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ADALBERT STIFTER

THE TECHNIQUE OF RÜCKBLICK

IN

ADALBERT STIFTER'S WORKS

A CRITICAL STUDY

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This study rests on an examination of certain retrospective narrative episodes in selected works of Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868), an Austrian writer. It is an attempt to explain the author's frequent use of the Rückblick technique, a salient feature of his prose. The events, ideas and problems portrayed in each of these episodes are first treated in relation to the main themes of the particular work and then viewed against the background of certain events and experiences in Stifter's life.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ORTHOGRAPHY

For purposes of this study, I have used two separate editions of Stifter's collected works. Direct quotations from the stories are made from the Tempel edition, in three volumes, and are identified in the text after the quotation by means of the letter T., followed by the volume and page numbers, all of these abbreviations being enclosed in parentheses. Where, on occasion, quotations from the works appear in the footnotes, the same abbreviations are used.

Direct quotations from Stifter's letters and from other non-literary articles are made from the so-called Prague edition. In this case the common abbreviation S.W. (Sämtliche Werke), followed by volume and page numbers, is used.

I draw the reader's attention to certain orthographic peculiarities which appear in the quoted matter. The orthography in the Prague edition is Stifterian, and has been left unchanged in this study. The orthography in the Tempel edition is modern, although the editor has not changed the punctuation and certain grammatical forms peculiar to Stifter.

References to secondary critical literature are

abbreviated in accordance with an accepted method suggested in the publication Scholarly Reporting in the Humanities.

Full details of the two editions of Stifter's works and the secondary literature are given in the Bibliography.

CHAPTER I

AIMS AND METHOD

This critical study on the use of the Rückblick in Adalbert Stifter's works proceeds from a belief that this literary device, a salient feature of the author's prose, contributes decidedly to our appreciating and understanding the central themes which pervade Stifter's art. It has also been inspired by the conviction that certain narrative episodes viewed in retrospect, either by a principal character or by the author himself, do, in fact, reflect real and personal problems of poignant, emotional significance to Stifter.

A main aim of this study is to show that the frequent occurrence of the Rückblick is in no wise accidental or ill-considered. Indeed, this technique is not merely a skilful stylistic device, but rather it is a well-considered means of artistic expression employed consciously and carefully by the author for a specific reason.

To discover the reason, an examination of both works and biography is essential. This study will show that the Rückblick has a definite place in the overall design of the work in which it occurs and that it stands in close relation-

ship to the main themes of the particular work. Moreover, it will be shown that the events and problems portrayed in Rückblick can be related to certain events and experiences in Stifter's life. An attempt will be made, therefore, to establish a meaningful correlation between the two. The plan of presentation derives from this personal viewpoint.

In the novel Der Nachsommer, there are two chapters entitled "Die Mitteilung" and "Der Rückblick". Here, the old man Risach communicates the events of his past life to the young Heinrich Drendorf. These two chapters are the most prominent examples of the Rückblick technique in Stifter's writing. Indeed, this is the only place where Stifter actually uses the word as a chapter title.¹

However, the technique, if not the word, is widespread throughout his works, and retrospective narrations similar to that of Risach are to be found in the smaller works which predate Der Nachsommer, and also in the final incomplete version of Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters, which was published posthumously.

In this study, attention will be focussed on those examples of the Rückblick which either bear resemblance in

¹In a letter to his publisher, Gustav Heckenast, dated October 18, 1846, Stifter refers to a chapter in Brigitta as "Rückblick". When Brigitta was published, however, the chapter title was changed to "Steppenvergangenheit". S.W., XVII, 176.

some way to the Rückblick and its rôle in Der Nachsommer, or, where essentially different, present a problem which can be related to Stifter's personal experiences.

First, selected examples of the Rückblick occurring in the smaller works will be treated. The purpose and importance of each in the presentation of the story's main themes will be discussed. In each case, certain problems will be presented, but a detailed treatment of their full significance will not be given at this juncture.

An examination of Der Nachsommer and the final version of Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters (generally referred to as Die letzte Mappe) will come after this. In treating Der Nachsommer, I shall examine the function of Risach's retrospective narration in the overall design of the novel, a relationship which Stifter clearly defined. At this point, the analogy of the Rückblick episodes in the smaller works to the Rückblick in Der Nachsommer will be made evident, differences of form and content notwithstanding.

Die letzte Mappe takes its place beside Der Nachsommer in this chapter, because I consider that these two works represent the full blossoming, not only of the Rückblick technique, but also of Stifter's art.

Following this, I shall trace in some detail the biographical background to the problems which are presented in the Rückblick episodes. This does not imply an undue

preoccupation with biography. Only those events, problems, emotional and spiritual experiences will be considered, which, first of all, were eminently important and instrumental in shaping Stifter's views on human relationships, and which were subsequently transformed into deep, intense expression in his writing.

CHAPTER II

THE PATH TO DER NACHSOMMER

1. Die Narrenburg

In relating the history of the eccentric Scharnast family, Stifter portrays violence, passion and all sorts of fantastic aberrations more forcefully than in any other of his previous works. It is immediately evident, however, that these destructive forces are relegated to the past, and are viewed in retrospect from the standpoint of a stable and harmonious present.

The form in which the Rückblick is cast is radically different from the form of the Rückblick in Der Nachsommer, as we shall see below; however, Die Narrenburg together with the Urfassung of Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters marks the real beginning of Stifter's use of the Rückblick technique along the lines laid down briefly in Chapter I.

Here, Stifter introduces the history of the Scharnasts by a brief description of Hanns von Scharnast's "lächerliches Fideikommiss". (T., I, 251.) This entail, in spite of its good intentions, was to govern the eccentric and aberrant deeds of the future Scharnasts whose way of life was expressed in the derisive name given to their

estate--"die Narrenburg".

Stifter then switches suddenly to the present:

"Heutzutage liegt die Burg beinahe in Trümmern, und seit der letzte Scharnast in Afrika erschossen worden ist, konnte man auch gar keinen Anwärter mehr auf den Rothenstein auf-treiben". (T., I, 252.) Nothing more is said of the Scharnasts for the time being. None of the details of their eccentric past lives is related. This comes only after Stifter has introduced the hero, Heinrich, and described the present setting, the Fichtau valley.

From this point on, the history of the Scharnasts is recalled very gradually by the author. Before Heinrich is really aware of his ancestry, he learns first of their former deeds from Erasmus, the innkeeper. The latter tells of the fierce altercation between the brothers Julius and Julianus which was witnessed by his grandfather. He goes on to give a brief account of Graf Cristoph's impassioned departure for battle against the Moors. His narration ends with an equally short reference to Jodokus' burning of the castle and to Prokopus' eccentricities.

The recollections of the crazed castellan Ruprecht provide Heinrich with a closer, albeit more confused, impression of his family's past, and finally, aware of his ancestry, Heinrich reads the account of Jodokus' life in keeping with the terms of the entail. At this point, the

Rückblick ends.

From this short description, we notice how skillfully the Rückblick has been presented. The narration of the past is not static. It begins in the valley and moves to the castle on the hill, from the sketchy recollections of Erasmus to the detailed confessions of Jodokus. This corresponds exactly to Heinrich's own initial presentiment that he is the heir to Julius and that presentiment grows to the final awareness of his ancestry. It also reflects Heinrich's development from the status of a simple wanderer who has entered the valley to that of lord over its inhabitants.

The description of the Fichtau as Heinrich and Robert look down upon it from the hill gives the essential theme of the whole story: "grün und weich und ruhig lag die ganze Fichtau in der Sommervormittagsluft unten, . . . alles bekannt und vertraut, eine holde Gegenwart, herumliegend um die unklare Vergangenheit, auf der sie standen." (T., I, 288.) Contrast is exploited in Die Narrenburg, and the Rückblick plays an eminent rôle in portraying the contrast between past and present.

These are two radically different worlds. Below is the stable and natural agricultural community. On the hill lie the vestiges of a fantastic and abnormal tradition. The inhabitants of the valley lead a simple and practical

life. They engage in productive and useful activity for the welfare of the community. This is a world which stands in a "naive" and harmonious relationship to Nature.

Opposed to this unostentatious way of life, which incorporates for Stifter the highest and most lasting values, are the sensational deeds of the Scharnasts. In the quarrel between Julius and Julianus we sense the turbulent outburst of anger and hate, which is climaxed by Julius' frenzied departure from the inn. Unrestrained passion, violence in desire and action, jealousy, hate and thoughts of murder are all seen in the Jodokus-Chelion-Sixtus episode.

These two worlds represent the antithesis between "gross" and "klein" which Stifter was to postulate later in the preface to the Bunte Steine. The daily activities in the valley are very ordinary and unsensational. For this very reason they are great, for they contribute to the preservation of mankind. The past deeds of the Scharnasts, although mighty at the moment, are really small, for they are destructive in nature and engender misery and confusion.

The Rückblick plays an important part in presenting the antithesis of past and present. The past was full of mistakes. Heinrich, however, is given the opportunity to learn from the example of his ancestors, and thereby avoid in his own life the errors which they committed. Happiness

will arise in the future from a recognition of the reasons for unhappiness in the past.

Two points are noteworthy at this juncture: firstly, the past viewed in retrospect is the repository of all passion and violence. Secondly, the Rückblick performs a major educational rôle in the development of the young Heinrich. Thus, with these striking features, Stifter lays the foundation upon which later examples of the Rückblick are based. The path leading to Der Nachsommer has its tentative beginnings in Die Narrenburg.

2. Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters (Studienfassung)

This work appeared in three distinct editions, generally referred to as Die Urfassung, Die Studienfassung and Die letzte Mappe. In this chapter I have chosen to treat mainly the Studienfassung referring briefly to the Urfassung where comparison proves significant.

Although Stifter revised the work noticeably as his concept broadened, the Colonel's Rückblick was not radically altered, either in content¹ or in the function which it performs in the story. From an early reference which Stifter made to this episode, we may infer that he was at least pleased with this part of the story as early as 1844,

¹Further notable emendations will be discussed below in the treatment of Die letzte Mappe.

and felt, therefore, that no radical change was necessary.

He writes to Heckenast:

die Erzählung des Obrists muss graniten sein, ich glaube, dass diese Episode das erste von mir ist, was man etwa klassisch nennen konnte. In anspruchloser Einfachheit und in massenhaft gedrängtem Erzählen, muss ein ganzes Leben, und einer der tiefsten Charaktere liegen. Lesen Sie recht bald das Ding, und sagen Sie mir Ihren Eindruck. Ich habe aber gerade an der Erzählung des Obrists gefeilt, wie sonst gar nie, und aus einem Bogen Material ist ein Blatt Text geworden, damit nur die Figur so eisenfest bleibe, wie ich ihre Form beabsichtige.²

There is, however, one notable difference between the Rückblick of Die Urfassung and Die Studienfassung, which, although relatively unimportant in the story itself, is significant for what it tells us of Stifter's growing concept of his subject. The Colonel of Die Urfassung is obviously the same Julius Scharnast who figured in Die Narrenburg, for the narration of his former life corresponds to Heinrich's account of his great-grandfather's life. The change in name to Casimir Uhldom in Die Studienfassung seems to indicate Stifter's desire to make Die Mappe completely independent of Die Narrenburg.

In the account of the Colonel's former life, we have also a variation of a motif presented in Die Narrenburg. Like the Scharnasts, the Colonel records his memoirs. Rather than leaving them to be read by his descendants,

²S.W., XVII, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 25 Dezember, 1844

however, he reads them again himself, and realizes the folly of many of his former thoughts and acts. He says to Augustinus: "ein Päckchen erzählte mir später meine damaligen Gefühle, die um viel besser waren als die Auszeichnung und die ich hatte zurückdrängen müssen, um meine Pflicht zu tun." (T., I, 376-7.)

Unlike that of the Scharnasts, the Colonel's knowledge of past mistakes yielded positive results: "Ich fing mit der Zeit auch an, im Leben auszuüben, was ich im Geiste denken gelernt hatte." (T., I, 377.)

The Colonel's Rückblick indicates that Stifter is moving gradually in the direction of Der Nachsommer. First, there is the obvious similarity between Casimir Uhldom and Risach. The Colonel has known the call of the passions in his day. As he relates to Augustinus, his former life was one of self-indulgence and excess. He was a gambler, a spendthrift, possessed of arrogant vanity.

His present life, however, stands in sharp contrast to his past. His character has been chastened by such bitter experiences as his attempted suicide and the tragic death of his wife. He has risen above his former mistakes and is now a gentle man leading an unpretentious and industrious life in an agricultural community.

Stifter's method in Die Mappe is essentially the

same as that which he will employ later in Der Nachsommer although the subjects are somewhat different. To the Rückblick are relegated forces of a violent, excessive, and passionate nature. The colonel recalls with a shudder his gambling adventures, his impulsive duel and his attempted suicide. Admittedly, violence has not been excised completely from the present. We need only consider the relationship between Augustinus and Margarita. He is both impulsive and violent in reproaching her with duplicity and infidelity after the Rudolph episode. We should not overlook Augustinus' contemplated suicide as a result of this.

Augustinus does not move in a world of unshaken harmony. His life is not completely serene and composed. He makes mistakes and has bitter experiences along the path of his development.

The Colonel's Rückblick is an important factor in this development. Let us recall that it was Augustinus' rough jostling of Margarita and his contemplated suicide which prompted the Colonel to tell the young doctor of his own past mistakes. Again, the Rückblick is seen as an educational force. The younger generation learns from the mistakes of the former. The Colonel now stands before Augustinus as an example of true human greatness which Augustinus gradually learns to appreciate. He says:

"Wie gut er ist nicht nur gegen mich, sondern auch gegen alle andern, wie einfach und schön er ist, zeigt sich ja viel deutlicher in dem, was er tut, als es mit allen andern Worten je gesagt werden könnte." (T., I, 387.)

3. Brigitta

With Brigitta, we stand before the gate that opens to the ideal embodied in the "Rosenhaus". It is not so much the subject matter, but rather, the theme, the atmosphere which pervades the entire story, and particularly, the form in which this work is cast that bring us so close to Der Nachsommer.

The events do not proceed chronologically. The present dominates the first two chapters, "Steppenwanderung" and "Steppenhaus". Then, in the next chapter, "Steppenvergangenheit", the past is reviewed, and in the final chapter, "Steppengegenwart", we are brought back to the present.

The figure of the Major, Stephan Murai, dominates the first two chapters of the story. He is seen in the autumn of his life engaged in productive agricultural activity much like that of the Colonel in *Die Mappe*, and Risach in Der Nachsommer.

There is, however, a certain mystery surrounding the Major's present station. The narrator knows very little of his former circumstances. During his travels in Italy where

the narrator had first met the Major, he had heard many tales of this man's past including claims that he possessed a certain magnetic power over women, rumours of an unhappy marriage and even fratricide. People observed "dass auf seiner Stirne eine Art Trauer wohne, die der Zeiger einer bedeutenden Vergangenheit sei". (T., I, 663.) However, nobody knew the facts.

Only once did Stephan refer to his past. He told his friend that he had considered at one time becoming an artist or a scholar, but realizing that he was not naturally endowed for such pursuits, had subsequently abandoned the idea. The narrator does not press for further information.

The mystery and suspense are heightened when the narrator sees the picture "eines hässlichen Mädchens" (T., I, 683.) in the Major's study. He is convinced that the girl must have figured somehow in Stephan's past.

Gömör, one of the neighbours, throws some light on the matter. From his narration, the visitor learns of the Major's arrival in the district some years before, of the combined activity of Stephan Murai and Brigitta Maroshely to make the "puszta" more fruitful, and of the subsequent formation of the agricultural federation among the neighbours.

Here, for the first time, we are given some information about Brigitta. We learn only that she had been

married, and that her husband, "ein junger leichtsinniger Mensch", (T., I, 686.) had left her, perhaps because she was so ugly. Brigitta then retired with her child to her estate, threw herself with vigour into agricultural activity, and assumed the dress and habits of a man. Little else but the fleeting impression of the masculine-looking woman given in the first chapter is explained here.

Gömör's narration ends with the suggestion that the Major apparently would like to marry Brigitta, but legal provisions cannot allow it because there exists neither a death certificate nor a divorce decree from Brigitta's estranged husband. These are the few indications which we have of the Major's and of Brigitta's past lives.

As in Der Nachsommer, it would seem that Stifter is interested in placing the present situation in the foreground, and then viewing the past only in retrospect from the standpoint of the present. The general tone and mood of the story appear to be one of contentment and fulfilment as indicated by the Major's words to his visitor:

Seit ich in der Mitte meiner Leute lebe . . . seit ich mit ihnen in ihrer Kleidung gehe, ihre Sitten teile, und mir ihre Achtung erworben habe, ist es mir eigentlich, als hätte ich dieses und jenes Glück errungen, das ich sonst immer in der einen oder der andern Entfernung gesucht habe." (T., I, 681.)

The visitor appreciates the perfection in this way of life, for he reflects: "Wie schön und ursprünglich . . .

ist die Bestimmung des Landmannes, wenn er sie versteht und veredelt. In ihrer Einfachheit und Mannigfaltigkeit, in dem ersten Zusammenleben mit der Natur, die leidenschaftslos ist, grenzt sie zunächst an die Sage von dem Paradiese." (T., I, 681.) This is essentially the world of Der Nachsommer.

Up to this point only the outward appearances of both Stephan and Brigitta have been described. As yet, we know little, either of the real nature of these people, or of their past.

Stifter stresses the importance of the chapter, "Steppenvergangenheit", that is, Brigitta's Rückblick, in a letter to his publisher Heckenast. He writes: "Das 3^{te} und 4^{te} Kapitel der Brigitta muss der Glanzpunkt der Erzählung sein, und ich glaube, er sic ist es auch. Lesen Sie das Kapitel "Rückblick" und urtheilen Sie."³

The importance of Brigitta's Rückblick is four-fold. First of all, the mystery which has surrounded the figures of the Major and Brigitta in the first two chapters is clarified here. Secondly, as the narrator suggests, it is necessary for us to have some knowledge of Brigitta's earlier life and her former relationship to Stephan before we can understand the further development of

³S.W., XVII, 176, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 18 Oktober, 1846

the story in the final chapter:

Ehe ich entwickle, wie wir nach Maroshely geritten sind, wie ich Brigitta kennen gelernt habe, und wie ich noch recht oft auf ihrem Gute gewesen bin, ist es nötig, dass ich einen Teil ihres früheren Lebens erzähle, ohne den das Folgende nicht verständlich wäre. (T., I, 687.)

Thirdly, of equal importance is the relationship between the introduction to the Rückblick and Stifter's general reflections on his theme at the beginning of the story. The author discusses the theme of beauty and ugliness, and states how difficult it is to distinguish the one from the other. He writes:

Es gibt oft Dinge und Beziehungen in dem menschlichen Leben, die uns nicht sogleich klar sind, und deren Grund wir nicht in Schnelligkeit hervor zu ziehen vermögen. Sie wirken dann meistens mit einem gewissen schönen und sanften Reize des Geheimnisvollen auf unsere Seele. In dem Angesichte eines Hässlichen ist für uns oft eine innere Schönheit, die wir nicht auf der Stelle von seinem Werte herzuleiten vermögen, während uns oft die Züge eines andern kalt und leer sind, von denen alle sagen, dass sie die grösste Schönheit besitzen." (T., I, 661.)

Then, as an introduction to Brigitta's Rückblick, he expresses essentially the same thoughts, but here these reflections are applied more directly to Brigitta:

Oft wird die Schönheit nicht gesehen, weil sie in der Wüste ist, oder weil das rechte Auge nicht gekommen ist--oft wird sie angebetet und vergöttert, und ist nicht da: aber fehlen darf sie nirgends, wo ein Herz in Inbrunst und Entzücken schlägt, oder wo zwei Seelen an einander glühen". (T., I, 687.)

In the Rückblick, we learn that Brigitta was not considered to be a beautiful child: "Als es geboren ward, zeigte es sich nicht als der schöne Engel, als der das Kind gewöhnlich der Mutter erscheint." (T., I, 688.) For this reason her parents showed little interest in her and bestowed their love and attention instead on her two beautiful sisters.

They failed, however, to recognize Brigitta's "innere Schönheit" (T., I, 661.) which lay behind her outer features. Stifter adds the thought: "Wenn nur einer gewesen wäre, für die verhüllte Seele ein Auge zu haben, und ihre Schönheit zu sehen". (T., I, 690.) But there was nobody.

It is true that Stephan passed by many beautiful girls to choose Brigitta as his bride, but it cannot really be said that he recognized her deeper hidden beauty. Only years later did he discover that the real source of beauty lay in the human heart. He says to Brigitta: "ja, es zieht uns das Gesetz der Schönheit, aber ich musste die ganze Welt durchziehen, bis ich lernte, dass sie im Herzen liegt, und dass ich sie daheim gelassen in einem Herzen, das es einzig gut mit mir gemeint hat". (T., I, 798.) A long interval of separation from Brigitta and much sorrow preceded Stephan's recognition of this truth, which brings us to the fourth feature of the Rückblick in this story.

In the Rückblick we encounter the crucial problem involved in a relationship between man and woman. The two themes - marriage and passion - which will later figure in Der Nachsommer occur here, albeit in a slightly different form. The whole vexed question of marriage stands particularly in the foreground of this Rückblick.

From the very outset, there are indications that the relationship between Brigitta and Stephan is very tenuous and questionable. Brigitta, aware of her ugliness, enjoins Stephan to consider carefully the possible consequences of his attraction for her: "Ich weiss, dass ich hässlich bin, darum würde ich eine höhere Liebe fordern, als das schönste Mädchen dieser Erde. Ich weiss es nicht, wie hoch, aber mir ist, als sollte sie ohne Mass und Ende sein. Sehn Sie - da nun dies unmöglich ist, so werben Sie nicht um mich." (T., I, 693-4.)

These demands seem very high, and one wonders whether Stephan is capable of fulfilling them. His words to Brigitta on their wedding night point further to the questionable character of their relationship: "Da ich dich das erste Mal sah, wusste ich schon, dass mir dieses Weib nicht gleichgültig bleiben werde; aber ich erkannte noch nicht, werde ich dich unendlich lieben oder unendlich hassen müssen. Wie glücklich ist es gekommen, dass es die Liebe ward!" (T., I, 695.)

Is Stephen really sure? When his love for Brigitta is put to the crucial test in the figure of Gabrielle, "ein himmlisches tolles, glühendes Rätsel" (T., I, 697.), it is not strong enough to offset the force of momentary passion. The results of this passionate attachment are naturally devastating for Brigitta and Stephan, for it shatters their marriage. Brigitta's insistence that she foresaw the outcome from the beginning drives Stephan to an outburst of blind and violent rage: "Weib, ich hasse dich unaussprechlich, ich hasse dich unaussprechlich!" (T., I, 698.)

Violent passion is seen here as a destroyer of human happiness. Aware now of Stifter's consistent treatment of violent passion, we can readily understand why it is relegated once again to the Rückblick--the distant past.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that Stifter is opposed to violence and excessive passion of any kind, inasmuch as these forces have been viewed negatively and have been consistently associated with conflict and unhappiness. Because of this, we may be tempted to conclude that he wishes to convince the reader that Stephan's actions were mainly responsible for the collapse of the marriage. I believe, however, that this is not a complete interpretation of the whole problem. Brigitta acknowledges later that she too erred: "Ich habe gefehlt, verzeihe mir, Stephan, die Sünde des Stolzes". (T., I, 708.) Indeed, it was Brigitta's

extreme pride that determined to a great degree her high demands regarding love. It would appear then, that Stifter, rather than attributing the guilt completely to Stephan, is merely attempting to show in this Rückblick how complex marriage can be.

In Die Narrenburg and Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters, the Rückblick serves as a major educational force. The same is true here in Brigitta. Heinrich learned from the mistakes of his ancestors, Augustinus from the colonel's experiences; the narrator's life is enriched by Brigitta's Rückblick. Recognizing the perfection of the present relationship between Brigitta and Stephan and knowing the painful, unhappy past, he comes to the realization: "O wie heilig, o wie heilig, muss die Gattenlieb sic sein, und wie arm bist du, der du von ihr bisher nichts erkanntest, und das Herz nur höchstens von der trüben Lohe der Leidenschaft ergreifen liessest." (T., I, 709.)

In this work we notice, too, that all struggle and conflict belong to the distant past. Two people have risen above their former mistakes at the cost of much sorrow and have attained finally to a belated happiness in the autumn of their lives. In the present we see "zwei Herzen . . . die sich nun erst recht zu einer vollen, wenn auch verspäteten Blume des Glückes aufschlossen." (T., I, 710.) Thus one of the major themes of Der Nachsommer is announced.

Again, the Rückblick serves to emphasize by contrast the excellence of the present situation.

4. Kalkstein

"Ein ganzes Leben voll Gerechtigkeit Einfachheit
 Bezwungung seiner selbst Verstandesgemässheit Wirksamkeit
 in seinem Kreise Bewunderung des Schönen verbunden mit
 einem heiteren gelassenen Sterben halte ich für gross."
 (T., II, 9.)

This passage which appears in the preface to the Bunte Steine forms the moral core of all Stifter's work. We have seen its manifestation in the lives of the Colonel, Brigitta and Stephan Murai. It will reveal itself in the life of Risach in Der Nachsommer where it will receive its noblest expression. In all cases it is the essence of the present scene.

The figure of the old parson in Kalkstein is another representation of this moral code and the story provides yet another expression of Stifter's artistic method along the lines laid down in the works already treated. The present activity of the poor, old parson, his simple, humble way of life stand in the foreground. His selfless dedication to the community is portrayed with a delicate tenderness reflective of his own character. His past will be recalled in Rückblick only after Stifter has portrayed the excellence of his present life.

The first description of the parson presents us with a picture that could easily be mistaken for that of the Colonel, of Stephan and Brigitta or of Risach. The narrator describes him as "einen vortrefflichen Mann, der die Obstbaumzucht eingeführt, und gemacht hatte, dass das Dorf, das früher mit Hecken, Dickicht und Geniste umgeben war, jetzt einem Garten glich, und in einer Fülle freundlicher Obstbäume da lag." (T., II, 50.) He is engaged in productive agricultural activity for the betterment of the community.

We recall that in Brigitta there was a certain air of mystery surrounding the present relationship of Stephan and Brigitta, one which was clarified fully only when Brigitta told the narrator of her past life. Such is the case also in Kalkstein, and this is the main function of the Rückblick in this work. The parson's appearance seems to hint "dass er Sorge und Kummer gehabt haben müsse." (T., II, 51.) Moreover, in contrast to his otherwise shabby, threadbare garments, the old parson wears linen of the finest quality imagineable. The narrator notices that the parson seems ashamed of this linen. He observes "dass der arme Pfarrer immer heimlich die Handkrausen seines Hemdes in die Rockärmel zurück schiebe, als hätte er sich ihrer zu schämen." (T., II, 56.) This gesture seems very strange. The apparent feeling of shame naturally arouses the curiosity of both the narrator and the reader. As was the case with

the narrator in Brigitta, the parson's guest learns certain facts concerning events in the old man's past life from the people in the district. He is, however, not importunate. The narrator admires the parson for what he is now; his past is of little concern: "Was seine Vergangenheit gewesen sei, in das drang ich nicht ein, und mochte nicht eindringen." (T., II, 74.) His attitude reflects that of the narrator in Brigitta and of Heinrich in Der Nachsommer.

The parson reveals his past to his guest for a specific reason. He knows that he is about to die, and he has a special request to make of his friend. Before expressing his wish, however, he thinks that the narrator should know something of his past. He says, "Ich muss Ihnen, ehe ich meine Bitte ausspreche, erst etwas erzählen. Bemerken Sie wohl, ich erzähle es nicht, weil es wichtig ist, sondern, damit sie sehen, wie alles so gekommen ist, was jetzt ist". (T., II, 77.) This is essentially the same reason that Risach gives to Heinrich in Der Nachsommer as we shall see later.

We notice that the parson stresses that his past life is not of any great significance. This is a noteworthy observation. Indeed, the Rückblick in Kalkstein certainly does not fit into the pattern so familiar now. Admittedly, it is not a happy past. There is the rapid decline of the

family business and the subsequent death of the parson's brother as a result of this misfortune. However, the destructive forces such as unbridled passion, violence, anger and hate are not seen in this Rückblick.

The Johanna episode which brought the parson so much sorrow cannot be compared to the relationship between man and woman portrayed in the other examples of the Rückblick. It merely serves to explain the parson's predilection for fine linen which is the emotional link to this one brief love affair in his earlier life.

The Rückblick, then, clarifies the mystery which surrounded the figure of the parson. It explains this visible trait in the parson's character which may be considered a weakness, but which also shows his humanity.

CHAPTER III
VARIATIONS IN A MINOR KEY

1. Der Hagestolz

Marriage and inheritance are the two central themes of Der Hagestolz. Here, however, the treatment of marriage is different from that in Brigitta. It is not so much a question of the problems engendered by and in marriage, but more the tragic results brought about by failure to marry.

In this scheme the Rückblick assumes a slightly different character. Like other examples already treated, it clarifies the present of a character by reference to past events; but it serves in no wise to underline by contrast the excellence of the present as is the case with Brigitta and the Colonel in Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters, for indeed the old man's present life is far from being enviable. He is described as "das Verkommen, mit dem eingeschüchternen Blicke, und mit einer herben Vergangenheit in jedem Zuge, die er sich einmal als einen Genuss, also als einen Gewinn, aufgeladen hatte." (T., I, 787.)

The old man takes stock of his life. His Rückblick is a confession of failure. In spite of anything that he

may have accomplished in his earlier years, he recognizes that his life has been an utter failure because he did not marry: "Wenn ein uralter Mann auf einem Hügel mannigfaltiger Taten steht, was nützt es ihm? Ich habe vieles und allerlei getan, und habe nichts davon. Alles zerfällt im Augenblicke, wenn man nicht ein Dasein erschaffen hat, das über dem Sarge noch fortduert. . . . Mit meinem Tode fällt alles dahin, was ich als Ich gewesen bin." (T., I, 798-9.)

Death brings with it the end of his name and family, for he dies without a natural heir. This is why he stresses to his nephew Victor the necessity of marrying young: "Darum musst du heiraten, Victor, und musst sehr jung heiraten." (T., I, 799.)

Once again, we see the Rückblick performing an educational function. The old man tells his nephew of his own past mistakes with the hope that Victor will avoid similar ones in the future: "Du bist wahrscheinlich auch mein Erbe, und darum möchte ich, dass du besser tatest, als ich." (T., I, 800.)

In passing we note the uncle's stress on the importance of marrying mainly to preserve the family by regeneration. This point of view is expressed also in Der Nachsommer, as we shall see later. Its full significance

will be discussed in the biographical chapter.

The description of the former relationship between Victor's uncle and Ludmilla is an interesting and revealing variation of the pattern so familiar in Stifter's portrayal of such episodes. In spite of the obvious outward differences, it may be related to the Risach-Mathilde affair in Der Nachsommer or to the relationship between Gustav and Cornelia in Der Condor. In all three cases, the woman bears the guilt for ending the relationship.¹

In Der Hagestolz, for example, Ludmilla rejects Victor's uncle in favour of his brother Hippolyt who in turn abandons her. The uncle's smugness and scorn in the face of Ludmilla's plight reveal clearly his attitude: "[Ich trat] mit Hohn vor Ludmilla hin, und zeigte ihr, wie sie ihren Verstand und ihr Herz nicht verwenden konnte." (T., I, 802.) Even in recalling the affair years later, he still cannot hide his feelings that Ludmilla was wrong for having spurned him: "Wenn sie nur um ein wenig stärker gewesen wäre, und den klaren Verstand, der ihr Anteil war, nur über ein grösser Stück Welt hätte ausdehnen

¹In Der Condor, Stifter leaves little doubt that Cornelia is responsible. The final scene shows Cornelia regretting her act: "aber es war vergebens, vergebens! Gelassen und kalt stand die Macht des Geschehenen vor ihrer Seele, und war nie und nimmermehr zu beugen". (T., I, 33.) Mathilde's acknowledgment of guilt will be discussed in Chapter IV.

können - alles wäre anders geworden." (T., I, 801.) This is an obvious reproach.

The uncle's Rückblick is important in the story not only for the problems which it portrays; it also clarifies to a great extent many of the old man's former acts which were misinterpreted by others.

Victor learns that his uncle's seemingly greedy and heartless seizure of his brother's property after the latter's death was done only in Victor's interests. He merely wished to save the estate from the plunderings of other lesser creditors, and thereby preserve it for his nephew. Thus, we see the old man in an entirely different light. His avarice for which he was notorious had a purpose. He says: "Ich bin geizig gewesen, aber vernünftiger geizig, als mancher freigebig ist, der sein Geld weg wirft, und dann weder sich, noch andern helfen kann." (T., I, 799.)

These communications contribute much to the final breakdown in the tension that existed between Victor and his uncle. Victor comes to know the old man better and to see beneath the cold outer shell. With this, there develops understanding and respect, and at the end of his stay Victor recognizes: "der Oheim ist ein herrlicher vortrefflicher Mann". (T., I, 809.)

2. Der Waldgänger

The chapter "Am Waldhange" is a variation in Stifter's use of the Rückblick technique. In form it differs from the other examples already treated. The events of the old Waldgänger's past are related by the author in the third person rather than by Georg himself.

In the first chapter of the story Stifter describes "die Armuth und gänzliche Verlassenheit des Waldgängers"², and then proceeds to pick up the past with the following introduction: "Ein ganzes Menschenalter früher, ehe sich das ereignete, was wir oben beschrieben haben, wurde weit entfernt von dem bisherigen Schauplatze einem Elternpaare ein Knäblein geboren". (T., II, 360.)

Although different in form, this example is similar in its function to the Rückblick in Der Hagestolz. It tells of a past error that explains the lonely present of the old man Georg which is portrayed in the first chapter.

The Rückblick in Der Waldgänger provides us with perhaps the most poignant and forceful expression of the problem of the childless marriage in Stifter's writing.

In describing the marriage of Georg and Corona, Stifter qualifies their happiness by adding: "Nur eins fehlte

²S.W., XVII, 159, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 26 April, 1846

dem Ehepaare zu seinem völligen Glücke: sie hatten keine Kinder." (T., II, 385.) Even when the couple moved into their new home, and lived only for each other apart from all others, their marital happiness remained incomplete for, "ein Wunsch ging nicht in Erfüllung, der allem anderen die Krone aufgesetzt hätte, oder der sie alle entbehrlich gemacht hätte: sie hatten noch immer keine Kinder." (T., II, 390.)

Corona proposes that she and George should seek a divorce on the grounds that the continuance of a childless marriage is both unjust and sinful. She says, "eine Ehe, die eines ihrer Hauptzwecke entbehrt, fortsetzen, deucht mir eher Sünde--darum wollen wir sie lösen". (T., II, 399.) This poses the central problem of the whole episode, one which assumes a great significance when viewed against the background of Stifter's own marriage which will be treated in Chapter V.

Georg accedes to Corona's request, marries again, but without love, and has two sons by his second wife Emilie, but he later blames himself for not having been strong enough to counter Corona's arguments. Moreover, Stifter's judgment at the end of the story seems unequivocal. He considers the divorce a mistake, and maintains that Georg and Corona should have found happiness enough in the love and companionship of each other:

Die zwei Menschen, die sich einmal geirrt hatten,

hätten die Kinderfreude opfernd, sich an der Wärme ihrer Herzen haltend, Glück geben und Glück nehmen sollen bis an das Grab, und wenn sie zu Gott gekommen wären, hätten sie sagen sollen: "Wir können keine Kinder als Opfer mitbringen, aber Herzen, die du uns gegeben, die sich nicht zu trennen vermochten, und die ihr Weniges, was ihnen geblieben, mit hieher bringen, ihre Liebe und ihre Treue bis zu dem Tode." (T., II, 407.)

The past as seen in Rückblick was one of unhappiness and conflict. The present is likewise filled with regret and grief.

The introduction to Der Waldgänger must also be considered in this treatment of the Rückblick. Here is an example which has nothing at all in common with any which I have already discussed. It is not a description of former mistakes of passion, nor of unhappiness and conflict in marriage. In this introduction, we see the author looking back on his own life. It is a personal Rückblick. He recalls vividly his homeland, his earlier student days and he weighs the accomplishments and failures of his life. He says, "was er sonst anstrebte, erreichte er nicht oder erreichte es anders, als er gewollt hatte, oder er wollte es nicht mehr erreichen". (T., II, 329.)

Most revealing is Stifter's recollection of Fanni Greipl, his former love. I have chosen to refer to this personal Rückblick mainly for that reason, because it is the only occasion in his entire writing where Stifter

refers directly to this episode in his earlier life.³ It is interesting to notice how Stifter looks back on the affair some fifteen years after its collapse. At the time it was very decisive and crucial to him, as we shall see in a later chapter: "Er hatte sein Herz an ein Mädchen geheftet, das nichts besass, keine sogenannte Bildung, keine folgerechte Entwicklung, als nur ihre schönen Augen, die an das Fabelhafte reichende Güte und das ahnungslose vertrauende Herz." (T., II, 325.) In reminiscence he sees only her beautiful black eyes and her good and trusting heart. The truth of his youthful poem to Fanni is fulfilled in this Rückblick:

Ich kannte zwei schwarze Augen
Und liebte sie gar so sehr
Wohl habe ich sie längst verloren
Aber vergessen nimmermehr.⁴

At first reading, it would appear that this rather long reminiscent introduction has little, if any, connection to the story of *Der Waldgänger* - no more, one might say, than the beautiful and vivid description of Oberplan has to

³Fanni does appear much later in the final version of *Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters* under the guise of Franziska Ferent. The description of her seems to suit Fanni perfectly: "Franziska von achtzehn Jahren hatte schwarze Haare schwarze Augen ein blühendes Angesicht und kirschrote Lippen." (T., III, 815.)

⁴S.W., XVII, 34, Brief an Adolf Brenner, 24 September, 1834. The short poem to Fanni appears in this letter.

the story of Hans and Hanna in Der Beschriebene Tännling. However, a closer examination of these the author's personal reminiscences reveals skilful and well-considered writing, for we see that they are closely related to the narration of Georg's past.

The dominant theme in the introduction is separation. We notice the word "Scheiden" in one form or another repeated nine times. For example, we see the author standing on the physical boundary - "der Scheidepunkt" - which separates his homeland from the rest of Austria; but it is much more than a physical boundary, for it is the line in time which separates the past from the future. It is the point which separates Stifter forever from Fanni. He writes: "Er stand auf dem Scheidepunkte und sah zurück in jene unbedeutenderen Teile, wo ihre Gestalt wandelte, woher er eben gekommen, wo er so lange neben ihr gewesen, und von wo er auf lange, auf unbestimmt lange, scheiden musste." (T., II, 325-6.) Thus the theme of separation in the Georg-Corona episode is announced.

3. Das Alte Siegel

Cöleste's narration of her past life in the final chapter of Das Alte Siegel is the most crucial point in the whole story, for it is chiefly responsible for ending her relationship with Hugo Almot.

The use of the Rückblick is different in two ways from other examples in Stifter's works. First of all, two lovers are directly involved here, one of whom has purposely kept the past a secret from the other, and then finally decides to relate it. Secondly, the narration of this past has a decidedly negative effect on the person hearing it.

A brief examination of Hugo Almot's character provides an explanation for his reaction to Cöleste's communications. From his father, Hugo inherited the characteristics of purity and innocence: "neben dem Unterrichte gab er seinem Sohne . . . sein eigenes einfältiges, metallstarkes, goldreines Männerherz, . . . so dass er schon als Knabe etwas Eisenfestes und Altkluges an sich hatte, . . . aber auch noch als Mann von zwanzig Jahren etwas so einsam Unschuldiges". (T., I, 609.)

His whole way of life was governed by one rigid principle--honour. "Servandus tantummodo honos" (T., I, 617.) was the motto on the old seal which he likewise inherited from his father. Hugo had only one resolution in life which he would follow at all costs: "so lange ich lebe, soll keine Makel an mein Herz und meine Ehre kommen, es soll kein einziger sein, der etwas Schimpfliches über mich zu sagen wüsste, und vor allen andern soll ich selber nicht der

einzigste sein, der eine geheime Schuld hätte, und sich dieselbe erzählen könnte." (T., I, 617.)

This adamant adherence to abstract principles eventually proves Hugo's undoing, for when he is confronted with the details of Cöleste's past life, he is uncompromising. Only here does he learn that Cöleste was already married during their former relationship. After hearing her story, he condemns her weakness and sin in having deluded him:

"Dann bist du desto schuldiger," . . . "Siehe, Cöleste, hättest du mir gesagt, dass du ein vermähltes Weib bist -- ich wäre dir ferne gestanden, ich hätte nie eine andere geliebt, und wenn der Himmel unsere Verbindung möglich gemacht hätte, ohne dass wir schuldig waren, wären wir frei eingegangen vor Gott und der Welt." (T., I, 655.)

Hugo maintains that she should have been open enough to reveal everything to him; however, we think back to the one statement which she made to Hugo in reference to her past: "Sie habe schwere, schwere Schicksale erlitten." (T., I, 637.)

In the Rückblick we learn that, as a girl of fifteen, Cöleste was forced by her guardian to marry a man of fifty for financial reasons. This marriage brought her nothing but unhappiness. She was maltreated physically by her husband because she failed to bear him any children. Again the familiar theme recurs - a loveless and childless marriage.

The extreme circumstances of this marriage explain why she was so greatly influenced by old Dionys' story of the woman who like her had suffered so much misfortune in her marriage with a cruel older man, but who had borne children by a blond youth and thus perpetuated the prosperity of her husband's house and name. For this reason she was attracted by Hugo's innocent youthful beauty. When we hear the details of Cöleste's past in her Rückblick, we can perhaps understand better her former plea to Hugo that he never inquire about the circumstances of her past life. "Es walten über meinem Schicksale einige Schwierigkeiten, deren Herr ich nicht bin, wenigstens jetzt noch nicht bin, fragen Sie mich daher nicht, wer ich bin, woher ich gekommen sei, und in welchen Verhältnissen ich lebe." (T., I, 632.)

Is Cöleste guilty for having delayed so long in telling Hugo of her past, or is Hugo really guilty for failing to understand and forgive? The one reference which Stifter makes to the problem might lead one to believe that Cöleste was, indeed, at fault. He writes: "bedauern Sie Cöleste, dass sie nicht offen genug sein konnte und die Schuld auf ihr Haupt zog."⁵

⁵S.W., XXII, 196,
Widmung des 4^{ten} Bandes der Studien
an Fräulein Auguste Jäger
Wien, am 29^{ten} April 1847

We notice, however, from the reference that Stifter does seek pity for Cöleste. Moreover, Cöleste's words seem to indicate that the author's sympathy does not lie with Hugo at all: "Ja, ich war eine Sünderin, aber die Sünde wurde mir nicht leicht; du hast nur ihre holde Frucht gesehen, ihre Kämpfe trug ich allein. Meine Sünde ist menschlicher, als deine Tugend". (T., I, 655.)

There is, also, the final scene of Hugo, as an old bachelor, many years later rueing his mistake and throwing the seal into the abyss. Cöleste's Rückblick put Hugo to the severest test of his life. He sacrificed life to iron-clad morality and lived to regret it.

CHAPTER IV
CEREUS PERUVIANUS

1. Der Nachsommer

Stifter was fifty-two years old when Der Nachsommer was published in 1857. It was thus conceived, written and completed in the maturity of his life and stands as his central work. He was sure that the novel represented his best writing to that date for he writes to Heckenast: "Das Buch ist besser als die Vorgänger"¹, and then in a later letter, "Ich sage aufrichtig, dass er mir mehr gefällt als meine früheren Arbeiten. Ich halte ihn für massvoller männlicher und tiefer."²

With Der Nachsommer, Stifter was aiming to produce a work of art which would stand above the literature of his contemporaries. His general criticism of their work reveals his unequivocal attitude: "Heute wird wilde Lust gezeichnet, die die Welt bewegt, oder Leidenschaften und Erregungen. Das halten sie für Kraft, was nur klägliche

¹S.W., XVIII, 279, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 13 Dezember, 1855

²S.W., XIX, 91, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 15 November, 1857

Schwäche ist."³ Der Nachsommer, consciously opposed to this in structure and theme, presents to the reader the author's concept of the highest and richest life embodied in the ideal of the "Rosenhaus". This life is portrayed from the beginning in a state of complete perfection.

By now, Stifter's artistic method is familiar to us. We have seen its tentative beginnings in Die Narrenburg, and followed its development through Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters and Brigitta. The present stands in the foreground, and the past, which is characterized by struggle and conflict, is viewed from the standpoint of the present.

The great forces which will ultimately determine the young Heinrich Drendorf's development to maturity are present in perfect and real form as early as the third chapter of this long novel. A detailed examination of this process does not lie within the immediate realm of this study. Indeed, as we shall see below, Stifter would not have us consider Der Nachsommer merely as an "Entwicklungsroman".⁴

It is significant, however, that the long process of development carries us along in the simple beauty of its

³S.W., XIX, 93, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 15 November, 1857

⁴See below, p. 56.

presentation into the third and last volume of the novel. We encounter no conflicting forces, no struggle, no personal problems. Along the way nothing is allowed to sully the vision of harmonious perfection in the "Rosenhaus" where art, science and morality unite in the serene and simple life of Risach and his daily activities.

Moreover the old man, who has played such a key rôle in Heinrich's attainment of maturity, has remained to some extent a mystery to us. We know no more of his past than we did of Stephan's and Brigitta's. Indeed, we can recognize the order and harmony that pervade his life and activities. We are sure of his unique greatness revealed in his unpretentious and humble way of life, and in the wisdom of his speeches. We can readily understand the great impact that he has on Heinrich's young mind. However, he never mentions his name, and Heinrich does not ask him. His past is relatively unknown. We are curious, but like Heinrich we are not importunate.

On two occasions we overhear a conversation between Risach and Mathilde, and learn that there existed in the past a certain relationship between the two which has now assumed another form. Mathilde says, "Wie diese Rosen abgeblüht sind, so ist unser Glück abgeblüht." Risach replies, "Es ist nicht abgeblüht, es hat nur eine

andere Gestalt." (T., II, 997.) From this relationship Mathilde still harbours strong feelings of guilt. On another occasion, while pointing to her son Gustav, she confesses, "Meine grösste Schuld steht da, eine Schuld, welche ich wohl nie werde tilgen können." (T., II, 883.) Nothing more is said. Stifter will reveal everything at the proper time and this will occur in the chapters "Die Mitteilung" and "Der Rückblick" where Risach tells Heinrich of his past.

One may well wonder why Stifter chose to delay Risach's important narration by placing it near the end of this long novel, and also what, if any, is the relationship between the Rückblick and the themes which the novel expresses. These questions are closely related to one another. They lead us first of all to examine carefully Stifter's own concept of the structure and overall design of the work, which, in turn, entails our thorough investigation of the possible reasons which Stifter had for employing the Rückblick technique not only in Der Nachsommer but in the other works already treated.

Before examining the individual incidents of Risach's past and the problems which the Rückblick expresses, I consider it most informative for purposes of this study to

trace in Stifter's correspondence certain references which he made to this work. We shall see clearly the lofty vision which the author wished the novel to portray; we shall understand better Stifter's slow, careful artistic method which was conditioned by his high purposes, and which eventually gave to the novel its great sense of design and proportion. Finally, we shall better understand the placing and the function of the Rückblick within the whole structure.

In a letter to his friend and publisher, Gustav Heckenast, Stifter gives an explicit statement of his aims and method. He writes:

Der Charakter des alten Mannes soll gross angelegt sein, darum die Festsetzung seiner jezigen Stellung, aus der im Folgenden seine an Leid und Freud reiche Vergangenheit zum Vorschein kommen wird, an welcher so wie an dem Wirken des Mannes in seinem jezigen ruhigen Nachsommer sich der junge noch unklare Reisende entwickeln wird, dessen äusseres Schicksal sich auch mit den Personen, die im Leben des alten Mannes enthalten sind, verschlingt.⁵

From the outset Stifter envisages clearly his subject; eventually⁶ its presentation will be cast in a form that corresponds to this vision.

In a later letter to Heckenast, the author explains the organic arrangement in the novel, and stresses once

⁵S.W., XVIII, 239-40, Brief an Heckenast, 5 April 1855

⁶Note that this letter was written before Stifter had finished the first volume of the novel.

again why the Rückblick must come towards the end:

Die Gliederung soll organisch sein, nicht dass Handlungen im Buche neben einander liegen, deren einmal eine die letzte ist. Ich will mich bemühen und besinnen, dass jedes Fremde weg ist, und dass jedes Zugehörige da ist. Der 1^{te} Band rundet die Lage ab, und sät das Samenkorn, das bereits sprosst, und zwar mit den Blättern vorwärts in die Zukunft des jungen Mannes und Nataliens und mit der Wurzel rückwärts in die Vergangenheit des alten Mannes und Mathildens. Eine heitere Gegenwart soll alles umstrahlen und verschönern. Dass in beiden Richtungen in den folgenden Bänden wärmere Gefühle und tiefere Handlungen kommen müssen, liegt im Haushalte des Buches, welches wie ein Organismus erst die schlanke Blättergerüste aufbauen muss, ehe die Blüte und die Frucht erfolgen kann.⁷

Each chapter will have its proper position in the whole design. Every conversation, event and descriptive passage will be placed where the author feels that it belongs. The progression will be slow, calm, and steady and will culminate in the final volume with Risach's retrospective narration which Stifter referred to as "die Spitze" of the novel:

Der 3^{te} Band ist so stark wo nicht stärker als der erste, und ich glaubte, es gibt Zeugniß für die organische Anlage des Werkes, dass ich nicht enden konnte, bis es eben aus war. Wie wenn jemand einen Thurm baut, der verjüngt in eine Spitze ausläuft -- er kann nicht eher enden, als bis die Spitze da ist.⁸

The placement of the Rückblick will be neither dubious nor ill-considered.

1856 ⁷S.W., XVIII, 298, Brief an Heckenast, 26 Februar

1857 ⁸S.W., XIX, 60, Brief an Heckenast, 12 September

Let us examine now the retrospective narration of Risach whose excellence and greatness have pervaded and dominated this "heitere Gegenwart" which the author has purposely portrayed for most of the novel.

Risach's communications to Heinrich fall into two separate parts. In the first section, he reveals his name, and describes his former activity as a public figure and servant of the state. He then tells of his subsequent decision to retire from his office because he recognized that he lacked the essential attributes for proper and effective performance of his duties:

Ihr seht, dass mir zwei Hauptdinge zum Staatsdiener fehlen, das Geschick zum Gehorchen, was eine Grundbedingung jeder Gliederung von Personen und Sachen ist, und das Geschick zu einer tätigen Einreihung in ein Ganzes und kräftiger Arbeit für Zwecke, die ausser dem Gesichtskreise liegen, was nicht minder eine Grundbedingung für jede Gliederung ist. (T., II, 1214.)

His natural artistic bents had been stifled and then only recognized too late when he had already entered a career for which he was temperamentally not suited: "Es war, ich erkannte es spät, im Grunde die Wesenheit eines Künstlers, die sich in mir offenbarte". (T., II, 1217.)

At this point Risach repeats the basic educational principle of the novel: "dass der Mensch seinen Lebensweg seiner selbst willen zur vollständiger Erfüllung seiner Kräfte

wählen soll. Dadurch dient er auch dem Ganzen am besten, wie er nur immer dienen kann." (T., II, 1220.)

Heinrich is, of course, already aware of this. He has been encouraged from the beginning of his development to follow his own natural inclinations without thought of any immediate utilitarian goals. Compare this advice to that of Heinrich's father in the first chapter: "der Mensch sei nicht zuerst der menschlichen Gesellschaft wegen da sondern seiner selbst willen. Und wenn jeder seiner selbst willen auf die beste Art da sei, so sei er es auch für die menschliche Gesellschaft." (T., II, 684.) It would be wrong, therefore, to credit Risach's Rückblick with the implantation of this principle in Heinrich's mind, but now the precept takes on a much deeper meaning and significance.

Here, in retrospect, Risach points to the unfortunate consequences that failure to heed this precept yielded, and this he does by example of his own uninspired, albeit efficient, activity.

Risach resumes his Rückblick the following day. In the second section, he traces his relationship to Mathilde. After giving more details of his childhood, his family, their subsequent misfortunes, and the village in which he

lived,⁹ he describes his years at the "Lehranstalt", his studies and activities at the university and his acceptance of a position as a tutor for Alfred, the young son of the prosperous Makloden family.

This experience brought him initially the affection and feeling of belonging which he sorely needed: "Wir gewöhnten uns immer mehr an einander, und mir war zuweilen, als hätte ich wieder eine unzerstörbare Heimat." (T., II, 1248.) It also produced, however, the great crisis in his life, for it was here that he and Mathilde, the daughter in the family, met and subsequently fell in love.

This episode, viewed in retrospect, demands special treatment in this study. We shall see that it is central and key, not only to an understanding of the Rückblick's function in the novel, but, indeed, to Stifter's views on human relationships, which determined to a great extent what he wrote, and particularly how he wrote it.

When we compare the love scene between Risach and Mathilde and its disastrous consequences with the strange and beautiful scene by the fountain where Heinrich and Natalie form their bond for life, we cannot help but notice a marked difference in treatment. In the past we witness a sudden almost violent outburst of mutually passionate feel-

⁹There are obvious similarities with Stifter's own early years in this description.

ings. Mathilde, like Heinrich, expresses the thought that the greatest happiness is derived from loving someone, but what follows has no parallel anywhere else in the book. This causes Risach, in his state of dejection, to express somewhat hastily his love for her.

Let us examine the passage closely:

'Mathilde, liebste du denn auch mich?' erwiderte ich. Ich hatte sie nie du genannt, ich wusste auch nicht, wie mir die Worte in den Mund kamen, es war, als wären sie mir durch eine fremde Macht hineingelegt worden. Kaum hatte ich sie gesagt, so rief sie: 'Gustav, Gustav', so ausserordentlich, wie es gar nicht auszusprechen ist. Mir brachen die heftigsten Tränen hervor. Da flog sie auf mich zu, drückte die sanften Lippen auf meinen Mund, und schlang die jungen Arme um meinen Nacken. Ich umfasste sie auch, und drückte die schlanke Gestalt so heftig an mich, dass ich meinte, sie nicht loslassen zu können. Sie zitterte in meinen Armen, und seufzte. (T., II, 1250.)

Certain words and expressions have been underlined to point out how, in this passage, Stifter renders perfectly the sudden passionate violence and the hasty outburst of these feelings by his well-considered choice of language. This is not the elevated prose that characterizes the love scene between Heinrich and Natalie, for such language has no place in a picture of such serene and chaste beauty. Passionate feelings are completely foreign to both Heinrich and Natalie, for the recognition and expression of their mutual spiritual admiration is almost timid and hesitant. Heinrich's words seem to characterize this timidity and hesitancy: "Ich hielt mich ferne, um

nicht den Schein zu haben, als dränge ich mich zu Euch". (T., II, 1103.) Their love is unveiled only after a long period of gradual development.

Risach and Mathilde decided to conceal their love from her parents for the time being, and in so doing, their passionate attachment became more violent: "Und je tiefer sich das Gefühl verbergen musste, desto gewaltiger war es". (T., II, 1254.) Compare this with Heinrich's and Natalie's decision to inform their parents and Risach immediately of their bond and to seek their approval. We know that Risach's subsequent decision to reveal the clandestine love affair to Mathilde's parents leads eventually to the tragic end of the relationship.

The parents are well aware of the dangers that lie in this premature bond based purely on feelings. The mother says, "Ihr habt euch nur eurem Gefühle hingegeben." (T., II, 1259.) She therefore advises Risach to convince himself and Mathilde that their passionate attachment is no solid basis for future happiness in marriage. It is interesting to note that the process by which Heinrich's and Natalie's love developed reflects perfectly the path which Risach and Mathilde had been encouraged to follow, but there are no passionate antecedents. Again the mother suggests: "Geht jetzt beide den Weg eurer Ausbildung, und

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wenn dann einst euer gereiftes Wesen dasselbe sagt, was jetzt das wallende Herz sagt, dann kommt beide, wir werden euch segnen." (T., II, 1262.)

Mathilde's immature feelings prevent her from recognizing the value of this advice, and she accuses Risach of a breach of faith for conceding to her parents' wishes.

So the bond is broken just as it was formed, in a state of short-sighted passion. We feel the vehemence of Mathilde's accusations. We notice the powerful effect on Risach in his equally violent act of pressing the thorny rose branch so hard that his hand begins to bleed: "Ich griff mit der blossen Hand in die Zweige der Rosen, drückte, dass mir leichter würde, die Dornen derselben in die Hand, und liess das Blut an ihr nieder rinnen." (T., II, 1267.) Nor can we overlook Risach's momentary thoughts of suicide brought on by the resultant state of dejection: "Ich sah in das dunkle Innere der Schlünde, und fragte, ob ich mich hinabwerfen solle." (T., II, 1270.)

One more event in Risach's Rückblick which must be mentioned is his marriage to Julie much later when he learned that Mathilde had married. Risach views this act as a mistake. He acknowledges that he has contravened the laws of Nature by marrying without love. He says, "und hier tat ich etwas, das mir ein Vorwurf bis zu meinem Lebensende sein wird, weil es nicht nach den reinen Gesetzen

der Natur ist, obwohl es tausend Mal und tausend Mal in der Welt geschieht. Ich heiratete ohne Liebe and Neigung." (T., II, 1272.)

He goes on further to describe his marriage, showing that it lacked the proper ingredients for true happiness: "Wir lebten in Eintracht, wir lebten in hoher Verehrung der gegenseitigen guten Eigenschaften, wir lebten in wechselweiser Aufmerksamkeit, man nannte unsere Ehe musterhaft; aber wir lebten bloss ohne Unglück." (T., II, 1273.)

The Rückblick ends with Risach's description of his reunion with Mathilde under the roses at the "Asperhof" years later. We are brought out of the bitter past back to the "heitere Gegenwart" with Risach's description of the new kind of deep and selfless love that has developed between him and Mathilde:

Es gibt eine eheliche Liebe, die nach den Tagen der feurigen gewitterartigen Liebe, die den Mann zu dem Weibe führt, als stille durchaus aufrichtige süsse Freundschaft auftritt, die über alles Lob und über allen Tadel erhaben ist, und die vielleicht das Spiegelklarste ist, was menschliche Verhältnisse aufzuweisen haben. Diese Liebe trat ein. Sie ist innig ohne Selbstsucht, freut sich, mit dem andern zusammen zu sein, sucht seine Tage zu schmücken und zu verlängern, ist zart, und hat gleichsam keinen irdischen Ursprung an sich. . . . So leben wir in Glück und Stetigkeit gleichsam einen Nachsommer ohne vorhergegangenen Sommer. (T., II, 1279.)

The failure to recognize and follow one's own natural bents, passionate feelings, violent words, actions and thoughts, a cold, unhappy marriage--all these charac-

terize Risach's past. The Rückblick clarifies the mystery which to some extent surrounded the figure of Risach and his relationship to Mathilde, Natalie and Gustav.

We understand now why Risach exhorted Heinrich so strongly to enlarge the sphere of his experience instead of concentrating his time, interests and ability too early in one phase of activity: "In der Jugend muss man sich allseitig üben, um als Mann gerade dann für das einzelne tauglich zu sein." (T., II, 938.)

His disavowal of destructive passions,¹⁰ and his description of the true form of love¹¹ do not represent

¹⁰cf. particularly Risach's speech which recalls Stifter's distinction between "gross" and "klein" in the preface to the Bunte Steine: "Weil die Menschen nur ein einziges wollen and preisen, weil sie, um sich zu sättigen, sich in das Einseitige stürzen, machen sie sich unglücklich. Wenn wir nur in uns selber in Ordnung wären, dann würden wir viel mehr Freude an den Dingen dieser Erde haben. Aber wenn ein Übermass von Wünschen und Begehungen in uns ist, so hören wir nur diese immer an, und vermögen nicht die Unschuld der Dinge ausser uns zu fassen. Leider heissen wir sie wichtig, wenn sie Gegenstände unserer Leidenschaften sind, und unwichtig, wenn sie zu diesen in keinen Beziehungen stehen, während es doch oft umgekehrt sein kann." (T., II, 838.)

¹¹Risach's description of this finds its noblest expression in the passage already cited above (T., II, 1279.), and also in the following passage: "Wenn wir hier alle die Dinge ausschliessen, die nur den Körper oder das Tierische des Menschen betreffen und befriedigen, und deren andauerndes Begehren mit Hinwegsetzung alles andern wir mit dem Namen Leidenschaft bezeichnen, weshalb es denn nichts Falscheres geben kann, als wenn man von edlen Leidenschaften spricht, und wenn wir als Gegenstände höchsten Strebens nur das Edelste des Menschen nennen: so dürfte alles Drängen nach solchen Gegenständen vielleicht nicht mit Unrecht nur

mere detached, impersonalized theorizing. We learn here in the Rückblick that they are the products of bitter experience. In the Rückblick we are enlightened about Mathilde's feelings of guilt which we overheard earlier.

Both Risach and Mathilde have overcome the struggle and the conflict of the past. They stand now before Heinrich and Natalie in the form of true human greatness. Their example has influenced and guided the two young people so carefully that Heinrich and Natalie have attained to proper intellectual and emotional maturity, and have not fallen prey to the conflict and struggle portrayed in Risach's Rückblick. Stifter confirms the eminent rôle

mit einem Namen zu benennen sein, mit Liebe. Lieben als unbedingte Werthaltung mit unbedingter Hinneigung kann man nur das Göttliche oder eigentlich nur Gott; aber da uns Gott für irdisches Fühlen zu unerreichbar ist, kann Liebe zu ihm nur Anbetung sein, und er gab uns für die Liebe auf Erden Teile des Göttlichen in verschiedenen Gestalten, denen wir uns zuneigen können: so ist die Liebe der Eltern zu den Kindern, die Liebe des Vaters zur Mutter der Mutter zum Vater, die Liebe der Geschwister, die Liebe des Bräutigams zur Braut der Braut zum Bräutigam, die Liebe des Freundes zum Freunde, die Liebe zum Vaterlande, zur Kunst zur Wissenschaft zur Natur, und endlich gleichsam kleine Rinnsale, die sich von dem grossen Strome abzweigen, Beschäftigungen mit einzelnen gleichsam kleinlichen Gegenständen, denen sich oft der Mensch am Abende seines Lebens wie kindlichen Notbehelfen hingibt, Blumenpflege Zucht einer einzigen Gewächsart einer Tierart und so weiter, was wir mit dem Namen Liebhaberei belegen. Wen die grösseren Gegenstände der Liebe verlassen haben, oder wer sie nie gehabt hat, und wer endlich auch gar keine Liebhaberei besitzt, der lebt kaum und betet auch kaum Gott an, er ist nur da. So fasst es sich, glaube ich, zusammen, was wir mit der Richtung grosser Kräfte nach grossen Zielen bezeichnen, und so findet es seine Berechtigung. (T., II, 1154-5.)

which Risach particularly plays in the proper development of Heinrich and Natalie. In a letter to Heckenast where he describes briefly Risach's life, he suggests that his perfect example was necessary in this respect: "Auch sein Herz findet die schönsten Blüten erst im Alter, und an diesen Blumen entzündeten sich andere, die jung ins Unbestimmte und Regellose gewachsen wären, und die, ohne selber gross zu sein, durch seine Grösse, die sich erst in einem Nachsommer zeigt, doch gross werden."¹²

Cognizant of this fact, we may well ask whether Risach's communications to Heinrich, like his other great speeches in the novel, perform a further and necessary educational rôle in the young man's development, particularly in his future relationship with Natalie. I have already suggested above that Heinrich is well aware of the educational principle repeated by Risach in his Rückblick. We feel sure, too, that Heinrich and Natalie will not succumb to the call of passions in their future relationship as did Risach and Mathilde. Indeed, violence in any form is completely foreign to the well-developed natures of these two young people. What then is the function of the Rückblick?

Risach himself very simply states the purpose. He

¹²S.W., XVIII, 234, Brief an Heckenast, 2 Jänner, 1855

tells Heinrich that the details of his past which he related in the first section were necessary, "damit Ihr ungefähr den Stand beurteilen könnt, auf dem ich nun stehe." (T., II, 1221.) His former relationship to Mathilde which explains the present connection between the "Asperhof" and the "Sternenhof" must be told, "damit Ihr wisst, wie ich mit der Familie in dem Sternenhofe zusammenhänge, und damit in dem Kreise, in welchen Ihr nun auch tretet, für Euch Klarheit ist." (T., II, 1279.)

Risach's reasons seem clear. It is the proper time for Heinrich to know more, indeed everything, about the man whose present life he has learned slowly to appreciate and respect. Risach does not state bluntly that his Rückblick was meant to enrich further Heinrich's development, for this would be at complete variance with Risach's nature.¹³ However, we cannot help but think that Heinrich will thereby appreciate more, and perhaps understand better the vision of the highest and best life to which he has been exposed.

Having now examined the position of the Rückblick in the novel's structure, and the details of Risach's past

¹³See Risach's reluctance merely to tell Heinrich that the marble statue was so beautiful, because he wished Heinrich to discover it himself. In reply to Heinrich's question, "Und warum habt Ihr denn nie zu mir darüber gesprochen?" Risach states, "Weil ich dachte, dass Ihr es nach einer bestimmten Zeit selber betrachten und für schön erachten werdet". (T., II, 962.)

with their relationship to the present situation, we must investigate further the possible reasons which Stifter had for allowing the reader to view this unpleasant episode only in retrospect. We shall see that these reasons are closely related to the author's concept of the novel's purpose.

In a letter to Heckenast, Stifter stresses that "die zwei jungen Leute sind weitaus nicht die Hauptsache, sind eine heitere Ausschmückung des Werkes, sein Ernst und sein Schwerpunkt muss irgendwo anders liegen".¹⁴

It would seem, therefore, that the author would not have us consider the novel merely as an "Entwicklungsroman". I have already indicated the rôle which Risach's Rückblick plays in Heinrich's development. If, however, the novel's stress lies elsewhere, this is then only a partial explanation of the Rückblick's function within the novel.

Later, in reply to the negative "Tagblattkritik" which Der Nachsommer encountered, Stifter explains clearly to Heckenast what he wanted the novel to portray. The novel is not merely "eine Heirathsgeschichte . . . und hierbei rückwärts eine veraltete Liebesgeschichte".¹⁵ The Rückblick depicts this past love episode with a view to

¹⁴S.W., XIX, 22, Brief an Heckenast, 24 Mai, 1857

¹⁵S.W., XIX, 93, Brief an Heckenast, 11 Februar, 1858

contrasting it with Heinrich's and Natalie's love in its development and culmination; but this is once again only one aspect of its rôle.

The function of the Rückblick, indeed of the novel itself, can be fully appreciated only in relation to Stifter's unequivocal statement of his aims, which appears in the same letter. It is so conclusive that I quote it in full:

Ich habe ein tieferes und reicheres Leben, als es gewöhnlich vorkömmt, in dem Werke zeichnen wollen, und zwar in seiner Vollendung, und zum Überblike entfaltet da liegend in Risach und Mathilden, zum Theile auch und zwar in einseitigeren Richtungen im Kaufmanne und seiner Frau, selbst etwas auch in Eustach und sogar dem Gärtner, in seiner Entwicklung begriffen und an jenem vollendeten Leben reifend in dem jungen Naturforscher an Natalie Roland Klothilde Gustav. Dieses tiefere Leben soll getragen sein durch die irdischen Grundlagen bürgerlicher Geschäfte der Landwirthschaft des Gemeinnuzens und der Wissenschaft und dann der Überirdischen der Kunst der Sitte und eines Blikes, der von reiner Menschlichkeit geleitet, oder wenn Sie wollen, von der Religion geführt höher geht als blos nach eigentlichen Geschäften (welche ihm allerdings Mittel sind) Staatsumwälzungen und anderen Kräften, welche das menschliche Leben treiben.¹⁶

In Der Nachsommer Stifter shows us his concept of the highest and richest form of human life and presents that life to us in a state of perfection. The human qualities which he admires and which he presented in the preface to the Bunte Steine find masterly expression in

¹⁶S.W., XIX, 94, Brief an Heckenast, 11 Februar, 1858

this novel. They are embodied in the ideal world of the "Rosenhaus" where daily life in all its aspects is governed by "das sanfte Gesetz".¹⁷

This moral law is for Stifter the only yardstick for measuring true human greatness, one which manifests itself in selfless love and friendship, absolute sincerity and simplicity, productive and useful activity for the welfare of the community, justice and reason, along with the concomitant state of order and harmony which these virtues yield. These qualities, which, like the ever-present undramatic manifestations of Nature, often pass completely unnoticed, are the truly great human forces because they are "menschenerhaltend". (T., II, 11.)

It is these very qualities which Stifter intended the novel to portray. They must and do stand in the foreground of the novel, that is, in the present time.

To the Rückblick are relegated the destructive forces in human nature: "mächtige Bewegungen des Gemütes furchtbar einherrollende[r] Zorn". (T., II, 9.) Although mighty in their momentary expression like storms, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, they are nonetheless small, for they are merely short-lived manifestations of greater forces and they give rise only to conflict and misery.

¹⁷T., II, 9, Vorrede to Bunte Steine: "Wir wollen das sanfte Gesetz zu erblicken suchen, wodurch das menschliche Geschlecht geleitet wird."

Stifter is well aware of the existence and of the negative effects of these destructive forces in human relationships;¹⁸ however, unlike some of his contemporaries, he will not place them in the foreground of his novel. They will be viewed, but only in retrospect. They belong to the past which Risach and Mathilde have surmounted, for their presence in the world of the "Rosenhaus" would only sully the beautiful and harmonious vision of the ideal life which Stifter wants to portray. It is this vision which must attract the reader, and nothing else.

In presenting this ideal, Stifter aims at convincing the reader to recognize and appreciate those values which he considers to be the highest, greatest and most lasting. He writes: "Die ganze Lage so wie die Charaktere der Menschen sollen nach meiner Meinung etwas Höheres sein, das den Leser über das gewöhnliche Leben hinaushebt, und ihm den Ton gibt, in dem er sich als Mensch reiner und grösser empfindet."¹⁹

In this noble plan, the Rückblick serves to emphasize further by contrast the excellence of the ideal way of life embodied in the world of the "Rosenhaus".

¹⁸I shall discuss this statement more fully in the next chapter.

¹⁹S.W., XVIII, 298, Brief an Heckenast, 29 Februar, 1856

2. Die letzte Mappe

The last version of Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters comprised two manuscripts, neither of which was completed. This version, although never finished, seems to represent Stifter's ultimate concept of his subject and perhaps approximates more nearly the high demands which he placed on this, his "Lieblingskind". He writes to Heckenast: "Dass ich die Mappe, mein Lieblingskind, wie Sie sagen, so streng beurtheile, kömmt eben daher weil sie mein Lieblingskind ist, und ich an demselben nur das Klarste, Edelste, Schönste sehen möchte."²⁰ In discussing the Studienfassung, I indicated that throughout the revision of this work, the Colonel's Rückblick did not undergo too much change. Little more need be added, then, in this section. Certain emendations to this episode are, however, very significant.

Let us examine the Colonel's account of his earlier love affair. In the first two versions, he is deceived by his best friend who woos the young lady for himself. This betrayal causes the Colonel first of all to contemplate murdering his friend, but then to consider suicide instead. The whole episode is told in a highly passionate tone. In the final version, the contemplated suicide is not omitted,

²⁰S.W., XVII, 212, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 1 März, 1847

but the affair is transformed radically. The friend does not figure at all in the episode. Rather, the final collapse of the relationship is due to the intervention of the girl's parents. The incident thus bears closer resemblance to the Risach-Mathilde affair. The parents' objections strengthen the parallel: "Aber diese sagten, es fehlen uns jetzt noch die Mittel zu standesmässigem Leben, und wir müssten warten." (T., III, 912.)

Notice, too, that the Colonel's age at the time of this incident has been changed. In the first two versions he was twenty-six years old. In the final version, he is twenty-four. This presents an interesting parallel to Stifter's own life. Biographical considerations will be discussed in detail below, but for the moment let us realize that this age corresponds to the year 1829 in Stifter's life, that is, the end of his relationship with Fanni Greipl as far as her parents were concerned. The full significance of the Fanni Greipl episode and particularly its relationship to Stifter's use of the Rückblick technique will be discussed in the next chapter.

In discussing the Studienfassung, I also stated that the present in Die Mappe is not as serene and composed as the world of "das Rosenhaus"; that is, not all violence, passion, struggle and conflict are relegated to the Colonel's

Rückblick. In the final version, such is still the case, but here Stifter has toned it down considerably. Let us examine, for example, the scene between Augustinus and Margarita. In the Studienfassung we have a sudden violent outburst. He says: "Margarita, Ihr liebt mich gar nicht!" (T., I, 477.) Compare this with the same scene in the final version. Augustinus still shows lack of confidence in Margarita, but there is no violence of words. Margarita assures him, "Ich habe zu Euch gesagt, dass ich Euch nach meinem Vater unter allen Menschen am meisten liebe", whereupon Augustinus replies doubtingly, "Ja, das habt Ihr gesagt, liebe Margarita, ob es aber auch wahr ist". (T., III, 899.)

We must recognize also that Augustinus' contemplated suicide which figured so prominently in the Urfassung and to some extent in the Studienfassung has no place in the final version. Actually Stifter realized as soon as 1847 that this scene must eventually be omitted. He tells this in a letter to Heckenast: "Die ersten 4 Bogen (mit Ausnahme des Hängversuches, der weg muss, weil der Doktor das nicht thut) sind so ziemlich fertig."²¹

This shows clearly that Stifter intended to sheer away more and more from the depiction of violence and

²¹S.W., XVII, 209, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 10 Februar, 1847

passion in any other place but the Rückblick. The fact that the Augustinus of the final version still does not move in a world of unshaken harmony, as does his counterpart Heinrich Drendorf, does not represent, in my view, a change in the author's values, but rather a more realistic treatment of the subject. The young doctor's path, albeit more rugged, leads to the same goal.

CHAPTER V
THE BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND TO THE
PROBLEMS PORTRAYED IN RÜCKBLICK

In examining the details of Risach's Rückblick, I have pointed to three central motifs which stand in the foreground of this episode: the undermining effects of passion and violence in human relationships; the problem of the loveless marriage; and the inner conflict engendered by dissatisfaction in public service. These themes were viewed only in relation to Stifter's concept of the novel's design and aims.

When, however, the events and problems presented in the Rückblick are set against the background of Stifter's life, the results are very revealing. Such a comparison demands special treatment here, for it brings to light another possible reason for the author's well-considered use of the Rückblick technique throughout his works.

In this chapter I shall consider briefly certain events, experiences and problems in the author's life which were subsequently transformed into intense artistic expression in such retrospective episodes as the ones which I have treated in Der Nachsommer and in the smaller works.

1. The Problem of "Leidenschaft"

i Definition of the Term "Leidenschaft"

Stifter's harsh criticism of contemporary writers¹ seems to reveal a disavowal of all passion. It is essential that one understand Stifter's broad concept of "Leidenschaft", for it is by no means restricted to denoting a sexually passionate relationship between man and woman.

In the article "Ueber Stand und Würde des Schriftstellers"² he gives a clear definition of the term:

Ich nehme hier Leidenschaft als ein die anderen Seelenkräfte überragendes Streben nach einem Sinnlichen. Sie strebt nach Thierischem, sei es die Erfüllungen einer Körperempfindung (Wollust), sei es die Gewalt oder Alleingeltendmachung (Herrschaft, Eifersucht, diese furchtbaren Geister der Menschheit, die sie leider mit dem Thiere, z.B. dem Hunde, gemein hat) und in diesem Streben aufgehalten, wird sie zum fanatischem sic Affecte,³ der blind gegen die Schranke stürmt und weil das Angestrebte aber ein Vernunftwidriges ist, so gelten Vernunftgründe nichts dagegen, die Leidenschaft sträubt sich gegen sie als ein ihr fremdes Hemmniss und wird nur noch ungeduldiger und dringender.⁴

¹See above, pp. 39-40.

²This article was published in two parts in the Constitutionelle Donau Zeitung, Nr. 2, 2 April, 1848 and Nr. 7, 7 April, 1848. It is reprinted in S.W., XVI, 5-18.

³Stifter gives a further definition of "Affecte" as "einseitiges Ueberwiegen des Strebens über die anderen Seelenthätigkeiten namentlich über den Verstand". S.W., XIV, 307.

⁴S.W., XVI, 15.

"Leidenschaft" conceived of in these terms is dangerous, for it undermines the higher preserving human forces, and storms blindly through the "pales and forts of reason". Passion is by nature immoral: "Leidenschaft, selbstthätige Überordnung des niederen Strebens über das höhere. Sie ist immer unsittlich".⁵ If healthy human relationships are to survive, passion must be suppressed: "Wer sich so herausgebildet, dass er seine Leidenschaften beherrscht, ja dass er keine mehr hat, wer gegen sich strenge ist und einfach das Rechte thut, Der sic ist auch gegen andere gerecht."⁶

ii The Effects of the March Revolution on Stifter

One month before publication of the article "Ueber Stand und Würde des Schriftstellers", revolution had broken out in Vienna. It is important to understand Stifter's attitude to the events of this crucial year, for the Revolution of 1848 undoubtedly played an eminent rôle in determining the author's complete condemnation of all forms of passion and violence. He was shocked, indeed, almost spiritually broken by the excesses committed in the name of freedom, but under the impact of evil passions and blind

⁵S.W., XIV, 307, Brief an das Vicedirektorat der philosophischen Studien an der Universität Wien. Beilage zu dem Gesuche um Bewilligung öffentlicher Vorträge über Ästhetik.

⁶S.W., XVI, 15.

lust for power: "Ich war im Oktober ganz gebrochen. Möge Vernunft und Menschlichkeit siegen--zwei Dinge, die jetzt fast aus der Welt geflohen zu sein scheinen."⁷

Looking back on the events of 1848, Stifter writes to Heckenast:

Ich habe diesen Sommer durch so vieles Schlechte, Freche, Unmenschliche und Dumme, das sich dreist machte, und für Höchstes ausgab UNSÄGLICH gelitten. Was in mir gross, gut, schön und vernünftig war, empörte sich, selbst Tod ist süsser, als solch ein Leben, wo Sitte Heiligkeit Kunst Göttliches nichts mehr ist, und jeder Schlamm und jede Thierheit, weil jetzt Freiheit ist, ein Recht zu haben währt hervor zu brechen, ja nicht blos hervorzubrechen, sondern zu tirranisieren.⁸

Der Nachsommer was in part a product of Stifter's attitude towards the Revolution of 1848. Is it any wonder that he chose to relegate violence and passion to the Rückblick and to exclude it from the ideal world of the "Rosenhaus"?

iii Evidences of "Leidenschaft" in Stifter's Childhood

It appears obvious from Risach's Rückblick that the old man's disavowal of all passion is rooted deeply in his own poignant experiences of the past. Is it possible to find a similar explanation for Stifter's attitude?

An examination of Stifter's earlier life seems to reveal that his abhorrence of passion is likewise the

⁷S.W., XVII, 310, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 21 November, 1848

⁸S.W., XVII, 321-2, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 6 März, 1849

product of painful wrestlings with it, and that it was not only the result of his attitude to the March Revolution. Indeed, passion in the form of cruelty, falsehood and violence was by no means foreign to Stifter's nature.

Sufficient evidence exists to show that the author's childhood and youth were not at all characterized by the repose and complete harmony which one finds in the foreground of his mature writings. A. R. Hein expresses the same view in his biography on Stifter:

Eigentümlich berührt es uns, wenn wir erfahren, dass der junge Dichter auch grausam sein konnte, und das seine spätere Sanftheit weniger das Ergebnis einer dazu hinneigenden Naturanlage, als vielmehr das Resultat einer gereiften und zur Klarheit ausgebildeten gemütvollen Weltanschauung gewesen. Stifter musste, bis er zur erhabenen Grösse jener ruhigen Erkenntnis gelangte, wie sie im Nachsommer ausgesprochen ist, eine gewaltige und eingreifende, seelische Wandlung durchleben.⁹

There is the "Butterbrot" incident first related by Aparent¹⁰ in which the young Bertl, in a fit of temper, knocked a sandwich out of a young classmate's hand and later lied about it when his teacher, Josef Jenne, questioned him. Hein tells of Bertl's cruel act of shutting the cat in the heated oven, and there is also the story that Stifter stabbed his younger brother in the side with a knife while playing.

⁹A. R. Hein, Adalbert Stifter: Sein Leben und seine Werke, 31.

¹⁰Johann Aparent, Adalbert Stifter, 29.

It would be wrong from the evidence of these few incidents to postulate that Stifter was essentially a passionate and violent man, for after all, they are only childhood acts. They do, however, indicate a highly emotional temperament, and point clearly to the "leidenschaftliche Anlage seiner Natur"¹¹ which seems to have played such a prominent rôle in his later relationship to Fanni Greipl.

iv The Fanni Greipl Episode

This great emotional crisis in Stifter's early life was extremely important in forming his views on human relationships and in determining later his abhorrence of all passion. A definitive analysis of this early episode in Stifter's life is extremely difficult because the biographical evidence which we have is very scanty. There exist only seven letters which Stifter wrote to Fanni, although we know that he wrote more. (See Appendix A.) Unfortunately, none of Fanni's letters to Stifter has been preserved. The exchange of letters between Stifter and Mathias, Fanni's brother, provides more information, although some of these are missing, too. (See Appendix A.) Stifter's correspond-

¹¹Urban Roedl, Adalbert Stifter, Geschichte seines Lebens, 59.

ence with Brenner and Handel between 1831 and 1837 reveals to some extent his emotional state after the collapse of the affair and before his marriage to Amalia.

The first evidence we have of any great affection appears in a letter which Stifter wrote to Fanni on November 7, 1828. A year later, Fanni stopped corresponding.¹²

Hein maintains that the collapse of this affair was due mainly to the intervention of Fanni's parents.¹³ Both Blackall and Steffen refute this view by pointing to Stifter's own unwillingness, from the very outset, to enter into a deep and binding relationship with Fanni.¹⁴ Their contention is that Fanni became tired of her hesitant and confused admirer, and then used the objections of her parents as a convenient way out.

We know, however, very little of what actually happened during the summers of 1828 in Friedberg and 1829 in Bad Hall. These important gaps and all the missing letters make it extremely difficult to draw such definite conclusions about this short-lived affair as have Hein, Blackall and Steffen.

¹²Stifter received the last letter from Fanni on October 20, 1829. Proof: Brief an Fanni, Wien am 15/11/1829, S.W., XVII, 19: "Deine Zeilen habe ich am 20^{ten} dieses Monathes erhalten."

¹³A. R. Hein, Adalbert Stifter: Sein Leben und seine Werke, 70.

¹⁴E. Blackall, A. Stifter: A Critical Study, 70.
K. Steffen, Adalbert Stifter: Deutungen, 16.

There is, nonetheless, sufficient evidence in the letters of this period to show that Stifter himself had considerable misgivings even at that time about the nature of the romance. He knew that a relationship which was based on passion alone could not lead to a happy end. Although aware of this, he could not be convinced by reason to break off the relationship. He writes to Fanni and refers to their love as foolishness:

Darum nenne ich sie Thorheit, weil sie Dir und mir so manches Weh bereiten kann, darum meinte ich, es wäre besser, wenn sie nicht da wäre, um nur Dir nicht Unglück zu bereiten, da diese Leidenschaft nie zu Glücke führen kann, darum kämpfte ich schon im Herbst gegen das Aufkeimen derselben in meiner Brust an, um deinen Frieden nicht zu stören, darum war ich traurig, weil ich sie doch nicht bezwingen konnte und kein fröhliches Ende absah und doch diese Liebe nicht lassen konnte, darum findest Du in mir Widerspruch, dass ich Dich jezt mit aller Macht des Herzens mein zu nennen wünsche, und jezt wieder mich zwingt, es für besser halten, wenn es wäre wie früher--und darum nannte ich diese Liebe eine Thorheit.¹⁵

Perhaps even more revealing is a letter which Stifter wrote to his younger friend, Brenner, in 1832. He speaks of his passionate temperament and confesses frankly to him that it was, indeed, a determining factor in his attachment to Fanni:

F. ist blass und kränkelnd. Ist es eitel, wenn ich unter die Ursachen auch mich zähle?? Wusst' ich das--aber der Dämon des Misstrauens ist auch durch die vorigjährige Geschichte aufgeschrieen worden. Dass

¹⁵S.W., XVII, 8-9, Brief an Franziska Greipl, 15 Mai, 1829

Leute Spieler werden und ohnmächtig sind, sich den Banden dieser Leidenschaft zu entreissen, begreife ich: aber wie ein Mensch, der nicht eben bornirt ist, der flüchtiges Temperament hat, der die Wissenschaften liebt, so hartnäckig eine Leidenschaft nährt gegen ein gutes und sanftes, aber sonst launisches und mädchenhaftes Wesen, das noch dazu ganz unwissenschaftlich ist, das begriffe ich nicht, wär ichs nicht selbst. Wir sind uns selber die heillosesten Räthsel, ich strebe mit brennender Sucht nach dem Besitze dieses Dinges--und schäme mich Schritte zu thun, die dahinzielen--und hätt' ichs, ob es wohl des Loderns werth gewesen wäre? Ich misstrauere mir in diesem Punkte ungeheuer, da ich leidenschaftlich bin, ob ich mich nicht vor meinem Verstande blamire. Beantworte mir die Frage, ob du meinst, dass ich die Neigung zu einer des andern Geschlechtes *c o n t i n u i r e n* könne, oder nicht. Auf die Antwort dieser Frage kömmt es an, was ich thun soll. Denn unglücklich möchte ich das treuherzig gute Mädchen nicht machen. Dass sie mich liebt, weiss ich, und verdiene es nicht; dass ich heftig nach ihr strebe, weiss ich auch--aber unterdrücke es--kurz, ich schreibe just keinen Buchstaben mehr von dieser Geschichte.¹⁶

Stifter continued to write to Fanni until as late as 1835, by which time it seems that he had already promised to marry Amalia Mohaupt.¹⁷ The last letter to Fanni, in which he implores her to take him back, provides a possible explanation for the prominent rôle which Fanni and this whole emotional experience were to play later in his writing.

¹⁶Gustav Wilhelm, Adalbert Stifters Jugendbriefe, 55. Brief an Adolf Freiherrn Brenner von Felsach, Krumau, 10 September, 1832

¹⁷S.W., XVII, 341, Anmerkung zum Brief an Franziska Greipl, 20 August, 1835
Brief Philipp Mohaupts an seine Tochter v. 1 Juli 1835
"Schlüsslich ersuche Dich ich mir im Monath August bekannt zu machen, wann die Hochzeit vor sich gehen oder gegangen ist, damit ich meiner Vätterlichen Seits mich des Glückes erfreuen und mich beruhigen könne." sic

In this letter Stifter views the whole affair in retrospect. He acknowledges his guilt in the final collapse of their love. He writes: "Du bist ein Engel, den ich nie verdiente . . . und ich konnte das an Dir thun, was ich that."¹⁸ He states clearly that his decision to marry Amalia was based primarily on pride, jealousy and spite: "Als sie sagten, Du werdest Huber heirathen, fuhr der Geist der Eifersucht in mich und da wurde der Plan gedacht, Dich und alle Vergangenheit zu vergessen und weil der Schmerz doch zu nagen nicht aufhörte, so suchte ich . . . in neuer Verbindung, das Glück, das die alte erste versagte . . . Gekränkte Eitelkeit war es".¹⁹

This was self-delusion however, for Fanni was really the bride of his soul: "du warst ja doch immer trotz meiner vorsüzlichen Selbstverhärtung die Braut meiner Seele."²⁰ She would always remain in his thoughts even if she refused to accept his love again: "Sagst du aber, du liebest mich nicht mehr, so will ich es leiden, wie auch das Herz wehe thue, und will nur allein dich zur Braut meiner Ideen

¹⁸S.W., XVII, 36, Brief an Fanni Greipl, 20 August, 1835. Compare this with a passage in the "Julius" Fragment: A. R. Hein, Adalbert Stifter: Sein Leben und seine Werke, 56: "wer bin ich, dass ich meinen Arm ausstrecke nach dem Diamant des Landes".

¹⁹S.W., XVII, 36, Brief an Fanni Greipl, 20 August, 1835

²⁰Ibid

machen und dich fort lieben bis an meinen Tod."²¹

All the facts of the Fanni Greipl episode will probably never be known. Important, however, is the effect which it had in developing Stifter's views on human relationships. His later abhorrence of all passion and his decision to view it only in distant retrospect become more comprehensible when viewed in relationship to this important early emotional crisis in his life.

The question arises to what extent the Risach-Mathilde episode can be related to the Stifter-Fanni affair. Hein would have us believe that Stifter gives an exact and thorough description of the whole relationship in Risach's Rückblick.²² Once again, Blackall and Steffen²³ oppose Hein. Blackall maintains that the whole incident has been "radically transformed" because "the recollection was no doubt too painful for Stifter".²⁴

The latter view is probably a truer statement of the case because there is, indeed, no evidence to show that Fanni's relationship to Stifter was similar to Mathilde's

²¹Ibid

²²A. R. Hein, Adalbert Stifter: Sein Leben und seine Werke, 70-1. Hein goes so far as to construct an imaginary conversation between Stifter and Fanni's parents. In so doing, he quotes verbatim from Der Nachsommer.

²³K. Steffen, Adalbert Stifter: Deutungen, 17.

²⁴E. Blackall, A. Stifter: A Critical Study, 316.

passionate attachment to Risach.²⁵ Moreover, it has been seen from Stifter's last letter to Fanni that he assumes much of the guilt and responsibility for ending their relationship, whereas in the novel, Mathilde is the one who harbours feelings of guilt.²⁶

Although the details of the two incidents are not the same, there can be little doubt that Stifter was recalling once again his disappointed love for Fanni and merely recasting it in a different form; and yet this dissimilarity is perhaps even more revealing than any similarity which may exist. It would seem to indicate that Stifter is attempting to gain, thereby, even more artistic detachment from a problem which was rooted so deeply in his own bitter experience.

In Der Hagestolz, the uncle's obvious reproach of Ludmilla for having spurned him can also be related to the Fanni episode. By attributing the guilt to the woman, Stifter is possibly justifying his own position by giving to the affair a reasonable explanation that was perhaps lacking in his own experience.

²⁵It seems, however, that Blackall goes too far in accusing Fanni of "coquetry". There is really no evidence to support this view.

²⁶T., II, 883.

2. The Problem of Marriage

i Stifter's Relationship with Amalia

The second problem presented in Risach's Rückblick is related to the question of marriage. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Risach's marriage to Julie had nothing positive in it, because it was not founded originally on love. Risach acknowledges that this was a mistake.

One may claim that Stifter is expressing here his own discontent and uneasiness in his relations with his wife, and that Risach's description of his marriage reflects vividly that of Stifter and Amalia. The claim is rather debatable. However, the whole problem of marriage occurs so often in Stifter's work and it is viewed so often in Rückblick, that it deserves careful consideration here.

It appears certain that Stifter's marriage to Amalia was essentially a rebound affair, resulting directly from the breakdown of his relationship with Fanni. In his last letter to Fanni quoted above, Stifter states clearly that he was merely intent on showing the Greipl family that he was quite capable of finding "ein schönes wohlhabendes und edles Weib".²⁷ This would seem to be a rather questionable basis for a healthy marriage.

In considering Stifter's reasons for marrying

²⁷S.W., XVII, 36, Brief an Fanni Greipl, 20 August, 1835

Amalia, one cannot overlook his strong sense of honour and duty, which possibly was a determining factor. It appears that Amalia could not really supplant Fanni in Stifter's mind. He writes to his friend, Brenner: "O wie viel weniger ist sie schön als Am., und wie unendlich schöner".²⁸ Indeed, she suffered by comparison. She did not represent his concept of the ideal woman either. "Meine himmelschönen Ideale der Frauenliebe sind elend hin".²⁹

Having promised to marry her, and realizing that there was no hope of resuming the relationship with Fanni, Stifter, it seems, felt obliged to take Amalia as his wife. The words which Stifter wrote in Ludwig Mielichhofer's Album at this time tell us a great deal of his state of mind before his marriage to Amalia in November, 1837. He writes:

Ich weiss nur das Eine, dass ich alle Menschen, die eine Welle dieses Meeres an mein Herz trägt, für dieses kurze Dasein lieben und schonen will, so sehr es nur ein Mensch vermag--ich muss es thun, dass nur etwas von dem Ungeheuren geschehe, wozu mich dieses Herz treibt--ich werde oft getäuscht sein, aber ich werde wieder Liebe geben, auch wenn ich nicht Liebe glaube--nicht aus Schwäche werde ich es thun, sondern aus Pflicht.³⁰

²⁸Gustav Wilhelm, Adalbert Stifters Jugendbriefe, Brief an Adolf Brenner, 23 August, 1833

²⁹S.W., XVII, 55, Brief an Sigmund Frh. von Handel, 24 Juni, 1836

³⁰S.W., XVII, 72-3, Albumblatt in Mielichhofers Album, Wien am 16ten Oktober 1837

I do not imply that this refers directly to Amalia. Stifter speaks here in general of his duty to mankind, but the performance of this duty will begin with Amalia.

In Risach's Rückblick there is to some extent a parallel to this, for Risach acknowledges that he was convinced by his friends that it was his duty to marry, regardless of whether or not the marriage was based on love:

Man hatte mir viel davon gesagt, dass es meine Pflicht sei, mir einen Familienstand zu gründen, dass ich im Alter von teuern Angehörigen umgeben sein müsse, die mich lieben pflegen und schützen, und auf die meine Ehren und mein Name übergehen können. Es sei auch Pflicht gegen die Menschheit und den Staat. Auf meine Einwendung, dass ich eine Neigung gegen irgend ein weibliches Wesen nicht habe, sagten sie, Neigungen führen oft zu unglücklichen Verbindungen. (T., II, 1272.)

Based on this premise, Risach's marriage brought him little satisfaction. He confesses: "Mathildens Bild war unberührt in meinem Herzen stehen geblieben." (T., II, 1273.)

One may ask if Stifter is expressing his own disappointment in his marriage with Amalia in Risach's words: "man nannte unsere Ehe musterhaft; aber wir lebten bloss ohne Unglück. Zu dem Glücke gehört mehr als Verneinendes, es ist der Inbegriff der Holdseligkeit des Wesens eines andern, zu dem alle unsre Kräfte einzig und fröhlich hinziehn." (T., II, 1273.) It is extremely difficult to know this. From reading the letters which Stifter wrote to Amalia and to his friends, one receives the impression that

the author gradually did find love and companionship in his marriage. (See Appendix B.) Whether Stifter's repeated affirmations of marital happiness with Amalia were merely self-delusion as Roedl claims³¹ we shall never know.

ii The Childless Marriage and the
Problem of "Nachkommenschaften"

One fact is certain. The marriage remained childless, and this was a cause of great sorrow and disappointment to Stifter. In 1841, for example, we find him writing to Amalia: "Nun meine schöne liebe Frau, bitte ich dich nur um eins: gebäre nur recht bald einen Knaben, der so schön ist wie du, und so lustig wie ich, dann ist alles gut bis auf ein Mädchen, um das ich dich auch bitte."³² The wish was never fulfilled. In 1846, he writes to Dr. Hermann Meynert giving him a short account of his life for the newspaper "Der Wanderer"³³ and bemoans the childlessness of his marriage: "Meine Ehe ist eine der glücklichsten, aber

³¹U. Roedl, Adalbert Stifter, Geschichte seines Lebens, 157-8: "Wie er vor Jahren der Freundin demütig seine Reue zu Füßen legte, die Vergeblichkeit aller Selbsttäuschung erkennend, so gesteht er jetzt wiederum seinen Irrtum."

³²S.W., XVII, 92, Brief an Amalia Stifter, 28 August, 1841

³³S.W., XVII, 399, Anmerkungen zum Brief an Dr. Hermann Meynert, 16 November, 1846

leider kinderlos."³⁴

The problem of the childless marriage does not stand in the foreground of the Rückblick in Der Nachsommer. Risach refers to it briefly, but it appears that he does not consider the duty of propogating the family as the sole justification of marriage as his solicitous friends maintained. Blackall argues that Stifter had overcome his disappointment at having no children by the time he wrote Der Nachsommer and for this reason, the problem does not appear in the novel.³⁵ This argument is only partially valid. (See Appendix C.)

One must consider too that the Stifters had adopted their niece Juliana Mohaupt in 1847. The presence of Juliana undoubtedly contributed a great deal to helping Stifter overcome his disappointment at having no children of his own. In 1848 he writes to his brother Anton: "Julie ist sehr brav and macht uns viele Freude".³⁶

Der Nachsommer was written during these years. This perhaps explains why the problem of the childless marriage is not emphasized in the description of Risach's marriage. However, as we have seen, it does find poignant

³⁴S.W., XVII, 187, Brief an Dr. Hermann Meynert, 16 November, 1846

³⁵E. Blackall, A. Stifter: A Critical Study, 241.

³⁶S.W., XVII, 276, Brief an Anton Stifter, 20 Februar, 1848

expression in works before 1847, where it is often treated in Rückblick episodes.

Aware of Stifter's disappointment at having no children, we may now view the marriage of Georg and Corona, portrayed in the Rückblick of Der Waldgänger, in relationship to the author's marriage. There can be little doubt that he is pouring out his own sorrow in describing their marriage. His description of it³⁷ bares a striking similarity to the reference which he made to his own childless marriage in the letter to Meynert. The same subjective yearning is expressed.

When Corona's proposal of divorce is viewed against the background of Stifter's marriage, the problem is not easily interpreted. One might maintain that she reflects the author's own attitude when she asserts: "Zu einem der ersten, vielleicht zu dem allerersten Rechte und zu der holdesten Pflicht der Menschen gehört es, Kinder zu haben;" (T., II, 396.) This would seem to be a true statement of Stifter's feelings at that time. However, it is most unlikely that the next step, the dissolution of the marriage on such grounds, represents a personal wish-dream of the author. For, from Stifter's judgment at the end of the story, we have seen that he disapproves of the divorce and considers that the two erred.

³⁷See above, pp. 30-1.

If anything in this Rückblick represents a personal wish-dream, it is the name Emilie which Stifter gave to Georg's second wife who bore him two sons. In Emilie, he obviously sees Amalia.

In this Rückblick episode it appears that Stifter is reviewing his own marriage. He sees sorrow on the one hand at the probability of dying without an heir, and contentment on the other hand in his companionship with Amalia.

3. Discontent with Public Service

The theme of dissatisfaction in public office is treated only in the Rückblick of Der Nachsommer, where it finds its most poignant expression. This is no accident, for the composition of the novel coincides roughly with Stifter's activity as school inspector for the province of Oberösterreich. Risach's discontent with public service and his subsequent decision to leave his post reflect clearly Stifter's own despondency and irritation during these years.

It is quite true that Stifter was delighted with his appointment as "Schulrat" in 1850. He writes to Heckenast: "Ich möchte recht gerne in Unterrichtssachen arbeiten."³⁸ He thought that it would give him the oppor-

³⁸S.W., XVII, 322, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 6 März, 1849

tunity to put into practice many of the educational ideas and theories which he had promulgated in a series of articles written for the Wiener Bote in 1849.³⁹

He deplored the state of the existing educational system: "Das arme Erziehungswesen! der Sündenstuhl seit zweitausend Jahren!! Wenn man irgendwo alles vernachlässigen will, so ist es gewiss allemal das Erziehungswesen."⁴⁰ He felt confident that he could improve these conditions: "Ich habe einen ganzen Plan über Volksschulen (Unterricht--Fachschole und Erziehung--Humanitätsschole) ins Detail ausgearbeitet."⁴¹

However, enthusiasm soon gave way to disappointment and frustration. The sordid conditions which Stifter met during his inspection travels must have made him despair that his ideas would ever be realized. His description of these conditions reveals this despair:

Man sollte nicht glauben, dass es möglich wäre, dass Gemeinden ihre eigenen Kinder in solche Räume zusammen pferchen, wie ich es gefunden habe . . . Viele Schulgebäude fand ich dem Zwecke nicht entsprechend, viele nur theilweise und eine Anzahl gut. Aber ich

³⁹Stifter wrote a series of articles on education under the following headings: "Erziehung in der Familie"; "Wirkung der Schule"; "Die Landschole"; "Nutzen der Landschole"; "Die Bürgerschule"; "Die Wissenschaftliche Schule"; "Die Kunstschule"; "Bildung des Lehrkörpers". S.W., XVI, 130-208, Aus dem Wiener Boten, 1849.

⁴⁰S.W., XVIII, 1, Brief an Josef Türck, 26 April, 1849

⁴¹S.W., XVII, 323, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 6 März, 1849

kann mich nicht erinnern, ein einziges Gebäude gefunden zu haben, das den erhebenden Eindruck gemacht hätte, jeden Zweck, auch den Sittenfördernden, zu erfüllen.⁴²

He must have felt, too, that all his efforts were in vain, when in 1855 the ministry of education rejected the "Lesebuch"⁴³ which he and Johannes Aprent had prepared for inclusion in the school curriculum.

Gradually he began to realize that public activity did not fulfil, after all, his lofty expectations of doing service to mankind. He states in a letter to his close friend, Louise von Eichendorff: "Wirksamkeit für die Menschen ist schon eher etwas, was lókt, aber wenn man für die andern nur wirkt, indem man sein innerstes Selbst aufgibt, so ist dies eine Unfórmlichkeit oder sogar Sünde."⁴⁴

Risach's words in the Rückblick express exactly the same thought. The parallel is very revealing: "Es wäre die schwerste Sünde, seinen Weg nur ausschliesslich dazu zu wählen, wie man sich so oft ausdrückt, der Menschheit nützlich zu werden. Man gäbe sich selber auf, und müsste in den meisten Fällen im eigentlichen Sinne sein Pfund vergraben." (T., II, 1220.)

⁴²S.W., XVI, 319 ff., Die Volksschule in Oberösterreich in den Jahren 1850-65 (Aus meinem Amtsleben [Bruchstück])

⁴³Full Title of the book: Lesebuch zur Förderung humaner Bildung in Realschulen und in anderen zu weiterer Bildung vorbereitenden Mittelschulen.

⁴⁴S.W., XVIII, 214, Brief an Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, 24 Juni, 1854

Another passage in the same letter to Louise von Eichendorff reveals the real cause for Stifter's frustration in his post: "Es ist ein Drängen und ein Streben in meinem Herzen Schöpfungen hervor zu bringen, ich muss dieses Leben in mich zurück drücken, und oft Amtsdinge thun, die keinen Strohalm in dem eigentlichen höheren Dasein verrücken."⁴⁵

He longs to be free from the many petty and unimportant tasks, so that he can devote his time and efforts to his writing; for not public service, but his art alone gives him the opportunity, "das Hohe das Göttliche das eigentliche Reich des Himmlischen auf der Welt fördern zu können".⁴⁶

His "Amt" has become a burden to him and in one painful forlorn cry, he pours out all his despondency and frustration to his friend Heckenast: "Hätte ich nur Zeit und hätte das Amt nicht!!"⁴⁷

Knowledge of Stifter's mood during these years throws a great deal of light on the theme of public service in Risach's Rückblick. Let us remember that Risach threw off his burden and chose instead to surround himself with a world in which he could devote his time to pursuits

⁴⁵Ibid

⁴⁶Ibid

⁴⁷S.W., XVIII, 297, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 29 Februar, 1856

reflecting his highest beliefs and ideals. Stifter longed for such an existence, but he was bound to his responsibilities. He did not retire until November, 1865, and then only after prolonged sick leave. The need for money was an important reason for this delay. His serious financial circumstances are revealed in a letter to Heckenast: "Zum Schlusse noch Geschäftliches. Ich habe es nicht früher erwähnt und würde diesem Briefe keineswegs die Sache anfügen, wenn es nicht sein müsste. Ich habe für Februar keine Rate erhalten. Im März sollte eine abgerechnet werden. Ich brauche sie aber dringend, da im Februar die Miethe gezahlt werden muss."⁴⁸

Is it not possible that Risach, indeed the whole "heitere Gegenwart" of the "Rosenhaus", represent for Stifter an ardent wish-dream? By viewing this personal problem in Rückblick and by showing that Risach has overcome satisfactorily his inner conflict, Stifter, it appears, is attempting through his art to gain relief and distance from his own dissatisfaction and frustration in public service.

⁴⁸S.W., XVIII, 301, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 29 Februar, 1856

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This study has rested on an examination of one aspect of Adalbert Stifter's art--the Rückblick technique. Its aim has been to discover why this device is such a prominent feature in his writing. There is, of course, the danger of exaggerating the rôle which the Rückblick plays in expressing certain problems and beliefs originating in the author's life. This has not been my intention, for it would do violence and injustice to Stifter's own sensitivity to the importance of form and expression.

The core of Stifter's thought does not lie solely in the retrospective narrations which have been treated. The preface to the Bunte Steine is, perhaps, the clearest, most fundamental and most summary statement of the author's moral and artistic creed. It clearly points the way from the ideals presented in his earlier works to the masterly expression of these ideals in Der Nachsommer.

Nonetheless, the events and problems related in Rückblick episodes, and equally as important, Stifter's decision to employ this technique so often, constitute

an intrinsic part of the whole scheme, and point the way to the very quintessence of his ethical and artistic convictions.

This study must end with the Rückblick in the background where it belongs, standing behind the author's simple statement of his aims:

guten Menschen eine gute Stunde bereiten, Gefühle und Ansichten, die ich für hoch halte, mitzutheilen, an edleren Menschen zu erproben, ob diese Gefühle wirklich hohe sind, und das Reich des Reinen Einfachen Schönen, das nicht nur häufig aus der Litteratur sondern auch aus dem Leben zu verschwinden droht, auszubreiten und in einer nicht ganz unschönen Gestalt vor die Leser zu treten, das war und ist das Streben meiner Schriften.¹

¹S.W., XVIII, 93, Brief an Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, 23 März, 1852

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The following material presents evidence of the missing letters written by Stifter to Fanni Greipl and to her brother Mathias to which reference was made in Chapter V. Assessment of this experience in Stifter's life has depended to a great extent on his correspondence during that period. The fact that certain letters are missing, and that these letters may have furnished much valuable information should caution critics against drawing definite conclusions about this episode.

Letters to Fanni:

1. Wien, Jänner, 1830

Evidence: S.W., XVII, 22, Brief an Fanni Greipl, 14
Februar, 1830
"Im Jänner schrieb ich wieder"

2. Briefe in der Zeit nach dem 14 Februar, 1830 und vor dem 5 Februar, 1833

Evidence: S.W., XVIII, 5, Brief von Mathias Greipl,
5 Februar, 1833
"Hätte ich Dir was angenehmes zu schreiben
gehabt, so hättest du gewiss schon auf
einige Deiner Briefe immer Antwort erhalten."

Letters to Mathias Greipl:

1. Wien, Dezember, 1828

Evidence: S.W., XXIII, 16, Brief von Mathias Greipl,
27 Dezember, 1828
"Zwar lange ist es so nicht, dass ich
Deinen Brief erhielt."

2. Wien, Februar, 1830

Evidence: S.W., XVII, 22, Brief an Fanni, 14 Februar,
1830
"der Brief an Mathias ist eine Mustercharte
aller Tollheiten"

3. Wien, 16 Februar, 1833

Evidence: S.W., XXIII, 24, Brief von Mathias Greipl,
28 Februar, 1833
"Ich hatte Dir gleich nach Erhalt Deiner
Antwort v. 16. d. M. geantwortet"

4. Wien, Mitte Juli, 1842

Evidence: S.W., XXIII, 16, Brief von Mathias Greipl,
22 Juli, 1842
"Endlich einmal habe ich wieder deine
Schrift"

APPENDIX B

The following letters refer to Stifter's relationship with Amalia in their marriage. As indicated in Chapter V, these letters seem to furnish ample evidence that the author did find happiness with his wife, for they contain repeated professions of his love. As we have seen, Urban Roedl maintains in his biography on Stifter that this is nothing more than self-delusion.¹ He considers Stifter's relationship with Amalia to be a very strange one, because in the letters Stifter refers so often to her death alongside his affirmations of love. Roedl describes Stifter's concern as "die sachlich Ängstliche Vorstellung ihres Todes." I respect Roedl's opinions as conjecture but not as a conclusive or particularly convincing explanation of the affair.

1. An Gustav Heckenast, 16. Dezember 1847

Der grösste Wunsch, die innigste Bitte an Gott ist nur die Gesundheit meiner Gattin. Sie wissen es noch nicht, wie es ist, wenn man 10 Jahre mit einem Menschen gelebt hat, der zuletzt doch der einzige und unverfälschteste Freund ist, der es von Urgrunde des Herzens gut meint.²

2. An Gustav Heckenast, 4. Mai 1853

Als höchsten Wunsch kann ich nur ausdrücken: Gott gebe

¹Urban Roedl, Adalbert Stifter, Geschichte seines Lebens, 156.

²S.W., XVII, 271.

Ihnen das Glück der Ehe, das er trotz meiner Fehler und wohl auch der Fehler meiner Frau uns zu Theil werden liess.³

3. An Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, 22. Dezember 1860

Die Weltlage betrübt mich sehr, und wenn nicht die grosse Liebe meiner Gattin zu mir und die wahrlich noch grössere von meiner Seite zu ihr unser ganzes und zwar grosses Glück ausmachte, und wenn es nicht doch noch einzelne gute und liebe Menschen gäbe, an denen man sich erlaben kann, so wäre im jezigen Europa zu leben wahrlich nicht der Mühe werth, so viele Schwäche Unverstand und Schlechtigkeit kömmt zu Tage.⁴

4. An Joseph Türck, 9. November 1861

Ich sage dir nichts Neues; aber oft ist das gute Alte, wenn es wiederholt wird, ein Heil, und die Wiederholung macht es zu einem Neuen. Sage deiner lieben Mutter meine tiefste Verehrung, und sage ihr, dass ich ihren Verlust um so eher ermesse, als ich selber in einer sehr glücklichen Ehe lebe. Meine Gattin und ich suchen unsere beiderseitigen Fehler zu ertragen, erfreuen uns an dem, was Gutes an uns ist, und lieben uns so herzlich, dass wir im Grunde gar nicht wissen, weswegen. Es wird eine schmerzliche Prüfung sein, wenn eines, selbst wenn es im höchsten Alter wäre, als das erste hindüber geht.⁵

5. An Amalia Stifter, 4. Dezember, 1861

Wenn ich von dir entfernt bin, dann sind mir deine Schriftzüge, ehe ich noch den Inhalt weiss, eine Sonne, die mich erwärmt. Du wirst denken, der alte Mann schwärmt noch, ich weiss aber, dass dich meine Worte doch entzücken, weil sie aus dem Herzen kommen, und dein Herz sie empfindet. Und kann es etwas schöneres geben, als wenn zwei Eheleute, die im nächsten Jahre die silberne Hochzeit feiern, mit solcher Zärtlichkeit einander zugethan sind, wie sonst nicht einmal junge

³S.W., XVIII, 146-7.

⁴S.W., XIX, 263.

⁵S.W., XX, 27.

Brautleute. Du bist mir so theuer, dass ich es mit Worten gar nicht auszusprechen vermag. Gott erhalte dich mir nur, ohne dich wäre mein Leben eine Wüste.⁶

6. An Amalia Stifter, 4. Juli 1863

Ja unsere eheliche Liebe unsere eheliche Eintracht und unser durch unsere Herzen in ihrem langen Zusammenleben gegründetes Sichzugehören ist unser grösstes Glück auf dieser Erde, es ist mein Glück, es ist dein Glück. Möge uns es der Himmel nicht zu frühe zerreißen; doch wie Gott will. Solltest du vor mir sterben, so wird die Erinnerung an dich mein einziges Glück auf der Welt sein; alles andere wird sich öde und leer vor mir hinbreiten, und ich werde mich dem Tage entgegen sehnen, der mich an deine Seite bringt; denn an deiner Seite muss ich begraben werden, so wird es mein Testament verordnen. Sterbe ich vor dir, so wirst auch du gewiss mir ein treues Andenken bewahren, du wirst meine Fehler vergessen, wirst dich auf meine Tugenden erinnern, und wirst denken: er hat mich doch geliebt, und hat ein gutes Herz für mich gehabt. Und vielleicht legst auch du dich nach deinem Tode an meiner Seite nieder. Und wenn es ein Jenseits gibt, und wenn dann für selige Menschen Gott anschauen das Höchste ist, und wenn Gott anschauen nichts anders sein kann, als ihn immer mehr in seinen Werken erkennen (denn ganz ergründen können wir ihn nicht; weil wir dann er selber sein müssten) und wenn für Menschen das höchste Werk Gottes wieder das menschliche Herz ist, so ist für mich wieder sein höchstes Werk dein Herz, das ich am besten kenne, es ist auch dort wieder mein höchstes Glück, und im Himmel wird unsere zum Schönsten gereinigte und geläuterte Liebe unser Himmel sein.⁷

7. An Amalia Stifter, 7. Juli, 1863

Doch nur noch das: ist es nicht erstaunlich, ist es nicht wunderbar, dass Gott in unserem Alter diese prächtige Blume so heisser ehelicher Liebe über uns blühen lässt? Es ist das Zeichen deines Werthes und des meinigen.⁸

8. An Amalia Stifter, 28. Oktober 1863

Ich sage immer, danken wir Gott, dass er uns dieses

⁶S.W., XX, 36.

⁷S.W., XX, 135-6.

⁸S.W., XX, 140.

Glück der gegenseitigen Liebe gegeben hat, es ist doch zuletzt das grösste irdische Glück. Wie sehr die Kunst, genossen und ausgeübt, das Herz erhebt, und mit hoher Freude füllt,--wahrhaft beseligend ist nur die Liebe, und zwar nicht die berauscheude der jugendlichen Geliebtepliebe, sondern die klare der Gatten und Freunde.⁹

9. An Amalia Stifter, 29. Oktober 1863.

O liebe Amalia, kein Liebender kein Bräutigam kann seine Geliebte so wahr so innig so aufrichtig lieben, als ich dich liebe, und stets lieben werde--nein immer mehr noch lieben werde. Mein häusliches Glück ist mein Alles auf der Welt, und meine Arbeiten Dichten Malen CACTUS freut mich nur in deiner Gesellschaft, selbst ein Gewitter betrachte ich lieber, wenn du zu Hause bist, obgleich du es fürchtest. Geniesse nur noch recht lange an meiner Seite das Leben, und möge es zum Abende unsers Daseins immer schöner werden, wie es bisher ja immer schöner geworden ist.¹⁰

10. An Amalia Stifter, 10. Januar 1866

Du wirst, wenn du diese Worte liesest, selber über den Schwärmer lächeln. Thust du es, mein theures Weib, so weiss ich dennoch, dass dir diese Worte lieb sind; denn sie zeigen dir, dass ich dich liebe, und sie können dir mit Wahrheit bezeugen, dass ich dich jezt, nachdem bereits acht und zwanzig Jahre unserer Ehe vorüber gegangen sind, mehr liebe, als damals, da ich dich, nachdem wir von unserer Vermählung in unserer künftigen Wohnung angekommen waren, in meine Arme schloss, und sagte: So wollen wir mit Gottes Segen unsern heiligen Ehestand beginnen. Erinnerst du dich des Augenblickes noch? Dein holdes jugendliches Angesicht war von Loken umwallt, und deine grossen Augen glänzten freundlich. Es war aber damals gleichsam ein wunderschönes verschlossenes Kästchen, das ich in der Hand hielt. Es konnte ein reicher Schatz drin sein, oder wesenloser Tand, oder gar Widriges und Unseliges. Und die Jahre haben aber gezeigt, dass es ein Schatz war, reicher, als ich ahnen konnte, und so reich, dass jedes Jahr mir an ihm einen grösseren Umfang darlegte, ein Schatz von Rechtschaffenheit, Treue, Güte, Einfachheit, Häuslich-

⁹S.W., XX, 162.

¹⁰S.W., XX, 167.

keit, Herzenstiefe, Liebe, so dass zuletzt deine Schönheit, die mich so bezaubert hatte, dein geringstes Gut war. Und endlich musste Gott das tiefe lange Leid, das über uns gekommen ist, schicken, damit ich erst recht zur Kenntniss komme, welches ein tiefes Gefühl in dir ist, und welche Liebe zu mir dein Herz birgt. Wenn ich dein Gefühl, besonders das durch die Trennung hervor gerufene, nicht begriff, und missdeutete, so verzeihe es mir; wie konnte ich den ahnen, dass du mich gar so liebst, da ich ja in mir die Eigenschaften nicht zu finden vermag, die dies verdienen. Aber auch das weiss ich erst jetzt, wie grenzenlos ich dich liebe, wie das Leben ohne dich für mich leer und öde und eine Wüstenei wäre, in die selbst meine geliebten Arbeiten nur ein bleiches Licht würden senden können.¹¹

¹¹S.W., XXI, 119-20.

APPENDIX C

The following presents an objection to E. Blackall's interpretation of the problem of the childless marriage in Stifter's works.

Blackall argues that, although this problem stands in the foreground of Der Waldgänger written in 1847, Stifter did not refer to it seriously again. He says: "Stifter never returned to the subject at all seriously after that date, and the few references to the fact in his letters show by their wording that he had overcome this particular mental conflict."¹ To support his argument, he quotes from a letter which Stifter wrote to Frau Antonie von Arneth in 1853: "Ich . . . habe keine Kinder. Oft möchte ich murren; aber Gott hat mir eine Gattin so nach meinem Sinne gegeben, dass eine Klage, dass nicht alles in grösstem Glücke vorhanden ist, wahrhafter Frevel wäre."²

That "Stifter never returned to the subject seriously after that date" is not correct. Admittedly, the problem does not occur in Der Nachsommer, but it figures prominently in such later works as Nachkommenschaften (1864) and Der

¹E. Blackall, A. Stifter: A Critical Study, 241.

²S.W., XXII, 24, Brief an Antonie von Arneth, 22 Jänner, 1853.

Kuss von Sentze (1866), where the theme of preservation of the family by regeneration stands particularly in the foreground.

That Stifter "had overcome this particular mental conflict" is likewise not true. The presence of Juliana mitigated to some extent his sorrow, but with her death the wound opened again. In presenting his argument, Blackall has chosen to refer to only one letter.

Let us look at the letter which Stifter wrote to his friend, Heckenast, on the occasion of the birth of the latter's daughter in 1859. It will show that, indeed, Stifter never overcame his distress at having no children: "die Liebe eines lebendigen Wesens wird zur Liebe des Menschen, die höchste Freude desselben sind wohlgerathene Kinder;" then he returns to his own "mental conflict": "Dies weiss ich an meiner theueren unvergesslichen Mutter, dies ahnte ich an meiner Ziehtochter, und dies sagt mir die Verödung und Vereinsamung in der wir uns jetzt befinden . . . da ich kinderlos sterben muss, so sind die Kinder meiner Freunde die meinigen."³

³S.W., XXX, 178, Brief an Gustav Heckenast, 29 November, 1859

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