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James McLellan  
*The University of Montana*

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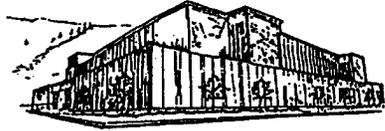
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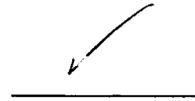
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*Descendants and The Village on the Heath:*  
Translating the Relationship between Man and Nature  
in Adalbert Stifter's Prose

by

James McLellan

B.A. German, University of Montana, 2001

B.A. Spanish, University of Montana, 2001

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

July, 2005

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## Abstract

McLellan, James, M.A., July 2005

German

*Descendants* and *The Village on the Heath*: Translating the Relationship between Man and Nature in Adalbert Stifter's Prose.

Director: Elizabeth Ametsbichler 

The two novellas, *Nachkommenschaften* (1864) and *Das Heidedorf* (1840), by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868) exemplify the author's portrayal of an idyllic, fictionalized world in which man and Nature exist in a harmonious relationship. Man, as inheritor and steward of the natural world, cultivates the land taking only what he needs, quite contrary to the current post-industrial paradigm that promotes a never-ending cycle of exploitation of and domination over Nature, conspicuous consumption, and resource depletion solely for the fulfillment of mankind's unlimited wants.

The main focus of this thesis is the translation into English of the two texts named above. Various theories of translation have been developed over the centuries. The theoretical writings of two well-known translators, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German Romantic philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian novelist and critic Vladimir Nabokov, provide guidelines for the translated texts in this project.

The purpose of this thesis is to introduce a new group of readers to Stifter and his prose and, as a result, make his timely message of stewardship of the natural world available to a wider audience.

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## Preface

This year, the bicentennial of Adalbert Stifter's birth, is being hailed as *Stifterjahr 2005* in the German-speaking world and is being observed through various exhibits that celebrate the life and work of this enigmatic figure. Thus, it is only fitting that Austrian Studies scholars all over the world are currently reexamining Stifter and his legacy. As a student of Austrian Literature and a Stifter enthusiast, it is my desire to also contribute to the renewed interest in this often neglected writer, and introduce a new group of readers to his literary work through this translation project.

My own introduction to Stifter's prose was *Brigitta*, his most widely-read novella. In the opening lines of the work, the author challenges the classical notion that equates outer beauty with inner beauty: "In dem Angesicht eines Häßlichen ist für uns oft eine innere Schönheit, die wir nicht auf der Stelle von seinem Werthe herzuleiten vermögen, während uns oft die Züge eines andern kalt und leer sind, von denen alle sagen, dass sie die größte Schönheit besitzen" (187). Brigitta is not pleasing to look at, and she dresses simply. Yet, because of her inner beauty, she catches the eye of the Major, a man venerated by all and desired by women wherever he goes.

Neglected and emotionally abandoned by her parents, the young Brigitta nurtures an inner world of fantasy and carries this creative quality with her into adulthood. Through her love and care for the land, she cultivates the barren soil of the Hungarian Steppes, developing her property into an agricultural oasis, a powerful metaphor for the nurturing of her soul and her life-long relationship with the Major, her estranged husband and the father of her child. Though the recurring themes of inner beauty and cultivation

initially intrigued me, it was Stifter's portrayal of the idyllic relationship between man and nature that piqued my curiosity and initiated my further inquiry into this perplexing writer and his work.

Whether near the mountainous landscapes of the Alps or on the desert-like plains of the heath, the typical Stifterian novella takes place in a rural setting where wilderness and civilization meet. Man, his character, and ultimately his fate are inextricably bound to the land upon which he is dependent for his livelihood. Here man does not boldly seek dominion over Nature, rather he lives humbly in a state of harmony with the natural world through "cultivation," which Stifter has often termed "die ursprüngliche Beschäftigung des Menschen."

Delving more deeply into Stifter and his writings, I discovered many interests that the author and I share. Aside from our mutual interest in language, literature, the natural sciences, and nature as a topic in general, we both have grown and collected cacti and other exotic succulent from the arid regions of the globe. In addition, we both have a predilection for religious art, especially for wooden carvings. For years I have collected Hopi kachina dolls<sup>1</sup> and wooden images of the Catholic saints. Because Stifter organized and oversaw the restoration of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century gothic altar in the Kefermarkterkirche, which was being eaten by worms, the Imperial Central Commission for Research and Preservation of Art and Historical Monuments named him Conservator for Upper-Austria in 1852. By virtue of our common interests and my growing curiosity in Stifter and his writings, I soon began to regard him as an old friend and perhaps a phantom mentor from another time and place.

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<sup>1</sup> *Katsintithu*, known by collectors as kachina dolls, are wooden effigies given to young girls and women by the supernatural kachina-beings of the Hopi religion.

Burgeoning interests either continue to grow and evolve or fade and disappear. However, my fascination with Stifter endured and eventually led me on a pilgrimage of sorts to the Bohemian village of Oberplan, known today as Horní Planá, where he was born. In Stifter's *Geburtshaus*, now a museum, I viewed first-hand various personal effects of the writer, which I had previously seen only in photos and read about in various Stifter biographies. These items include several first editions of his work and the book *Des Pomponius Mela drei Bücher von der Lage der Welt*, a prized possession awarded to Stifter, the top student in Latin class, and which is briefly mentioned in *Nachkommenschaften*, one of the stories selected for this translation project. The museum also houses a painting of Fanny Greipl, his true-love; a painting of Oberplan as it appeared during Stifter's youth; and the author's death-mask enshrined in a glass display case.

The modern village of Horní Planá remains out-of-the-way, surrounded by farmland and the timbered subalpine foothills of the Böhmerwald. This region is now part of an international park centered in the Czech Republic and stretching into Bavaria and Upper-Austria. Since the region is still agricultural, many of the villagers depend upon the summer rains for their crops, as do the fictionalized villagers in *Das Heidedorf*, the second story chosen for this project.

While developing ideas for my thesis, I searched the internet, bookstores, the databases in the Mansfield Library, and finally the databases of the Library of Congress seeking two of Stifter's novellas that had not yet been translated into English and that also illustrated one of the most important themes of his writings: the harmonious existence of man and Nature. As indicated above, the two texts I chose to examine for

this translation project are *Das Heidedorf*, one of his first novellas (1840) and *Nachkommenschaften* (1864). The former was translated so long ago (1851) that I felt a more current version was needed, and the latter has not been previously translated.

Though Stifter may be long gone, his works remain and through them, he still has much to offer us in our day of conspicuous consumption, unprecedented environmental degradation, and the looming threat of extinction not only to humanity, but also to all life on Earth. By translating these two texts into English, I hope to reveal and make available Stifter's timely and vital message of harmony between man and nature to a contemporary English-speaking audience. This topic will be explored further in my conclusions.

## Introduction

Adalbert Stifter, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Austrian landscape painter and writer, is famous for his rustic, apple-cheeked<sup>1</sup> characters who not only eke out an existence in the remote surroundings of his fiction, but who also flourish in such settings. Stifter's poetic style, the gentle treatment of his characters, and his sensitivity towards Nature have endeared him to readers the world over. Though Stifter's prose is part of the German literary canon, and thus usually required reading for students in Germany and Austria, he remains largely misunderstood by critics and readers alike, who regard him as little more than a nature-poet. Stifter's charming narratives actually contain an undercurrent of darkness, but in order to uncover this shadowy quality beneath the surface of Stifter's charming narratives, we must first disassociate this idyllic image of Stifter the author from the reality of Stifter the man.

Adalbert Stifter was born on October 23, 1805 to Johann and Magdalena Stifter, a young couple of peasant stock who were weavers and flax and linen traders in the southern Bohemian village of Oberplan, an outlying settlement of the expansive Hapsburg Empire. Farming and herding were at the heart of the region's economic life. Between his morning and his evening chores, Stifter attended the local *Volkschule* where he was exposed to a larger world that existed beyond the confines of the farm and Oberplan. An alert and inquisitive boy, Adalbert never tired of asking those around him fundamental questions about the phenomena that he observed daily in the natural world, such as: why is the sky blue during the day and red in the evening? Adalbert's teacher

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Introduction," *Brigitta and Other Tales*, by Adalbert Stifter, Trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, (London: Penguin, 1990) 9.

and parents agreed that the *Volkschule* could no longer satisfy his insatiable appetite for knowledge.

Since Magdalena wanted nothing more than for her son to become a priest, he consequently began studying Latin under the tutelage of a local Chaplain. But, after instruction, the teacher informed Adalbert's parents that, "der Bub sei völlig talentlos, schade um jeden Kreuzer, den man aufs Studium verschwende" (Roedl 29).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the matter of Stifter's education appeared to be settled. However, after an out-of-control wagon struck and killed his father when Adalbert was only 12 years old, his life took a new direction, because Stifter's maternal grandfather, Franz Frieipes, who never agreed with the chaplain's assessment of his grandson's ability, insisted that he be educated. Otherwise, Adalbert would have probably been limited to a life of hard work on the farm.

Frieipes contacted his nephew, the chaplain of Viechtwang in Almtal, who interviewed Adalbert, also recognized his potential, and thus recommended Stifter to Father Placidus Hall of the Benedictine monastery in Kremsmünster in Upper-Austria. After a brief interview with Father Hall, Stifter was accepted into the monastery, and thus began his real education and creative work. Later, he enrolled as a student at the university in Vienna where he studied law, mathematics, and the natural sciences. He never earned a degree, but rather dedicated himself to painting and later to writing.

With no immediate job prospects, Stifter was no longer permitted to court Fanni Greipl, a girl from back home whom he considered his true love. Fanni's father, a well-to-do merchant from the neighboring village of Friedberg, forbade his daughter to continue corresponding with the fledgling artist and writer, as he believed that Stifter had no future. Distraught and seemingly on the rebound, he married Amalie Mohaupt in

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<sup>2</sup> Urban Roedl, *Adalbert Stifter, Geschichte seines Lebens*, Rev. ed. (Francke Verlag. Bern: 1958) 29.

November of 1837. The marriage was unhappy and childless. Unable to find a position within the bureaucratic machinery of Hapsburg Austria, Stifter earned a living tutoring the children of wealthy and noble families in Vienna, a job at which he excelled and for which he became well-known in aristocratic circles. Among others, he tutored the sons of Chancellor Metternich in physics and math. In 1848, Stifter was elected to the Frankfurt National Assembly, but he soon grew disillusioned with the revolution and its politics and consequently withdrew his support. In 1850, he was named School Inspector for Upper-Austria and resided in Linz for the remainder of his life. Terminally ill with cancer of the liver, Stifter went into retirement in 1858. He died on January 28, 1868, two days after he slit his throat with a razor in a suicide attempt.

### III. Translation Methodology

Given that translating a text from one language into another is viewed as a thankless and somewhat dubious enterprise at best, the underlying question guiding my work is: why should one bother to translate anything at all? Many readers are familiar with the literary works deemed worthy enough to be included in the canon of world literature, whether they have read these texts or not. The authors of these “great” narratives are celebrated and thought to have special insight into the human condition. Outside of academia and the publishing world, however, how many readers are familiar with those who have rendered these texts into another language and thereby contributed to the fame of these works around the globe? In her master’s thesis, *Between Two Texts: Translating James Welch’s Fools Crow into German*, Andrea Opitz touches on the anonymity of the translator:

Seldom do readers consider the fact that a great number of the books they read are in fact translations. The reason for this lack of interest might lie in the misconception that all translations are “literal.” If a translation is merely a transfer of words from one language into another, the translator can be imagined as safely remaining in the author’s shadow. (1)

Such a naive and mechanistic view of translation fails to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of language, culture and history that the translator must contemplate in order to accomplish his task. Unfortunately, this rather simplistic and mechanistic view of translation fails to recognize the multifaceted nature of language, culture, and historical framework of the source text, which the translator must keep in mind while incorporating them into his own work.

Thus translation is not only a bridge between two cultures and all that this entails, for example the introduction and assimilation of new ideas from one culture to the other, but it is also often a bridge spanning two periods in time. In this regard, Judson Rosengrant argues in his article “Polarities of Translation”:<sup>1</sup>

[i]t is an ancient truism, one no doubt extending back as far as the “catastrophe” of Babel, that if a culture is to remain healthy (or recover its health), it must be prepared to reach outside the ambits of its own time and place. And if it is to do that and thus avail itself of the vast human experience beyond, then it will, as a practical necessity, have to do so by means of translation. (1)

This idea clearly demonstrates the vital role of translation in the exchange of cultures, for which it provides the beginning of a new understanding. Throughout the course of human history, many cultures have looked to their neighbors for new ideas when old modes of understanding cease to function in a meaningful way. The Romans, a culturally inferior society, appropriated not only the gods of their culturally sophisticated contemporaries, the Greeks, but even incorporated their humble beginnings into the existing mythic Greek tale about the fall of Troy and the exodus of Aeneas. In North America, indigenous peoples borrowed religious practices and myths from one another as they discarded old deities and adopted new ones. These examples show us that translation, whether of texts or ideas, has been with us since the dawn of man. While translation is thus firmly established as an act of historic consequence, we must ask ourselves whether a translation, in and of itself, has any sort of permanence.

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<sup>1</sup> Judson Rosengrant, “Polarities of Translation,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, 38.1 (Spring 1994) 1-4. This quote is taken from page 1.

In her article, “The Impossibility of being Kafka,”<sup>2</sup> Cynthia Ozick claims: “The permanence of a work does not insure the permanence of its translation – perhaps because the original remains fixed and unalterable, while the translation must inevitably vary with the changing cultural outlook and idiom of each succeeding generation” (83).

For my part, I do not question Ozick’s claim about the ephemeral shelf-life of the translation, however, I do question the so-called “fixed and unalterable” quality attributed to the original text to which she refers. For example, how can the meaning of the Bible, probably the most prolific book of all times, be “fixed and unalterable” if theologians cannot agree on whether the words contained therein are the literal words of God or allegory for a right way of living? Furthermore, the proliferation of the Bible is in fact due to its numerous translations and is, therefore, removed two or three times from its source languages and hence its cultural roots. The Old Testament, originally in Hebrew, and the New Testament, written in Greek, were later translated into Latin and from Latin into all other modern languages. Because early Jewish and Christian theologians wrote these texts within a specific cultural and temporal context, it is impossible for the contemporary reader of the Bible to grasp the entirety of its meaning. The original texts are available to only a relatively small number of scholars, so the question arises: what has been either accidentally or intentionally discarded from the original in the translation process? Unable to read the original, many readers simply believe that individual words have an exact equivalent from one language to the next and they regard the translations as flawless. This inaccurate perception of translation as a process of mechanically

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<sup>2</sup> Cynthia Ozick, “The Impossibility of Being Kafka: How Do You Translate a Writer Who Felt Alienated From His Own Words?” *New Yorker* 74 (1999) 80-87. This quote was taken from page 83.

transposing one language into another has given rise to many ideas about how the translator should approach his task.

One such idea is presented in *Methoden des Übersetzens* (1813), a well-known essay by 19<sup>th</sup>-century German Romantic philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, in which he notes that there are two poles of translation that any translator must consider before he begins. The translator must either necessarily bring the reader to the author or bring the author to the reader and, therefore, must take into consideration for whom he is writing. I agree with Rosengrant's position that "neither of Schleiermacher's poles at its extreme can really be seen as possible or desirable" ("Polarities" 2). Either pole has its advantages and its accompanying problems. For a scholarly translation, it may be appropriate to bring the reader all the way to the author, insofar as this is possible, and footnote heavily; however, this is probably beyond the understanding of a wider audience. The inverse is true when preparing a translation that brings the author to the reader. Through translation, the original text becomes accessible to a much wider audience than it enjoyed in its original. Unfortunately, the integrity of the author's message, style, the cultural context, and *Zeitgeist* are diluted, and certain nuances of meaning may be lost entirely. Schleiermacher criticized Luther's "Verdeutschung der Bibel" for precisely this reason. Although Schleiermacher influenced generations of translators with his theories, translation theory has continued to evolve.

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian writer and critic, Vladimir Nabakov, had a different approach to translation. According to him, there is a hierarchy of three distinct modes of verse translation: the paraphrastic, the lexical, and the literal, listed here in order from

the least desirable to the most acceptable mode. In his article, “Nabokov, Onegin, and the Theory of Translation,”<sup>3</sup> Rosengrant quotes from the foreword to Nabakov’s *Eugene Onegin* for an explanation of each method:

“The first is ‘Paraphrastic: offering a free version of the original with omissions and additions prompted by the exigencies of form, the conventions attributed to the consumer, and the translator’s ignorance. Some paraphrases may possess the charm of stylish diction and idiomatic conciseness, but no scholar should succumb to stylishness and no reader be fooled by it.’” (14)

Though Nabakov’s disdain for the paraphrastic mode of translation is grounded in his desire for a semantically true representation of the original, depending on the intended audience, this mode may in fact be more in line with a translator’s goals. For example, the following sentence from Stifter’s novella *Nachkommenschaften*: “Einmal ist keinmal” (121). The meaning in German is simple and straightforward, though the English equivalents can be understood in more than one way. My translation reads as follows: “Once is not enough” (71). I chose a paraphrastic interpretation of the original sentence, as it seemed more suitable to my purpose, which is to produce an easily read and understood version of *Nachkommenschaften* in English in an effort to reach more readers with Stifter’s message of harmony between man and Nature.

Again in the forward, Rosengrant cites the Russian author:

“Nabakov’s second mode is ‘Lexical (or constructional): rendering the basic meaning of the words (and their order). This a machine can do

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<sup>3</sup> Judson Rosengrant, “Nabakov, Onegin, and the Theory of Translation” *Slavic and East European Journal* 38.1 (Spring 1994) 13-27.

under the direction of an intelligent bilingualist.’ Examples of lexical translation, though patently beyond any machine, would be the interlinear version that follows the syntax of the original[...].” (14)

Let us revisit the German sentence: “Einmal ist keinmal.” A lexical translation of this line in English might be: “One time is no time.” In this version, I have in fact rendered the fundamental meanings of the German sentence into English and at the same time maintained its syntactical integrity. Though two of Nabakov’s requirements have been met, “one time is no time” fails the original text since it does not capture the rhyme and simplicity of “einmal ist keinmal.” Furthermore, though the meaning in English is somewhat clear, it is awkward and thus undermines the flow of the English text.

Rosengrant further cites the foreword to *Eugene Onegin*: “Nabokov’s third mode is a ‘Literal: rendering, as closely as the associative and syntactical capacities of another language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. Only this is a true translation’” (14). For yet another interpretation of “einmal ist keinmal,” one possible literal translation could be: “One time is none time.” However awkward this sentence may be in English, both issues of semantics and syntax are resolved in this version. In addition, I maintained the sense of the rhythmic tension and rhyme produced by “ein” and “kein,” and the direct translation of “mal” as “time” preserves the continuity of the textual flow. One possible advantage of the sentence, “one time is none time,” is that it sounds unusual to the English-speaker’s ear, and in effect is “making strange” and, in so doing, elevating the consciousness of the reader, thereby causing him to focus more carefully on the words and their intent, but for my purpose of writing a smooth flowing translation, I found “one time is none time” to disrupt the continuity of the textual flow.

Finally, for my purposes here, Rosengrant cites Nabakov one last time:

“First of all, ‘literal translation’ implies adherence not only to the direct sense of a word or sentence, but to its implied sense; it is a semantically exact interpretation and not necessarily a lexical one (pertaining to the meaning of a word out of context) or a constructional one (conforming to the grammatical order of the words in the text). In other words, a translation may be, and often is, both lexical and constructional, but it is only literal when it is contextually correct, and when precise nuance and intonation of the text are rendered.” (14)

Although in most cases I attempted to create a literal translation in the Nabokovian sense of the term, this mode of translation was not always appropriate for my objective of writing a smooth-flowing text for the reader. Having explored all of these options and given each careful thought, I decided to use a paraphrastic interpretation “once is not enough” for my translation of “einmal ist keinmal,” because it reads smoother than the other interpretations. Another interesting problem arose during the course of my work. Let us consider the following: “Versteht sich,” erwiderte der Graf. Der Kauz hat sich in ein Uhunest gesetzt” (111). In a literal sense, though not Nabakov’s understanding of the term, this sentence could be translated as: “Understood,” replied the Count, “the oddball has stepped into an owl’s nest.” Although the literal meaning is apparent, the idiomatic meaning may have a specific cultural context unique to a German readership, and the expression: “stepping into an owl’s nest” may even be unique to the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century. In Nabokovian fashion, I wanted to find an equivalent expression in English. I translated this passage as: “Understood, replied the count, “the oddball has stirred up a hornet nest”

(60). The English-speaking reader immediately can identify this commonly used idiomatic expression, and as a result, the text flows smoothly.

Undertaking any translation project can prove to be difficult and time-consuming for even an experienced translator. For a novice such as myself, it was doubly so. When the idea of translating Stifter first occurred to me, I naively believed that it would take only a few weeks, perhaps a month at the most to translate these works. I reasoned that if I could read each novella in an evening or two at the most, then translating them should take only slightly longer. Before I began, I had not considered the complexities of translation discussed in this chapter. I simply believed in the one to one equivalents of words from one language to the other. It was not until I began to work in earnest on putting Stifter's words into equivalent English words that I discovered the richness and complexity of language and the problems they posed for the translator.

It soon became clear to me that I would need some kind of methodology to guide my progress through this unfamiliar process. The essays by both Schleiermacher and Nabakov influenced my translation process and provided the theoretical underpinnings for the two stories presented in this thesis. I came to regard their theories not as absolute, infallible methods for translating, but rather as guidelines offering structure in the often nebulous realm of language. Ultimately, translation is not a formalistic act, in which the translator attempts to determine meaning, because the more he attempts to affix any given word with absolute meaning, the more likely it is to slip through his fingers and, in the end, avoid definition. Rather, translation is an art, a co-creation, a merging of the author and translator's respective languages and cultural and historic backgrounds.

## Descendants

I unexpectedly became a landscape painter. It is dreadful. When one comes across a collection of new paintings, what a number of landscapes there are; when one goes to a painting exhibit, what an even greater quantity of landscapes are revealed. And if one displayed all of the landscapes painted by all the painters of our time – by those landscape painters who want to sell their paintings and by those who do not – one would find there the absolute greatest quantity of landscape paintings! I am not speaking here of coy daughters who secretly paint in water colors a weeping willow under which some decorated beer mug stands and at whose feet forget-me-nots bloom – a work the mother shall receive for her birthday. And furthermore, I am not speaking of the creations traveling women or girls enter as memoirs into their journals from the steamship or from the window of an inn. I am also not speaking of the landscapes, which composers of beautiful words weave into their embellishments, and also not of the bundles of drawings prepared yearly in the girls schools, which include many landscapes with trees upon which gloves grow – if you were to add them all up, we would be inundated with landscapes, and everyone would have cause to despair. Indeed, there are already enough landscapes painted in oil colors and with gold frames. And now I want to paint as many landscapes as I can with the time I have remaining. I am now twenty-six years old; my father is fifty-six, my grandfather eighty-eight, and both are so spry and healthy that they could live to be a hundred years old. My great grandfather, great-great grandfather and their grandfathers and great-great grandfathers, according to my grandmother, lived to be over ninety years old. If I also live so long and continue painting landscapes, it will be necessary, should I allow them to survive and have them packed together with their

frames into boxes, to have fifteen wagons with two strong horses to carry them all away so that I can experience some pleasurable days without painting.

This is worthy of consideration.

I continue on. When one comes to an alpine lake and stays overnight in a lonely inn, in the evenings, three or four landscape painters may come to the lobby, who during the day were seated at various locations on the meadow and painted. Those who find themselves at the edge of the glacier spend the night in the alpine hut, on the oxen-meadow, or wherever. Below the stream, several very big, white sunshades are opened out like the tortoise-shell shields of the Romans during a siege, under which men sit and attempt to imitate the rising veil of water.

At the forest's edge in front of the ruins of an old knight's castle, in front of sculptured cliffs, in front of stretching plains, at the sea-wall, in grottos and the blue-green ice caves of the glacier, in front of individual trees, ruins, brooks, and woodland plants, are those who strive to bring the things they see there to life through colors on their canvases. Add to this the teacher from the landscape school of the state painting-institution, who takes all of his students on a field trip so that they can paint objects in Nature that they otherwise have painted indoors using his examples. And now, I too am equipped with a three-legged, collapsible field stool; with a wide, rough, white-green sunshade I can plant in the earth and fasten so that it stands there like a watch-tower; with a painting box that also serves as an easel and is filled with canvas, paper, paints, brushes, and so on – not to mention the waterproof boots, the oilcloth jacket, and other gear.

This is worthy of mention.

Often, when I considered the numerous books to be found in public collections, or when I looked through the indices of newly printed books, I thought, how can one still

write a book when so many are already available. When one makes a new, astonishing discovery, one likes to describe it and explain it in a book. But when one merely desires to relate something, it seems superfluous to me, since so very many have already narrated something. And yet a book has many advantages over a landscape painted in oil, and situated in a gold frame. A book is characteristically small, can lie in a corner, the pages can be ripped out, and the cover flaps can serve as a lid to the milk jug. But the landscape, with its gold frame that people take pity on, can wait for generations until it hangs in the wall of a castle or in the entry way of an inn or on the outer wall of a junk-dealer's vault. And finally, when there is no longer any gold on the frame at all, and the colors throughout the course of their lives have turned every possible tone, it will be put in another corner in a junk-room for the rest of its years, and so it moves around as if it were its own ghost. Meanwhile, all the pages of the book have already been used up, and the lid has become rotten and slimy and has been thrown away.

But I am quite innocent.

I never thought about wanting to become a landscape painter. Did I not receive first-prize in the Latin school of the Benedictine abbey? Did I not, therefore, have to learn Latin diligently?...and also Greek? And have I not also studied a lot of history and the natural sciences? They also had a drawing school there. I jumped for joy when I saw an ink drawing of a pillar, by a pupil from one of the upper classes, whose base was very pale-green and whose profile was quite a pale pinkish-red.

I wrote to my father for permission to attend this school, and I received it. Now I also painted such pillars with pale-green bases and pink profiles. But then I drew trees, and the teacher let me draw quite a bit, because he said I seemed to have an aptitude. In the afternoons, looking out from the abbey, there were beautiful, blue mountains, green

hills, golden grain-fields, rushing streams, and trees with wonderful leaf shapes. I observed all of this with pleasure; I drew some of these things with charcoal, and others I painted with water colors on white paper or blue.

And after I had long since left the abbey, and after I had seen people, cities, collections of paintings, and painting exhibits, and after I had wandered up and down and all over the Alps many times, I said: Should it not be possible to paint the Dachstein<sup>1</sup> exactly as I have always seen it from in front of the Gosausee?<sup>2</sup> Why do they all paint it differently? What is the reason for this? I do want to find out. And so I made ten or more attempts. They all failed completely. So keen was I at that time to paint the Dachstein as true and beautiful as it is, that I once said: I would like to build myself a cottage on the bank of the Gosausee across from the Dachstein, with a great glass wall looking out toward it, and not leave the cottage until I have painted the Dachstein so successfully that no one will be able to distinguish the painted version from the real one.

A friend of mine, who was somewhat of a joker, said: “Then you will have spent fifty-seven years in the cottage painting. It will become a well-known fact, the newspapers will write about it, travelers will come here, Englishmen will sit on nearby peaks with binoculars and look upon your cottage. Friends will take care of your needs, and when the fifty-seven years have passed, you will die, we will bury you, and your cottage will be filled up with unsuccessful paintings of the Dachstein.”

He may have been right about the failure; however, I did not build the cottage and I did not paint any more Dachsteins. But I already had the paint, and the sunshade, the box of painting supplies, and the field stool were there, so I continued to paint. Painting is more important to me than anything in the world. There is nothing at all on earth that

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<sup>1</sup> A high mountain plateau reaching up to 2,995 meters above sea-level situated in the Austrian Alps on the border between the provinces of Salzburg, Steyria, and Upper Austria.

<sup>2</sup>The lake located in front of the *Dachstein*.

could grab me hold of me more deeply than painting. When the early morning quickly dawns, I wake up and already look forward to working again with the delightful colors. When the evening comes, I think about what the day has brought, or what has remained behind, and continue to paint in my thoughts.

With me things are different than with other painters. The jokester would not have experienced the cottage at the Gosausee filled with failed representations of the Dachstein. All of my work that does not please me, I burn. Those really unsuccessful painting of the Dachstein have all been burned. I could not even look at them, and had no peace as long as they existed. And therefore, if I did not succeed in painting the Dachstein well enough, only many ashes would have been found in the cottage. Some friend once said: "I beg you, even if you do not like a painting, I would like it very much. Give it to me rather than burn it. That is so absurd. Nobody can enjoy something that has been burned." – "What you want is absurd," I said. "For the rest of my life I would be upset about the unburned blunders as long as I know they exist. I forget about the burned ones, in that I think to myself, now I want to create something really beautiful." And thus, many things have already gone into the fire.

An unusual consequence can result from this.

Either I improve from one painting to the next, then upon my death only one of my paintings will exist, namely the one I was working on just before my death because the others will have been burned; or I quickly achieve success and therefore paint honest masterpieces. Then upon my death, those fifteen wagons will be filled with my existing paintings or perhaps twenty wagons since, in my joy at the success of my work, I will paint ever more eagerly and through practice come to understand how to paint more quickly. Where then, would these paintings be? Would I really transfer the paintings in

the wagons, if near the end of my life, in my ninety-seventh or ninety-eighth year, I settled down in another town or another house? Or would they be scattered all over?

This brings me to another point about my painting. Namely, I have the good fortune of not having to sell my paintings. And I will not sell any. I have so much money and property that even if I had a wife and seven children, I still would be well off. But I will never have a wife, because that does not interest me at all.

When my father aired his misgivings about my painting activities, my uncle said: “Let the fool do his thing. He must have something he can sink his teeth into, and if you take it away from him, maybe he will delight in squandering his money.” Well, such squandering has its good side. Paints, canvas, brushes, mahlsticks are not expensive, and other than that I do not need much, and so the money will always increase. But what will I do with the paintings in the event they are not destroyed? That I do not know yet. Now when I paint a picture, and when stroke after stroke is successful, then I am so pleased that I would not give it away at any price, even if someone offered me money or words of praise, or familial affection for it, until by and by, I ruin it and burn it.

Therefore, should it happen that my paintings survive and I do not change my mind, then at last, I really will have all of my paintings together in my apartment or in the rooms that I will lease for them. If I change my mind, which would be bad, then I have a sister who has children.

My two uncles also have children. One day these children will have children, who in turn will have children, so that in my old age, whichever age I reach, I will have nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews, great-great nieces and great-great nephews, and so on, in great numbers, among whom I can distribute my paintings as gifts.

My grandmother said that our ancestors were always prolific and that the extended family was never as shrunken together as now, but the family is beginning to expand again, in that the younger sons already have many children and still hold hope for having many more. My father still could have such a hope. And if the uncles, great uncles and aunts from whom I inherited my money had not died, then the extended family would be larger still. This could keep a painter who is occupied with landscapes on his toes. May they be fruitful and multiply, I will not; just as my great uncle did not – the uncle who had shot so many rabbits – until he died without children or anything.

Here I am in the Lüpfinger Valley, where a witch has banished me. It is not beautiful at all and has a long moor, from which one can get a fever. But I do not get the fever, being as I was here once already and got no fever – rather I wanted to paint the moor and the surrounding monotone spruce forest – the meadow hills across from it – the rising blue spruce-forest lying behind it – and beyond the forest, the gray backlit sparkling mountains as well. I am now painting this scene again, because I burned the earlier one. But there is not much to paint, because a very wealthy man bought Firnberg Castle and had so many stones and so much earth dumped into the moor and so many holes dug from it that the moor has become smaller and the fever less common. He then harvested a little bit of grass and very poor grain on the moor. My hostess at the Lüp Inn says it not even worth mentioning anymore those who fall ill from the fever. And I say, it is not even worth mentioning anymore what one could paint of the moor. But paint it, I must, because the rich man may totally ruin it in the end, and then there will not be anything left to paint.

There is also a mud bath with a house that belongs to Firnberg Castle; the rich man has let the house waste away and the mud bath fall into ruin so that the roadmaker's

pig is said to have been its last guest. Thus, everything changes. If the house of my hostess did not stand atop a hill, from which one could look out over the remaining moor, the two monotone spruce-forests, the gray hills across from the moor, and the blue mountains behind, and if the hill and the house had not belonged to the innkeeper's family since the time of the Great Flood, and if the current owner of the Lüpff Inn did nothing but take the family house and give it away, then the rich man would have already bought it and perhaps thrown hill and house into the moor.

If the son and grandson of the Lüpff's innkeeper follow in the footsteps of their father and grandfather, then they will also plow their small fields on the mounds behind the hill; they will encourage and serve wanderers here at the crossing-points of the foot trail of the four valleys and in the little room upstairs will accommodate a painter who paints the fields below him when the descendants of the rich man no longer have the moor, but rather a pasture of yellow grass and fields of short oats.

When yesterday, for the first time in the three days I had been at the Lüpff House, it got a little warmer, I sat down around evening – after I had cleaned and put away all of the painting tools I use on a daily basis – to eat my dinner on a wooden bench at one of the four wooden tables found there near the front of the hill where an apple tree stands. The hostess brought me a baked fish, an egg, a piece of white bread, and a glass of good wine, which she had procured on my account. One can always get these things fresh at the Lüpff Inn, since the chickens lay eggs, the big stream in the Lüpff Valley has fish, and when she bakes bread, the hostess always bakes a loaf of white bread.

When I had eaten and given myself over to comfortable contemplation of the moor – not the painted one, but the real one – a man came to the apple tree. He was of medium stature, had a little gray cap, and wore gray clothes. His not-so-long hair was

white, and his not-so-long, full beard was also white. Red cheeks peek out of it, and his eyes were brown and clear. He seated himself at one of the small tables, raised his little gray cap and, with a kerchief, wiped a wee bit of sweat from his brow. Then he raised the cap yet one more time and greeted me. I was startled, stood up, and thanked him very kindly, since it was actually up to me, being younger, to offer the first greeting.

The hostess brought him beer in a polished mug and set it in front of him. After a while he raised the lid of the beer mug, blew the foam away, and tasted the beer. I say tasted, because he did not even drink seven thimbles full. After a long while he drank again, this time more. I had nothing in front of me, because after I have eaten and have drunk my glass of wine, I need nothing else. Again, after only a short while, he spoke to me and praised the evening. Though we were sitting at two different tables, we were close enough to carry on a conversation. I also praised the evening, because, instead of becoming cooler, it seemed to be getting increasingly warmer. The moor below us became ever more lovely and aromatic and the air clearer. He said that spring now will be upon us with such force that we should hardly expect anymore serious frosts. Then he told me about street construction in Kiring and said that explosives had to be used on the cliffs; this measure had become quite necessary – the Kiring road went over a mountain, which was strenuous and fatiguing for man and beast. Then he spoke of the coal deposits in the Fuchsberg. In the distant future, however, the Fuchsberg would become increasingly important. He then said that by doing this, the lower Lüpfer ought to be insured against annual flooding.

I answered very little, as I did not know or understand enough about the things he spoke of; instead, I listened attentively to him. By and by during the conversation, he drank all of his beer. After this, he set several coins – the price of the beer – next to the

glass. Eventually he stood up, raised his little gray cap again, wished me a good-night and left. I had returned his good-night greeting by standing up and then watched him go. The hostess, who had come out of the house as he departed, curtsied and accompanied him to the juniper hedges behind the inn where the trail leading downwards begins. Then she quickly came back again, and after she had taken the money and the beer glass, she said: "That was he!"

"Who?" I asked.

"Herr Roderer," she said.

"Herr Roderer," I said. "Herr Roderer? Really? My name also is Roderer."

"Your name is Roderer, kind Sir?" replied the hostess. "Well he must be another Roderer; there are several. Here there are many Meiers, Bauers, and Schmids."

"Meier, Bauer, and Schmid," I said, "such common names, but Roderer! Who is he then, if he is the Herr Roderer?"

"The rich man," she said.

"The rich man," I countered, "who with his unreasonable wealth wants to dry out the moor?"

"Yes, the one who throws stones into the moor," she answered. "He always comes up here, ever since he gave us a winter supply of grain after the hail storm two autumns ago. Out of gratitude we drink the beer from his brewery in the Upper Lüpf, which he built at the foot of the slope, and it seems to me that he comes up here to taste the beer, to see whether we have tampered with it or not. But, thank God, we have no reason to tamper with anything. He always drinks only a single glass, no more, no less; then he pays for it and leaves. Often, he comes up here every day. He brought his own, polished beer mug here. His wagon waits at the gate for him and he comes here,

afterwards he goes to Lüpfig, and then back to Firnberg Castle. When it is warm he always sits at the apple tree, and when it is cold, he doesn't come at all. He surely spoke with you; he speaks with everybody."

"He did speak with me – and where did Herr Roderer come from?" I said.

"He came from far away," answered the hostess. "He came from Holland or Spain with his wife, his son, and his daughter. He bought the castle and has a forester, a grounds-keeper, a brew-meister, and he has a gardener. He didn't spend any money on the hut after it burned down; he involved himself in its dismantling, had a roof framework put on in order to carry off the construction timbers, which he had piled up behind the castle. Part of it still lies there, but nobody burns it now. We wanted to call him Herr Baron, because it is only fitting, but he would not hear of it. In the nearby forest, he is having spruce planks cut. And below, where the clay is, he is digging ditches so that more trees can grow where only coltsfoot and white water-flowers thrive. He doesn't dress like a man of his class and goes around unassumingly. He wants the poor of Lüpfig who are sick to come together in one house, where he wants to provide them with soups and medical supplies. Out in Kiring, he has a dry-mill with a church tower. His son is not even here now. He wants to study machines and has traveled to England. Tomorrow will be even warmer than today; he will surely come out here again. You should talk with him – perhaps he will buy from you the many sketches that you made of the moor. He can make good use of them."

"It's quite alright madam," I said. "Tomorrow morning, even before the gray of dawn, bring me my warm milk with the white bread, and set another piece of bread with it that I can take along. I will not be home all day. In the evening, for my midday meal, roast me a hen or a duck."

“A hen is not possible,” said the hostess. “We need all of the available hens to lay eggs, but you can have one of the ducks from the last hatch, and since the red apples have lasted until spring, I will put one inside.”

“That’s good,” I said. “And now I’ll go to sleep.”

“Have a peaceful rest,” replied the hostess and then curtsied.

I went up the steps to my room. Up there I thought: “it would be terribly bizarre if this rich Roderer – how rich, one doesn’t really know – were a Roderer of our family; if his gentlemanly son were my cousin, and his young lady-like daughter were also my cousin!” Then of course, I thought: “the Roderers would have been prolific enough. I must inform my grandmother; she loves everything having to do with this kind of investigation.”

The next morning dawned without a single wisp of cloud in the sky. The stars had hardly faded when my conscientious hostess came up to my room with warm milk and bread. I was already dressed and ate quickly, which was appropriate for this morning. The bread, my nourishment for the day, I put into my bag. Then I looked once again at the two sheets of paper with the views of the moor that I had sketched, and for the time being, hung up in my room, took up my box, the big sunshade, my long walking-stick, and began the journey.

Everything that was necessary, I had already prepared the day before – paints, brushes, and many sheets of paper, upon which I would be able to paint – because I wanted to begin painting the moor in early morning light, the moor in late morning light, the moor in midday light, the moor in afternoon light; and every day at the suitable hour, I wanted to paint on the appropriate sheet as long as the sky allowed. I had already planned on painting the moor in the rain from my window. I have not yet thought about

the moor in the fog. It really was a good stroke of luck that I designed a device for my supply box that allows me to store many sheets wet with oil in it without them smearing.

A hot spring day arrived, such as few I have yet experienced. I had to hurry terribly; the hours flew by like the blink of an eye. The lighting changed, and I had to search for the places from which the light showed itself most beautifully. I would have hardly had any water at all to quench my thirst had it not been for the men who drive the wagons out onto the dam, which was constructed on the moor with stones they cleared away, and who gave me fresh well-water in a green, bulbous mug. It tasted splendid.

When the day was over, and as I cleaned everything that I needed to and prepared the supply box again so that I could be able to have it handy the next day, my hostess brought the duck. And as I sat at the apple tree in the mild evening air with the duck in front of me on the table, well-roasted with a red apple stuffed inside, Herr Roderer showed up in his gray suit, gray cap, and with his short, white hair. I immediately sprang up to greet him first so as not to embarrass myself again, as yesterday. I held my cap in my hand and fixed my eyes on him. He raised his cap as he had the day before and walked over to me. I offered him a seat at my table, and he sat down. Then the hostess brought him a glass of beer. As I ate my duck, he carried on exactly as the day before. He opened the lid, blew away the foam, and sampled the beer. After some time, he took his first drink. Today the conversation came about much more easily. He said there had been a lot of work since the spring days such as these demanded a lot. There was much to accomplish in the garden, in the fields and meadows, in the forest, and in the pastures. He himself had covered a great distance, and therefore the evening was doubly welcome for him.

“I have a brewery,” he said, “from which I have the best brew put in my house, and I store it there in a good cellar and treat it well. And yet a drink from this beer which these people get from my brewery tastes better to me under the apple tree than at home. Evenings, when I am out viewing the moor, I like coming up here to enjoy the beer. The hill here consists of sandstone, the cellar is first-rate, and the beer remains full-flavored, so that I always look forward to the walk up here, and then the trip home is so relaxing. I do not need to mention that this lonely hill with the apple tree at the edge of the moor is so alluring that one must tear oneself away from it.”

“I don’t keep myself from it,” I said. “That’s why I am here every evening if frost or rain don’t hinder me.”

“That will change,” he countered. “One must often deny oneself one’s favorite things. You worked very hard today; my workers, who were this very day busy at the moor, told me they saw you go the whole day without your midday meal.”

“My midday meal is this duck here,” I said.

“That’s what I thought,” he countered. “I always have my people down at the moor replace one another after a while so that the danger of fever is lessened for them. But you always go to the moor, and the air generated there can affect you.”

“In pursuit of my goal, I have to take my chances,” I said.

“Well, I hope you reach your goal in the best and most thorough way,” he answered. “One usually attains one’s goals through persistence, but one changes goals often.”

And so we continued conversing until he had drunk all of his beer, until he stood up, raised his cap, and said good-night to me. Then I heard his wagon down below rumble away with him in it.

The next day was sunny again. At the break of day, I went to the moor and remained there all day. To quench my thirst, this time I had brought a very large covered bottle full of water with me. The water became very warm, but it helped. I continued to work from all of the places where I had begun sketches until close to evening. The people who were very busy with the draining of the moor brought load after load of stones and threw them into the soft ground, which absorbed them, until the day approached its end. It had been even hotter than the previous day. In the evening, the old man came to the apple tree, and we talked with one another.

I wanted to prepare a series of sketches, which would then enable me to tackle a large painting.

One day, as I sat at one of my workstations – it was a dry, gray field located not too far from the road to Firnberg at the edge of the moor – a group of people came over toward me as I diligently worked under my white sunshade. I first sensed somebody standing behind me when, by chance, I glanced in another direction and saw shadows of objects that were neither me nor my sunshade. I slammed the lid of my painting device shut so that the painting could no longer be seen and, remaining on my three-legged stool, looked around. There stood behind me four people. Two were young girls, and two were young men. A girl stood directly behind me. She had brown hair, brown eyes, and a radiant face. On her head was a little yellow straw hat. Next to her stood a man who had on reddish-yellow trousers, a vest and jacket, and on his head, he too had a little yellow straw hat. He was blond and had a cheerful complexion. The other two were almost identical. Each of them had black hair and dark eyes. They stood a little further away. When I spotted these four people, I stood up from my stool and turned my back toward my easel, facing these people. I remained standing like this.

“You are behaving rudely in pulling your beautiful work so quickly from our sight,” said the girl with the brown eyes.

“You have already stolen a glance of this work whose beauty is still uncertain,” I answered.

“We surprised you,” she said, “because you were so engrossed in your art and were looking at something. Do you think that is wrong?”

“Yes,” I countered, “because you couldn’t have known if the man painting had prepared his painting for viewing.”

“This is a road upon which anyone can travel from Kiring to Firmberg,” the young blond man now spoke up. “Anyone who has not broken the law has the right to travel this road, in which case one may arrest him. Since we don’t belong to this class of people, we are allowed to travel this road. And since we have eyes, we may look upon the road and upon everything that is to the right or left of it.”

“To the right and left, yes – if one sticks to the road,” I answered. “However, beyond that you need the consent of the person working.”

“You could have closed your painting box when you heard us coming,” the man said.

“I didn’t hear you coming – you’re well aware of that,” I answered.

“Don’t be quarrelsome Herr Count” the brown-eyed girl said. “It was very inconsiderate of us. We were enticed by the attractive colors under the opened canvas of the sunshade to stop and watch a bit and see how these appealing colors are created. We should have asked the Herr for permission.”

“You’re right my lovely Susanna, just as you always are,” answered the one addressed as Herr Count. “And perhaps the Herr will open the lid covering these alluring colors, if I ask him kindly.”

“That, which is under the lid of this box,” I countered, “consists of unfinished strokes and scratches that only make sense to the one who wants to develop them further and, for this reason, give them form. This is why they are not fit to show.”

“That is right and just,” answered the brown-eyed girl, “but I know, noble Herr, that you have finished sketches of this area in the Lüpff Inn. Would it be immodest for a girl who loves this region and art, if she harbored the wish to see some of these sketches?”

“It is not immodest to harbor such a wish,” I said, “but my paintings are not made for viewing. Perhaps I will show them to somebody; maybe I will give them to somebody; maybe I will always keep them to myself, I may even destroy them. Moreover, the objects lying in the Lüpff Inn are only sketches and not paintings. This is why I cannot show them to you.”

“You see dear Susanna, no agreement can be made with this noble gentleman,” said he, who had been called Herr Count. “We must give up trying to see more than we already have.”

“We must do without,” she said.

After saying these words, she nodded. I bowed; the others bowed as well, and the two couples went by.

After a short time, a wagon passed by heading in the same direction as the four were walking. The wagon was empty; it was very beautiful and was drawn by two excellent brown steeds. When it had caught up to the two couples, they seated

themselves inside and traveled on to Firnberg. I now opened the lid, sat down, and continued painting until my time at this spot ran out.

I saw these people once again at a later time. After that first encounter, I was very cautious whenever I sat at that place next to the road, and so looked up and down it in time. And so I saw them coming. Just before they reached me, I shut the lid, stood up, and faced them. As they went by, I greeted them, and they thanked me. Susanna had big fiery eyes, with which she gazed at me. Only after they were further on their way did I calmly continue to paint.

At last, a new season arrived. A storm drifted over the moor, and more cold and rainy days ensued. I attempted to paint the rain over the moor from my window. Since cloudy days without rain came, I set to work in my room using the painted sketches to form the large painting I had in mind. I set up my collapsible easel, stretched a large canvas out onto slats I had brought along, put the canvas on the easel and, next to it, put up a special painting box. The hostess opened the door to an attic room for me, so that from time to time I could have the proper distance from painting. While I was working, I often went to this next-door chamber and from there viewed my painting. Without delay, I ordered by letter a gold frame together with a case for the painting so that nothing would hold up the progress of my work, since the last strokes of a painting should and must be made inside the frame, and I needed the case so that at any moment, I could move the painting to a different location in the event I should find this necessary. So that I would not become distracted, I also did not eat lunch at this time, but rather I set out a piece of bread, from which I occasionally took a bite. Only toward evening, when I stopped, when all my tools were cleaned, and after I had gotten everything ready for the

next day, did I confer with the hostess about my midday dinner, which was also my evening meal.

In the five dreary days of off-and-on showers, I was able to cover the huge canvas with colors, therefore creating the background of the picture. By and by, after she saw how I was beginning to run out of space, the hostess had cleared away all sorts of belongings for me, which she had in the attic room, and made total use of the room. In these five days, something strange happened to me that I fundamentally could not comprehend. The wealthy old Herr with closely-cropped white hair, who naturally was not deterred by the rainy days from his work on the moor, but could get even more done by horse and man in the cool weather than during hot days and who thus got quite a head start over me, also came up to the Lüpff Hill on some of these rainy days, or when the sky was gray and frosty. He then sat with me in the parlor, in which there was seldom a guest in the evenings because travelers on foot, who most frequently came here to talk, avoided the moor in the evening, partly because of the mist and partly because of the ghosts. The hostess told me that the highborn Roderer otherwise never came on days like this, so he must have found me agreeable; he was now staying longer than usual, even if stubbornly never drinking more than one glass of beer.

One day, because it was very smoky in the parlor while the hostess cooked my evening meal, we sat in the only available area of the house, a tiny little room next to my two work rooms. On another day – I do not know if it was smoky again – I heard Herr Roderer climbing up the steps to the tiny room. I recognized his footsteps quite well and could distinguish them from those of the innkeeper, his wife, and the horseplay of the boys. I called out to him through the open door of my quarters to come in – giddy from what the hostess had said and from my own observations, that he really was staying

longer now. And because the days were longer and it was completely light, he saw all of my paintings and sketches, which I did not want to show to anyone, and which I had not even shown Susanna, who had, by far, livelier eyes than Herr Roderer, although his were as brown as hers. I was just cleaning the brushes, and he went from one work to the other since they were just lying about or were hung on the wall and examined each one closely. He also took a long look at the large painting I had begun, which was resting on the easel. I could not forbid him to look since I myself had called him in, consequently giving him free reign to inspect my things. He did not say a single word about all my work. Since I was done with my brushes, we sat down in a small room where the hostess had set his beer and my evening meal at the table extending from the wall. When his time was up, he climbed down the stairs, went over the hill and down the other side, and traveled home in his wagon.

The next day the weather was nice. My travel barometer, which I had hung up in my painting room, showed twenty-eight digits and four lines, indicating a duration of good weather. I took my things that were always ready and immediately set out for the moor to paint. Several lonely days followed, and I made use of them.

Before long my hostess would put me into an uncomfortable situation. The parish fair in Lüpfig was approaching. She encouraged me to go, telling me that I should take the day off because I would never see anything finer than this celebration. I turned down her request. When the day of festivities was over, which she had spent entirely in Lüpfig, she came to me in the evening at the apple tree, under which my Herr Roderer was not sitting because it was a holiday, and told me what an extraordinary shame it was that I had not gone to Lüpfig. She said that all of the people know me, they all love me, they all asked about me and praised my work, they all said I appear to be a very simple

gentleman who is not proud and speaks with everyone; she could see my paintings whenever she so desires, when she tidies up or when she has a question for me. Her husband can see them too when he carries water or whatever up to the room; and when I tidy up after working, I do not even reprimand her boys when they come up. The villagers are looking forward to seeing the paintings; they will come.

I said to the lady of the inn: “You my kind lady, when you come into my room for whatever reason, and your husband, the proprietor of the inn, if he has something to do in my room, you can both look at my paintings to your heart’s content. Even your boys are permitted to look, provided they do it at a time at which they do not disturb me. But no other person may do so, whether he comes from Lüpfiging or Kiring or the Upper Lüpfiging or from the Lower Lüpfiging or from Paris or from Petersburg or from Munich. Tell every one of them that I don’t have time to receive people, and my paintings are not on display.”

“So that’s the way it is,” she answered. “We have the right, we and the highborn Herr Roderer, to look at your paintings and nobody else.”

“You can see them,” I said, “because of who you are, and I showed them to Herr Roderer simply because I already showed them to him once before.”

“Yes, I understand that,” she answered.

“And so do as I have asked,” I replied.

“I will do it, of course I will,” she said.

And with that the conversation ended, but not the subject. For in the days following the parish fair in Lüpfiging, people actually did come from Lüpfiging and other places, people who simply wanted to visit me. The days were overcast. I worked on my large painting in my locked-up room and let it be known that I could not interrupt myself and could not be disturbed. Finally, through the innkeeper, I sent for a wagon from

Lüpfing and traveled there in it. The hostess expressed her joy that for once I put aside the enormous burden that I imposed on myself and looked for a pleasurable distraction, which was my due. Instead, while in Lüpfing, I bought two identical steel eyelet-screws and a padlock and returned home again. From outside, I screwed the steel eyelet-screws into the doorframe and the door of my room so that the rings fit over one another, and the next time I went to the moor to paint, I set the padlock in the rings and thus locked my room so that it could not be opened in my absence and no one could anyone my paintings.

The gold frame for the big painting also finally arrived. The frame was disassembled, and its parts were packed in the case according to length. I could not put it together yet, but I could tell by its parts that it must be very beautiful, like everything that comes from my gilder.

When it was already summer, and I sat with Roderer at the apple tree on a mild, delightful evening, he said: "One day, you will quite probably stop painting and then never again touch a brush."

I looked at him with the largest eyes I could muster and said: "That would be most unusual. I find absolutely nothing in my being that begins to suggest that. What would I do then, if I no longer painted?"

"I don't know yet," he answered, "but you will surely do something."

"Yes, surely something," I said, "and you surely can't blame me when I ask you what entitles you to these remarks that delve so deeply into my business?"

"Certainly, I can't tell you," he answered, "but to me it is very likely, and if my words can contribute to a more rapid progression of your path, it will please me greatly;

and if I am mistaken and you remain a painter, then because of my words and behavior, you will become a great painter.”

“Now I am curious,” I replied.

“Listen to me,” he began. “For centuries there has lived a family that has always achieved something other than what it had aggressively striven for. The more heated the effort of one of the family, the more certain one could be that nothing would come of it. And these people were not thrown off track because of fate; for then some would have stayed with their activities, since fate and chance are not logically consistent. Rather, each one voluntarily and with glee abandoned his battleground and applied himself to other things. Some didn’t reach their goal beyond accumulating the means to their goal. They were all very talented people, except for one, who was an ordinary person. And because they all had such talents, early on they chose some activity, fueled it to fiery heights, and even achieved success that amazed other people, but success wasn’t enough for them, and they threw everything away. If one ever would have come along who had been the best in his field, I don’t know if he also would have abandoned it. I don’t know, because it never happened. However, I believe this man would have become an exception in this family and would have brought exceptional honor to the family, if he also had not, chasing other ideas, regarded all of his work as incomplete and cast it aside as rubbish. Who can know that? So unusual is the fortune of this family, that even the ordinary person who, as I mentioned, belonged to it, couldn’t escape this fate. Although he wasn’t driven by means of extreme talent to an early career and made to turn away from it again, his means were just enough to do as his forefathers and cousins, namely, to turn a monstrous amount of time and energy toward something just to let it go and seize something else. I know this family extraordinarily well. I myself am one of them and,

indeed, am that ordinary person of whom I spoke. I myself did as those of my clan. I have heard it said of those who lived before us, and I have observed what they fostered – those of my generation – and I have especially watched it in the younger ones. And you behave exactly as these younger ones. You’ve given yourself up to landscape painting, not for money, not for glory, and not for vanity. For you hide your paintings or you don’t show them. You don’t want to sell them, rather you strive for your own approval. You want to extract the essence from things; you want to exhaust the depths. Therefore, you choose a subject that is so serious, difficult, and meaningless that others would avoid it, this moor. You follow your purpose with a force and stubbornness that is astonishing. You leave by the wayside everything that otherwise moves youth. Yes, you deny yourself the satisfaction of common needs in order to steer toward your goal. And in your work, you have achieved results that are quite out of the ordinary. I understand paintings, and if one day you were to visit me in my house, you would not find unimportant works of art from earlier times. Your sketches, which I have carefully looked at, belong to the very best that the new art has produced. They surpass everything there now is at capturing truth. This is precisely why you will one day say: this is nothing but empty to-do. To hell with it! There is one more thing to watch for. All the descendants of our ancestors, to whom we can count back, have, almost obstinately and without much exception, brown hair, brown eyes, and a warm facial color. You also possess these characteristics, as if your appearance were giving me the same indication that your spirit has given me. Such is the case, and so I have concluded about you.”

“I let you develop your views,” I countered the speech of my neighbor, “and I am less disconcerted about your remarks than I was when I heard the beginning of your story – because at that time I believed they were based upon infallible arguments and that they

would rob me of my way of life against my will. But now I can calmly tell you: I will never be unfaithful to my aspirations, and I will never renounce landscape painting, the consequences be they what they may. I can't foresee them, but if someone took my livelihood from me, my life would have no value and no stimulation at all, and what we call pleasure, joy, spiritual contentment, the end of existence, and such, is for me then nothing more than the dust playing in the sun, or the sand that the beggar walks upon."

"Exactly that is also one of the characteristics," countered my neighbor, "and reinforces my view. Everyone in our family was absolutely convinced of the interminability of his aspirations until they ceased.

"The men pursued their goal, the women tolerated and then fought for it until it didn't exist. First there was the ancient *Echoz* – there were hardly any first names back then. He participated in the Roman crusades of the red-bearded Friedrich.<sup>3</sup> He thirsted for knightly glory, for deeds that nobody could imitate. He thirsted for showy weapons, horses, and clothes. He wanted, like Büren, the patriarch of the Staufen family, to build a castle atop a high mountain, to marry a young lady of high status and to found a family whose glory would spread farther over the earth than that of the Staufens.

"He acquired wealth, married a young lady of high status. And in his old age, he managed a huge estate and rode about it counting his cattle, sheep, and breeding horses.

"His great-grandson wanted to establish the best stock of wildlife in the German Empire in an unusually large, fenced-in enclosure and finally cleared the preserve for pastures and fields, and because of this was probably called Roderer.<sup>4</sup>

"Another, Peter Roderer, lived with his sons and daughters on his estate and maintained order. He attempted to familiarize himself with everything that good

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<sup>3</sup> Friedrich I or Friedrich Barbarossa (1123?-1190), both emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Germany

<sup>4</sup> The German verb *roden* means *to clear, to cultivate*.

agriculturists do in order to improve their property because he wanted to establish the best farm possible. Then he marched off to fight the Turks and became a champion and leader who was highly respected, and he died honorably, far away from his estate, which he never saw again. Then there was another Peter Roderer who strove for wealth in order to start a magnificent family dynasty that was to be the envy of everyone in the district. Therefore he pressed wine from apples and sought to distribute this drink throughout the land, as well as plant a high-quality fruit orchard, which is why he looked for suitable trees and planted them. His sons were the Peter Roderer boys. They numbered four, and were of exactly the same mind. Their father left them a moderate estate in Tissenreit. They were very close in age since each of the boys was about one and a half years apart from the next oldest. They had in mind not only to possess an estate and cultivate it like farmers, but also to raise their status to the level of nobility. Each one wanted to acquire wealth, then marry a beautiful, wealthy girl, acquire his own estate, and carry on in this manner.

“In order to carry this out, they agreed to manage their father’s property jointly and that everything that could be squeezed from the estate would be liquidated, and that when enough money was available, they would divide it, including the estate, and then begin their intended lives.

“They put on coarse farmers’ garments and wore wooden shoes. They undertook the hardest house and field work, they had no farm hands at all, but rather day laborers, and required only a single maid. On Sundays each wore a better coat and leather boots, and then they walked to their parish church a half-hour away. On the way home during the summer, they took off their boots and coats, walked barefoot, and carried the boots and coats over their shoulders. In the afternoon on these days, they sat on the stony

walkway inside their courtyard, or in the winter in the small common room, and each of them ate a piece of white bread as a Sunday treat. None of the four ever drank a swallow of wine or beer or brandy wine. They sold the apple wine that their father had made and they themselves had made. Whatever the estate produced was set aside for sale. The Peter Roderer boys died unwed, each over ninety years old, and were always called the Peter Roderer boys.

“Silver was found in sacks, in stockings, in old boots, in small wooden boxes, or in pans. Karst, their niece’s husband, became the inheritor. He was poor, consulted with his family, and was happy to collect the money. When Karst received the money, he went mad, lived like a lord, squandered everything, and he and his wife died in misery. The Peter Roderer boys would have died out with these brothers had there not been yet another, a fifth one, who had never been called so, because at the time people conjured up the name “Peter Roderer boys” – since as young men they jointly managed their estate – he was no longer at home. He had already left during his father’s lifetime. He was named Friedrich.

“Friedrich Roderer was a black sheep. Even as a little boy, the youngest of the brothers, he couldn’t share the ambitions of his father. He had no interest in the fruit orchards or other matters of the household, nor was he taken with his brothers’ desire for money, which they had already shown during their childhood. Rather he roamed all around the area, knew where all the bird nests were, knew all the dogs, knew what they were called and to whom they belonged, rode all the horses that were in the pasture and those he was able to get his hands on, skipped school, squandered every penny he ever received. He led all the boys in the area, who, like he, were seldom at home, to battles or to campaigns in the forest, or they caught fish or crabs in the streams and roasted them

over a fire they had made. And when he feared punishment from his father, he often slept several nights in a cave or under a stone ledge that protected him from the night's dew.

“His father sought to change him; he spoke to him, he beat him severely, but because of the punishment, he became only more resolute. His mother had already died long before. Later, he grew a long beard and joined some traveling entertainers who danced on tightropes, leaped into the air through hoops, ate fire, regurgitated ribbons, and twisted their bodies into the most amazing positions. He traveled far from home, and no one heard from him for a long time.

“From the traveling entertainers, he went to the thespians and acted out all kinds of plots and emotions. He wanted to raise German theater to the pinnacle of the arts, and what he had so avoided as a child – books – now became his most cherished possessions. He read almost day and night, or he wrote, pausing only to show his comrades things that were beautiful and worthy, and how one could best portray them. When the Prussians attacked Silesia, he fought against them in battle and never went back to the thespians or traveling entertainers, but remained among the soldiers and advanced; and just as he had led the good-for-nothing boys of his hometown in playing war, so he now led men to the real thing, and the number of men under him became ever larger. He acquired worldly goods, married a wealthy girl, and through this increased his holdings.

“What the four Peter Roder boys couldn't accomplish in ninety years, the unruly Friedrich achieved through play-acting and jumping. In his old age, he lived on a noble estate belonging to him, and although he never sought the title of nobility, it could have been given to him.

“He received only a small share of the inheritance of the Peter Roderer boys. It isn’t known if this was due to legal or other means. He took in Karst’s poor daughter, Mathilde.

“This Friedrich Roderer was my great-grandfather, and all Roderers descend from him. It is strange that all of them had a beard, just like the beard he had when he was a tightrope artist – unfortunately, we don’t know anymore how he looked as a warrior. In contrast to him, they didn’t have a long one, but rather a beard trimmed back to only three inches. The numerous Roderers that descended from him and have gone to their graves, I saw portrayed with this beard. And those who still live, I know with this beard. For some of them, like for me, it has turned white. And, like our family, don’t you also have a short, brown beard?”

“That’s a coincidence,” I said. “It’s now the custom in many circles of men to have a short beard. I like this custom. I’m more comfortable taking care of my beard with scissors and a comb than with a shearing knife.”

“That you like this custom demonstrates that you feel the same way as our family does,” said Roderer. “We had the beard before it was a custom.”

He remained silent for a brief time, then he asked: “Wouldn’t you like to hear something about me?”

“I would give it my fullest attention,” I said.

“Of course,” he answered, “because I am sitting before you and because the present always has more force and relevance than the past. So listen then.

“Of Friedrich’s four sons, after one of them had been ripped apart by wolves and one had joined the German Order, two of them unmarried – my grandfather Peter, the second youngest, and the youngest, Joseph. The four daughters also married, as did

Mathilde, the child who was taken in. Thus Roderers were carried on, also those who, from the female side, had Roderer blood running in their veins. My father, likewise, was called Peter Roderer, as I am also called Peter Roderer. My father owned a small estate and had a lively trade in linen and flax. My mother bore him four sons and four daughters. Our parents carefully raised us under comfortable circumstances. My father enjoyed reading historical and scientific books very much. Whenever he had free time, he almost completely dedicated himself to reading. He devised his own lamp and desk so that he could read in bed at night or when he was sick. It was said that in his youth, he had set about writing a history of the world. We never saw a trace of it.

“We attended school and were among the best students. I remember as if it were today, how other Roderers often came to visit us on the estate and, in the months when school was out, we then played games. Among the girls who came to see us on one wagon or the other, from one family or the other, was also Mathilde, the granddaughter of the Mathilde who had been taken in by the head of the family. The girl had very lovely, rosy cheeks, brown hair, and prominent, large, brown eyes. She was quiet and seemed a little bit naive. She liked to follow me, and when the male cousins teased her or even in high-spiritedness swung at her, she came to my side, as if in so doing, she were already protected. As I was growing up, a great misfortune fell upon the Roderers. They all died within a short period of time though there was no epidemic in the region. They died from various maladies, so that only my father with his children and one of Joseph’s sons, a widower remained. This son of Joseph was an old frail man, and Mathilde was under his care. Very little attention was paid to her. She received what she needed and remained unschooled. I was one of the best students in the school. More than anything, my

enthusiasm for the poets carried me away, and in the same way my father read historical writers, I almost always read poets, if only one free minute allowed.

“I soon absorbed the ancient Greeks. I then went to the Romans, for whom I had less of an affinity, and then to the newer poets. I swam in a sea of delight when I could move around in the world of poetry; and heroic figures, beautiful women, fairy-like girls with the highest angelic essence were conjured up in my soul, and so grew my desire and from this the decision to become an epic poet. All book about heroes, the old ones and those from our first blossoming age, were again brought out. I chose Adam as my subject, the Maccabees, Charlemagne, Otto<sup>5</sup> and Friedrich Barbarossa.

“All things that normally gave boys my age pleasure moved me no more, only the world of my poems. I needed very little sleep, deliberately chose simple nourishment, and was always at my writing desk or my books. And if needed several hours for a single verse, I put in the hours until it flowed beautifully and easily and had a depth like that of Homer’s. Often I had delightful shudders when, after long forgings, I succeeded in a wonderful turn. For my purpose, I studied languages – Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, and almost all of the European languages. I still speak them with some proficiency. I then read the greatest works available in these languages. It was grand and extraordinary, nevertheless, not so grand and not so extraordinary as reality. I decided to surpass all epic poets and bring real truth to my work. A lot of time had passed with language studies and reading, and I read my song about Otto again and the song about the Maccabees, and thought both drafts were my very best work, however, they didn’t surpass those already existing, and because I dedicated all of my time and ability to writing something new, which wasn’t greater than the existing songs and didn’t bring

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<sup>5</sup> “Otto the Great” (912-973) was credited with creating the royal line in Germany and setting the foundations for the Holy Roman Empire.

forth real truth, therefore, I didn't write anymore and destroyed all that I had done. Only the books I had come to know were and remained a source of pleasure for me. What I would then do, I didn't know. An emptiness came over me. Then a period of time began that changed everything. My father died suddenly in the prime of his life. An out-of-control wagon struck and killed him. My mother fell into a state of despair, and wondering who would care for her children tormented her heart. She had to take over our father's business.

“Claims were announced, outstanding debt denied, business associates pressured us, there were legal fees, earlier losses multiplied, and when, in order to bring these matters to a close, the business was finally dissolved, it became clear during this settlement that only a small estate was left, which was barely able to provide for the most pressing needs.

“So I said that my upbringing at home had been concluded for quite some time. I was the oldest, and I didn't want to keep food out of my siblings' mouths. I would go out into the world and acquire wealth in order to provide for myself and my siblings and to contribute to my mother's small estate. I packed my things immediately. The travel money I took was only an advance, and I left the house at once. My proficiency with languages became very useful to me. I was able to go to every country in Europe. But, I went to Amsterdam. I didn't even have a Guilder left when I arrived, but just as I had earlier struggled with the greatest perseverance and made many sacrifices for my poetry, so I now struggled to learn everything about making a business fruitful.

“I immediately found a job, since anything was suitable for me – pushing barrels or crates in a wheelbarrow, or carrying bundles, or preparing objects in mortar, or sending goods to the smallest shops to be sold, or cleaning chests and glasses, performing

any errands, or often standing guard and watching during the nights. And I did this as exactly and surely as I had done earlier when polishing my verses. I was extremely thrifty, and already after four months I could repay the travel money advanced to me by my family. Every little piece of silver or even the gold that I'd earned, I tried to use according to the knowledge I attained, and even before people in the vicinity took notice of me, I already had a small side business that yielded a profit and I perfected that with my expanding experience. I chased after every small acquisition, and using what I had, to earn even the smallest return in the shortest period of time meant more to me than greater profits after longer periods of time.

“People became aware of my connections and drew me into more secure levels of commerce and wages, and also enlarged my circle of influence and power. After a short while, I became engaged mostly in writing, accounting, and in business. And again after a short time, I led, almost independently, an expanded business in several languages and conducted my own smaller side business in ever wider circles. After fewer years than I ever would have thought, I was self-employed. The name Peter Roderer written on a business document was known all over Amsterdam, and I was regarded as a solid citizen.

“In Frankfurt am Main, I had once met a girl who was as fine and ethereal as those in my poems and as beautiful as the princesses in the old and new epic poems. I had seen this girl often, spoken with her, and had often been in the house of her rich father as a guest or engaged in business. Certain moods came over me at times, as they once had with my poetry. However, I now went to Joseph's Mathilde and asked: 'Mathilde, will you be my good and faithful wife?' Her big brown eyes became even larger than usual when she looked at me, filled with tears, and she said: 'Cousin Peter, I would like to go with you and want to be obedient and faithful to you as long as I live.'

And I carried the greatest pearl, the greatest jewel into my home and the greatest fortune into my life. Over the years, she has been a gentle, sacrificing, loving, faithful, conscientious companion to me, and still lives in the purity of her spirit next to me. Now, in her old age, in my eyes she is more beautiful than the fairy from Frankfurt ever had been in my young eyes. The wedding was held at my mother's, and all my brothers and sisters were present. My brothers had hardly used the little support that I had given them earlier and the greater support that I had sent them later and now gave it all back to me in the same way I had once paid them back for my travel money. Each of them had established a business and was an upright and honest man.

“My sister was engaged to a young, capable man. All of us together could provide a pleasant, happy life for our mother. Once when we were downstairs before the meal was brought out and were sitting around the beech table in the same way we had done as children, and as our mother sat on a bench next to the large green oven, she said: 'All the joys of the world come to an end, only the joys a mother has because of her children do not.' We all had tears in our eyes, and after the meal was brought out and we had brought our mother to the table, the meal couldn't really get started right away. I now left with Mathilde for Amsterdam, and she became the image of every domestic virtue. She sought little glory. What she lacked in knowledge, she acquired for herself in my company to the extent I deemed necessary for my wife. And amid the demands and concerns of business, I relived some of the times of my earlier poetry with her when we shared with one another a book or art we acquired. Since heaven sent us the gift of a son and a daughter, she dedicated herself to the children like a mother and maid.

“After a number of years went by, after my mother had left this earthly life, and after my holdings had increased – more than I had ever expected for my lifestyle or

needed – I sold the business, gathered my money, took it with me back to Germany and bought myself the estate at Firnberg where I now live in peace, if you can call managing a garden, meadow, field and forest, a dairy, poultry, sheep stall, and such things, peace. In comparison to the business of money and commerce, it is peace, and it's the most primordial activity of mankind. I also set myself the goal of doing whatever good for individual people or mankind with what I have acquired, as much as I possibly can. This gives me special pleasure. We can dedicate more time to books and paintings than we were otherwise able to do. I will die here. It has always been a peculiar trait of the Roderers to be scattered throughout the world, belonging to no particular place – appearing now here, now there, and disappearing again. This is due to their gifted or unsettled nature, which then multiplies. I would like to firmly root a branch of Roderers here and bind it to the area. And if my descendants think as I do, they will drain the moor completely; manage their sprawling estate; enjoy their acquisitions – never decreasing them, rather increasing them; do good for the people here; become intimately bound up with them; become steady and peaceful; remain good, middle-class citizens, and say: 'Peter Roderer from Amsterdam was the first who established himself here.' Now as heaven may have it! That's the way it is with me, and you see how strange our endeavors often are and how odd our achievements. I wouldn't want to influence your lifestyle. I recognize in your being and in your endeavors that this would be in vain. I said what I said because you remind me so much of the Roderers. Accept my words in the friendly manner in which they have been given.”

“I am very thankful to you for your opinions and trust,” I said. “The images of life into which you have given me a glimpse offer me instruction and stimulus. And I see more clearly that it is good to respect every ambition as long as it doesn't turn toward the

bad, and to persist in one's own as long as one's own spirit doesn't lead into something else.”

“I am speaking of the same thing,” said my neighbor. “And what you maintain here will become yet more clear with age than it has been in youth. The drive to do things is planted in the heart and in those of remarkable people more than in those of others, or rather: those who have stronger urges and who thus proceed more forcefully become these more remarkable people.”

“But they also struggle more easily through to clarity than others,” I said.

“Of course,” he answered, “and take double pleasure from life, while those who are uncertain and hesitate hardly begin to live, and least of all to evolve into some kind of being, because action is life.”

While telling his stories, he had drunk all of his beer. He had remained sitting much longer than on other evenings and had refused the offer to refill his glass. He now stood up, raised his cap, and said: “Farewell, enjoy the tranquility and tomorrow go enthusiastically back to your work.”

“I express once more my gratitude for the time you have given me,” I said, “for your opinions, and I wish you a good journey home and a pleasant night.”

“Amen,” he said and went down the hill. I heard his wagon drive away and then climbed the stairs up to my room.

“Now that would be most devilish,” I said to myself, “if I belonged to these mad Roderers! Why didn't I tell him that my name is also Roderer?”

I went to bed and fell asleep with all the cousins and aunts who, according to Roderer's story, could be mine as well.

As far as the scattering of the Roderers throughout the world is concerned, it happened to us just as to the Roderers of Herr Peter Roderer. First my father moved from Siebenbuergen to Vienna. One of my uncles lives in Maehren, and the other also just recently arrived in Vienna, and the great uncle shot all the rabbits in Silesia. I myself am still not a resident anywhere, since from the time I came of age, or actually, already from the time when I began to pursue landscape painting, I have spent very little time living with my parents in Vienna. Mostly I have been at various other places, just as I now sit upon a scanty, gray-green hill at the Lüpfinger Moor that has an apple tree and a small inn, to which a man of medium stature with short white hair and a short white beard climbs and tells stories about the Roderers. I now must ask about my Roderer relations. I have shamefully neglected this scientific discipline which would enable me to compare my Roderers with those of Herr Peter Roderer.

It was very peculiar that on the day after Roderer had told me that I would give up my painting, the workers came to build a log cabin on the Lüp Hill for me. I had bought a parcel of land from the Lüp innkeeper in order to erect a very large room next to a small sleeping area in a log cabin so that I would be able to paint my large picture in it, for which the room at the inn would be too small. I wanted, namely, in the same manner as the epic poet Peter Roderer, to depict real truth and thus always have this real truth next to me. They say, of course, it is a great mistake if one portrays truth too realistically. You become dry, mechanical, and destroy any poetic fragrances of the work. Free impetus, free discretion, the artist's flight of fancy must be there; then a free, easy, poetic work comes into being. Otherwise all is futile and in vain – this is what they, who cannot depict reality, will say. To the contrary, I say: Why has God mad the real quite so real and most realistic in his artistry, and yet in this same artistry attained the highest vitality

that you with all of your flourish could not quite attain? The greatest poetic wealth and the most heart-moving force are in the world and its parts. Make reality only as real as it is and do not change the vitality that is contained within it, and you will produce more wonderful works than you thought and than you do when you paint imitations and say: Now, there is vitality in it.

There is a landscape in Vienna. A clear stream in the foreground goes over loamy soil; then there are trees and a small wood between whose trunks one again sees the sky. The sky has a simple arrangement of clouds. This has occurred in the world several hundred million times, and yet this landscape is the most powerful and the most shattering there can be. I will paint my moor in my log cabin. The workers, whom I have expected for so long, have come, and the work has begun. I have hired a master builder from the area who is building following my design. I gave him the task of buying dry wood. I did not build the little glass house within sight of the Dachstein, but I am building a log cabin in view of the Lüpfig Moor.

I did not paint the day after the conversation with Roderer, of course, because on this day the foundation of the house was marked out and the excavation work began, at which I personally wanted to be present. The master builder had promised me to be quick and efficient and to employ many people so that the house could be ready in a few weeks. And truly, in the next few days as the construction site was evened out and made ready, wagons came continually with the dry, fallen trunks from which, stacked on one another, my log cabin was to be built. Carpenters arrived who worked on the joints in the logs. Also, the logs for the scaffolding were set up. And now work on the frame began. Finally, joining the logs could be started. I lost a lot of time during this work and during the progressing construction because I frequently set my activities aside and went to the

construction site in order to observe or interfere when needed. Herr Roderer also appeared at times, stood there affably, watched, and was of help with advice and instructions. On one such occasion, I also found out that the felled trunks had been purchased from him and that as to their dryness and durability, I was well supplied, because they had been cut at the right time, when their sap had receded and dried in the right kind of air, and were only finally trimmed then. I have then, I thought, received some of the building timbers that my hostess told me about, that Herr Roderer had left over because nobody is burning it now.

Something unpleasant began to happen during the construction.

Did people have the inclination to come to the Lüpff Inn ever since that silly parish festival, the one at which the hostess had invited people to visit me – or had rumors spread of my building and the reason for it aroused curiosity? Whichever – now I seldom could sit alone with Herr Roderer at the tree. People from Lüpffing or other places always came and sat with us. Also, the excellence of the beer, which had moved Herr Roderer for quite some time to come up the hill and drink a glass, was newly discovered. Word was spread and the Lüpff Inn sought out, which was agreeable to the innkeeper and delighted the hostess, for he always looked happy, and she always smiled and at times talked to herself. The local people enjoyed talking to me; they wanted to converse and become acquainted with my plans. Also, attempts to see my paintings were not lacking, which I always determinedly dismissed. Only when heavy clouds hung in the sky and thunder or a storm threatened was I now alone with Roderer. And if the clouds then passed and a sudden change of weather was no longer a threat, he again remained with me longer, as he often did, and we talked about various things. He had considerable knowledge, and we often spoke quite a bit about art.

One evening when it was raining gently, but steadily, and there was not a single guest present at the Lüpff Inn except for me, and I was in the parlor and had consumed my dinner and afterwards was speaking a little with the innkeeper who sat next to me, the hostess also came over and asked for permission to speak. She had wanted to say something to me for a long time.

I pulled up a stool for her and said she should sit with us and talk.

“Ah, this honor!” she said. “I will sit and talk with you because you allow it.”

After she seated herself with bashful gestures, she said: “For some time we have owed you a debt of gratitude, but we didn't have the opportunity to thank you, and I told my husband, it must be today. Not only because of the construction do all the carpenters, day laborers, and handymen eat at our place and bring us a bit of money, but you are a well known gentleman and conduct yourself well so that the highborn Herr Roderer sits with you for an unusually long time. He almost always rides here or there in his wagon, or walks here or there on foot. And people come from Lüpffing to see you, and as distinguished as they might be there, owning a store or managing a shop, they see that our beer is very good, and we must thank you. Christian, we really must thank him.”

“The gentleman knows that we are very thankful that people come to us because of him,” said the innkeeper. “Our words are not very sophisticated, but he sees that we mean well by him.”

“Yes, good,” said the hostess. “Of course, good. For that reason, I am telling you, you must go out among the people. You must go to Lüpffing. You must go to the highborn Roderer; it's very nice there. You will see paintings and gardens, and Susanna will marry a very handsome count. He is Count von Sternberg, and his mother is a very friendly woman; she speaks with every child. It is also possible that Baron Waldheim

will marry Susanna; they say it's not yet certain, or Baron Geller. Yet others also like her. They act as though she were a king's daughter. But I say she will marry the count, because a count is more than a baron, and he has two very sleek sorrels that pull a dark-brown wagon, and I have already seen her riding in the dark-brown wagon. And you must also go visit other people so that you aren't so alone. Also, one sees no people in your paintings, instead you paint only the trees and herbs. I wanted to say this to you, and now I have said it.”

“And I thank you very much, kind lady,” I replied. “When I leave you, I will go to Vienna. It's a monstrously big city; more than two-hundred Lüpings would fit inside. More than five-hundred times more people are there than in Lüpung, including distinguished people who own stores and are even more distinguished than shopkeepers. I socialize with many of them while I am in Vienna. But, when I come out to visit you, I don't want to socialize, but to be among the lizards and flies.”

“Yes, that's fine,” said the hostess. “But when are you going to Vienna? You are building yourself a new wooden house out here with us, and whoever builds a house will live in it, and so you will always be in it. And even if you eat and drink at our place or employ a servant-girl that I would recommend to you, still these aren't your kind of people. In Lüpung there are two painters who paint rooms and churches very nicely, but one of them has a wife and children. And evenings, both of them go to the local tavern when they are done with their work. Well, you also sit here evenings when it's nice, with several people at the apple tree, but you don't speak to them, not half as much as the highborn Roderer does. We could build you a fancy pavilion like those of other inns so that people could sit inside, and you could intricately paint it. You don't paint any birds or saints – I have seen an enormous canvas upon which you are working spread out on

wood in your room, but again, there are only a lot of clouds painted on it, and then you will take the canvas to the new house and will paint away, will visit nobody, perhaps not even come over to see us, and in your soul become emotionally sick.”

“Now I promise you, kind lady,” I answered, “Frau Anna, as your husband always calls you, Frau Anna, I promise you I will not become ill. I don't get sick easily; I walk a lot and often in the fresh air.”

“Yes, in the fresh air,” she said, “down at the marsh where people get sick, and there you sit on a ridiculous, tiny little stool and paint. At the most you take a couple of chicken-steps from one place to the other.”

“In the winter,” I answered, “I won't be working on the large painting, because the large picture I'm painting is of the surrounding land and, therefore, to paint it, it must be summer so that I can often look out in order to do it just right. And if I don't go to Vienna in the winter, I will put on a pair of Russian leather boots and walk through the snow to Lüpfig. And perhaps I will go to the local tavern and eat and drink there. And I will also walk in the snow to visit all kinds of people.”

“Yes, yes to people,” she said, “to people. Otherwise you will become twisted and foolish.”

“Yes, to see people, I want to go visit people,” I said. “Your words are well meant, and I thank you.”

“Yes, they are well meant,” she replied. “And Christian thinks so too.”

We then continued discussing the fancy pavilion that the hostess wanted to build for her guests. I advised her to leave the apple tree, which pleases people more than a so-called pavilion, which is nothing new to them, and which they come across everywhere. And should her inn become ever more popular, and should it become necessary to build a

pavilion, then I would stand by her and would bring a painter from Vienna myself who would paint the pavilion better than I could.

She curtsied and thanked me as I left and was happy that I possessed such politeness.

I went up to my chamber to go to bed.

My house really was ready in only a few weeks. I had the two rooms inside lightly paneled, had them covered with clay, and whitewashed in pale-green. As soon as everything was dry, I moved in. I had a celebration and felt happy and light when I was in the high, wide room with the large windows. I now positioned my scaffolding so that the right light could fall in a gentle stream on the surface upon which I painted. With joyful enthusiasm, I also changed all my other things. I did not hire a maid, rather I had what I needed brought over to me from the Lüpff Inn, and whatever had to be tidied up or put in order was taken care of by the hostess. I had arranged the furnishings so that she was able to enter through my sleeping-quarters without having to go through the large room. I had prepared the large room to be locked up in the event of my going away. For furnishings, I had two long tables, a small nightstand, several chairs, a bench around the green-tiled stove, two large cabinets for my things and clothes, and a bed frame.

Everything was made from softwood and painted gray like the walls because I did not want any particular color to dominate the place. I showed Roderer through my house. He praised the construction and layout. The first thing I did in my house, with the help of two workers whose skill I had become familiar with during the construction, was to unpack the gold frame, put it together, and, on the large scaffolding which had been chosen for it, set the large picture into it. It fit perfectly. What always happened to me when I put a painting into a frame for the first time, namely, that it appeared larger, but

also more impressive, happened now as well and to a greater degree. The painting really seemed to me unusually large, so that if I eventually would want to take it out of the cabin, I would have to take the frame apart and roll up the painting. Otherwise, if I wanted to take it away in a box still stretched within the frame, I would have to take down a wall of the house. What had been painted up to now also appeared appropriate to me. Now I eagerly wanted to continue. I did not take the frame apart anymore. Instead, I wrapped it in linen towels and set it against the wall to be ready when I would need it again.

I now almost always worked on the painting, since I was already mostly done with the sketches I needed from outdoors. Only occasionally did I have to go out for a couple of hours to sketch something. Often I walked to the hill in front of my house in order to have a view of everything. The views I saw from my windows were from the same direction in which the picture was being painted. And so I continued. Since I now was outside less often, I had to take walks. That the hostess was displeased with my current activities, I could clearly see, but she said nothing more. However, she often told me what was happening in Lüpfig, in Kiring, in Zanft, and in other places, and which celebrations and merriments were taking place. She also described beautiful areas that were here or there. The largest celebration being prepared was Lüpfig's five-hundredth anniversary, when the first stone was laid for the church as it is now. There is said to have been a town there before, however, it disappeared. Whoever went to Lüpfig could see for themselves the preparations for the festivity to be celebrated on St. Bartholomew's Day.<sup>6</sup>

I walked around for a little while every day.

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<sup>6</sup>August 24th

There was a delightful path to the left of my hill toward the forest. In the forest, one came upon a dry, sandy trail that led from the footpath in a vertical direction to the right and led into the road that ran on the other side of the moor toward Lüpfig and Firnberg. It was the same road on which Roderer rode home when he had been at the apple tree and on which I had seen the people who, behind my back, had waited to look at my painting.

Walking on the forest path was very pleasant. It was wide and smooth, and after the heaviest and longest rains, soon dry again. On both sides stood dark spruce trees firmly in rows, spreading shadows and a pleasant fragrance. I do not want to talk about the bird-song, which also certainly is to be contemplated since in the moor, at most, the plover cries out, and on the Lüpfig Hill the beating wings of the little redstart can be heard. One seldom encounters anyone on this path since it is used mainly only in winter for hauling wood, which is why one often sees a green herb or lovely flower growing up from it. I had already walked upon this path often and knew the forest surrounding it very well. This is why I now chose this path most often for my daily walks. I walked from my house down to the left side of the moor where one soon reaches the forest, then along the forest path to the right, and finally on the right bank of the moor, back to my house. To do this, I needed two or two and a half hours, depending on my pace. I could sacrifice this time.

One day at eleven o'clock as I strolled along the straight forest path, a female figure came toward me. It was Susanna. I continued to walk toward her, looked at her, and was alarmed – because she really was a king's daughter. Her cheeks were delightful and fine. Her stride was free and easy. I raised my cap to greet her. She nodded her head a little, and we were past one another.

On the road beyond the forest, I found her wagon waiting for her. It was harnessed to the big brown horses that had previously taken her away after she had stood behind the spot where I had been painting. The reddish-yellow count had therefore probably been Count Sternberg.

I said nothing that evening to Herr Roderer about having seen his daughter that day. He also mentioned nothing of the encounter.

I saw her again another time on this path and then again.

I now took no other path than this one. I saw her several times and finally daily.

At the first light of dawn I climbed out of my bed and was angry that now the days would be shorter and the sun would appear later. As soon as the light allowed, I was already at my painting in order to gain time. My telescope was set up at my window jam, and as soon as I saw a wagon driving along the right bank of the moor I aimed the telescope at it to see if it had the familiar brown horses. And if it had them, I threw brush and easel aside and hurried out by way of the left bank of the moor into the forest and met her on the forest path. Our encounters were always the same. We approached one another in measured steps. And as we met, I moved my eyes toward her large, fiery eyes that were directed at me and greeted her respectfully. She nodded in a friendly manner, and then we were past each other. I no longer returned home by way of the road where her wagon waited, instead I used a side trail to get to the bank of the moor and used it to return home.

One day it took a long time before the wagon with the brown horses drove down the road southwardly on the right bank of the moor. It came about two hours later. I set my tools aside and went into the forest. We met. I thought I noticed at that encounter that she blushed.

On the next day the wagon came one and a half hours too early. I pulled myself together, went into the forest, and we met, and again I thought the red on her cheeks was visible.

From now on the wagon came quite regularly at eleven o'clock. We met, greeted each other, and her eyes became ever more alert and radiant.

Never, not a single time, did Roderer make mention of his daughter. I did not either.

Then came St. Bartholomew's Day. In the late morning in Lüpfig, there was a festive church service, and the wagon with the brown horses did not drive south along the right shore of the moor. It was already three o'clock. This day was unbearable for me. I got ready and set out for Lüpfig. There was a long stretch of brush to the east of Lüpfig, and from its edge one could look out over the valley, the pastures, fields, and gardens in which Lüpfig was located. Firmberg Castle also could be seen from there. I directed my way so that I would come through this brush to its edge, and from there to Lüpfig. As I came out at the edge of the shrubbery, I saw a strange sight before me. On the meadow, which gently sloped down and merged with the undergrowth, and also partially on the harvested fields, where huts had been set up, there were tables with people feasting. There were also bowling lanes, targets to shoot, swings, music stages, dance floors, and I do not know what else, all with flapping flags on poles towering above and swarming with a mix of people from Lüpfig, Kiring, Zanft, and from near and far in the surrounding areas. I remained standing and looked the whole thing over. Then I took my sketchbook out and decided to sketch an outline of the event. Between the brush and the pasture was a wall made of loose stones and next to it was a trail on the side of the pasture. On my side, namely the forest-side of the wall, I looked for a good

location where, unseen, I could support my book on the wall and draw. I soon found the place: a dry field, overshadowed by hazelnut bushes, met the wall which was lower here, so that lying with my body underneath the hazelnut bush, I could support the sketchbook on a rise and see out through a nick in the wall. Then I began to draw, but barely even had a tenth of the picture on paper, when I saw a group of people on the other side of the wall coming toward me. Roderer walked on the path with an old woman on his arm. The woman had mild, pretty, delicate features with very large brown eyes. It must have been Mathilde, Susanna's mother. Then came Susanna and two girls, then the count and the man with the black hair who had been with Susanna at the place where I paint, and then yet other young men. When they arrived exactly in front of me, Roderer said: "From here one can really see the hustle and bustle, and a painter could hardly choose a better spot if he wanted to paint. One sees such a thing at its liveliest in Holland."

"And here for our queen is a stone throne just as the old pagan peoples had royal stone seats in the open," said the blond count as he led Susanna to a smooth place on the stone wall, upon which she sat down.

"And indeed, the mother of the queen must, as vassal, sit to her left below," said Roderer as he led Mathilde to a stone at Susanna's side that was lower and upon which she took as seat.

She said: "Age also seeks lower places because it doesn't like to swing onto the high ones anymore."

"And the gentlemen, as vassals, sit yet lower than the ladies," said Roderer as he sat down lower than his spouse, most likely on a stone.

“And the knights must be at the foot of the queen,” said the count as he threw himself down on the grass. The other men did the same. The girls also seated themselves in lower positions, but at the wall.

Mathilde was right in front of my head, but I could only see her neck and the back of her head. I could see nothing of Roderer or the men. Of the girls, I could only see the backs of their little bonnets. Susanna sat somewhere to the right of my head, but half turned toward me and her mother. Because she sat on the stone wall, I saw her entire back.

I was in a very uncomfortable situation. Should I crawl back into the bushes? Then perhaps I would make a noise and direct everyone's attention toward me. The music, although one heard it only muffled from here, was also now silent everywhere. Should I stand up and greet everyone? By no means. The dance music and then the blaring music at the shooting stand had to begin, and then I would withdraw. Up until now, nobody had seen me because all the attention had been on the folk celebration in front of me.

But the music did not begin; therefore, I heard the words of the count's loud voice. “Because you already said, highly esteemed Herr, that the view in front of us could be painted, as such things are in Holland, and as the Dutch have always understood how to paint delicately, someone should have brought the painter from the Lüpff Inn so that he could hastily sketch it in color and then later complete the painting.”

“He wouldn't come out here to you frivolous types,” said Roderer.

“Understood,” replied the count, “the oddball has stirred up a hornet nest.”

“He puts his efforts into his projects,” said Roderer.

“He built a cabin in order to besiege the moor,” retorted the count.

“Who knows whether he has the ability to paint such a colorfully alive scene as we see here,” said the man with the black hair.

“Whether he can or not, I don't know,” replied the count, “but he is the biggest fool I have ever seen, the outcast of the Lüpfer, the hermit of the Rohrdommel Moor! That also speaks little for his art. However, everyone is a bungler and a fool at his own risk, and we can't hold anything against him for that. If, however, what I heard is true, that he has his eyes on the beautiful Susanna, then the rascal will have to be punished.”

I do not know if Susanna had seen me earlier or not; but with these words, she threw a glance at me. It was only a single, short glance. She quickly had to look away in order not to betray me, but it was an indescribably wonderful glance. I looked with incredible anger and incredible love toward her eyes. Her loving hand felt down the other side of the wall, and when she reached my head, from which I had laid my hat in the grass when I began to draw the sketches, she held her hand on the top of my head and pushed me gently down.

I did not breathe in this moment.

Then she stood up and said: “But we must examine the view from another perspective.”

And she took a step forward and then hesitated in order to see if anyone was following her. Since she must have seen that the others wanted to get up, she again took a few more steps, her face always to the crowd of people. Roderer got up, took his wife on his arm, and walked with her further along the wall. The girls had gotten up. The men had sprung up, and all the young people followed Susanna.

I now ducked back into my hazel bush, put my sketchbook in my bag, took my cap, got up from the ground behind the bush, went back to the undergrowth, and from it to the path from which I had come, back to my cabin.

I did not sleep a wink that night, and I did not paint the next morning.

When I saw the wagon with the brown horses driving along the right side of the moor in a southerly direction, I flew to my path with beating heart. On the forest path I saw Susanna wandering towards me. With raging breast, I approached her. When she was close, and when I saw her and saw that today she was paler, I cried out: "Susanna, Susanna!"

She looked at me lovingly and held out both hands to me.

I took hold of her hands, pulled her towards me and embraced her in my arms. Our arms were intertwined, and her warm mouth burned against mine.

Her mouth, which always had been proud, had kissed me.

And when we released our arms and when I looked at her again, I saw that she really was the most beautiful creature that had walked upon the earth and that God had ever created.

I put my arm around her shoulder again, took her by the hand and said: "Susanna! forever –"

"Forever," she answered.

"You lovely, you precious creature," I said.

"You dear, you unique man," she answered, "who rests his universe upon one thought, contrary to those who have no universe and no thought upon which to rest it –!"

"You walked the path in the forest on account of me, Susanna?" I asked.

“I walked it because of you,” she replied, “and you?”

“I came only to see you,” I said.

“I knew it,” she replied, “but do tell me, what do I call you?”

“Call me Friedrich,” I said.

“Listen Friedrich,” she said, “you must turn your strength, which I see that you have, toward some great thing and achieve it, then I will love you unconditionally.”

“And I will love you unconditionally, because you are as you are,” I said. “I will do what I can or die trying.”

“I know, I know,” she said.

“What luck that we have found each other so quickly,” I said.

“Luck from heaven,” she answered.

She remained silent for a little while, then she said: “Yesterday you fulfilled my first wish Friedrich, fulfill my second today.”

“Speak,” I said.

“You will hold that wretched count accountable?” she asked.

“Yes,” I said.

“Don't do it,” she replied. “He didn't speak badly of you, only from lack of understanding, and there were no witnesses. If you were to quarrel with him, you would appear insulted to me.”

“And if he begins to quarrel with me?” I asked.

“He will not,” she answered. “When we were alone, I said to him, if any man were to arouse my displeasure by laying his eyes on me, then he should be my defender against this man. But if I allow a man to lay his eyes on me, he must honor this man in the highest.”

“And?” I asked.

“He went along with it,” she answered, “like he always does.”

“It is said, he is your fiancé?” I asked.

“He assures me,” she answered, “that I am the most beautiful woman in the world, that I am a goddess, that I am a queen, and that I could make him the happiest person, if I shared my destiny with him. I answered him that I didn't harbor the desire to become his wife and that I never could. His face has a nice healthy glow; he has beautiful eyes and a handsome beard. He has beautiful horses, which he rides here and there, and which he trains himself. And he has several properties. He is good-natured besides. He has always made his advances in a joking manner, and I have jokingly made my rejections. When he sees that you are my fiancé – because I don't want to hide my love; tell my father, tell my mother, tell whomever you want! – and when he sees that you are my fiancé, he will go along with it and someday will bring someone else home.”

“But if he does come against me?” I asked.

“Then use your best judgment,” she said.

“So be it,” I answered. “May the first day of our union be peaceful.”

I gave her my hand and she took it.

Then I took her by the arm and led her back along the trail from where she had come. We now slowly walked arm in arm in quiet conversation along the trail on which we had so often silently met and passed by one another. I led her to her wagon. There, we gave one another our hands in parting. I helped her into the wagon. Her coachman drove her south on the road along the right bank of the moor. I took the long trail through the forest and then the path on the left bank of the moor to my cabin.

With a throbbing heart, I went into my room. There, my big painting calmly stared at me from its scaffolding.

I did not paint anymore that afternoon.

When I sat with Roderer at the apple tree that evening, I said to him: "I request of you an appointment for tomorrow to discuss something very important to me. May you permit me this if your time allows for it."

"My time always allows for it," he said. "And I implore you to choose the time yourself."

"If I am permitted to choose," I said, "then I will choose so that not too much time slips by before beginning the discussion, nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

"There will be a wagon waiting for you after eight o'clock at the gate below this hill to bring you to my House Firnberg," he said.

"I graciously accept," I replied.

The next morning I dressed as one does in Vienna when one makes a morning visit. The hostess gazed at me with wide eyes when she saw me in these clothes without my painting tools, walking down the hill.

The wagon waited at the gate and had Roderer's horses, which waited there daily in the evening. I climbed in, and after a ride of barely half an hour, I was inside Firnberg Castle. I was led into Roderer's reception room. It was a very respectably furnished chamber that gently embraced one with simple beauty. Roderer was dressed to receive visitors. He sat on a wicker chair at a desk. As I entered, he stood up, approached me, held out his hand, led me to a seat at the big table that stood in the room, sat down to my left, and asked if he could somehow be of service to me.

I was a little moved and uttered the words: "Venerable Herr Roderer! I did not come to ask for your services, rather something has happened which concerns one of your own, and I see it as my duty to reveal this matter to you. Your daughter Susanna and I have developed an affection for one another and have silently harbored it for a long time. As long as neither of us said a word to the other, I didn't feel obliged to speak with you about it, because speculative thoughts are pointless. But yesterday we spoke and said that it would be the wish of both of us to belong to one another eternally. And now I have come to tell you this so that you can act as you feel is your duty. I am Friedrich Roderer, Roderer just like you, and am now twenty-six years old. My father lives in Vienna and has property in Lower Austria and Hungary. My mother is also still alive. I have a sister, a grandmother, and two uncles, my father's brothers. Whether or not we are related to you and your Roderers, I don't know, I have never concerned myself with whether there still are distant relatives of ours in the world. I myself have a fortune so that a wife and many descendants could be provided for as well-to-do people provide for their own. I waste nothing. You yourself have seen my simple life, and that is how it always was. Thus my wealth has grown. Up until now, I have committed no dishonorable act and surely am determined to commit none in the future. I seek to correct my failings when they become known to me. Those left over, may my friends tolerate out of love and make better. Up until now I have not paid attention to any girl, because I had a singular endeavor that overshadowed all else, my art. I believed I would never enter a marital bond. I love Susanna as I have loved no other creature in the world. How and why, I don't know. I have often stared at her silently and she at me also. We loved one another and have suddenly let it be known. Concerning my external affairs, I can offer you proof when it arrives; about my character, only my words. I will love

Susanna forever, and I believe she will love me also. What else will be, I don't know. Now, I have told you everything.”

He remained silent for a little while, then he spoke: “In this matter you have acted honorably, and I firmly believe you are not capable of dishonorable behavior. I knew that my daughter went walking in the Lüpff Forest; I knew you took the same route. My daughter has our trust, and I gave it to you as well. If you had not spoken up, Susanna would have, and then I would have felt sorry for you. I sensed what would happen, and Mathilde and I expressed no disapproval. We don't care about the fortune of Susanna's spouse, only about his person. I have known you only a few months and respect you perhaps more than you know. But, whether you are compatible with Susanna, or Susanna with you, nobody can possibly know right now. Spend time with us, and when the time that is necessary to clarify compatibility or incompatibility has passed, then let happen what this time has nurtured. Is this answer agreeable to you?”

“As delightful as I expected from you, whom I have learned to respect,” I said. “You must have foreseen it.”

“I did,” he answered. “And I also did not, my dear young friend, always climb up the Lüpff Hill only for a glass of beer. You showed your paintings only to me, and I told you stories about the Roderers, in which enough foolishness occurs. You did not push yourself on us, and I did not ask your name. But tell me, why didn't you reveal to me that you are a Roderer?”

“I really don't know why,” I answered. “I suspect in the beginning it was shyness, and then when I had become familiar with the story of the Roderers, it must have been fear of prematurely being drawn into investigating the family's ancestry, which would have weighed on my heart and mood for my current work. But during the winter, I

thought, since I wouldn't be working on the painting of the Lüpff, I could tell you about it, and we could investigate, and perhaps you would see another Roderer.”

He smiled and said: “So you are descended from that particular Friedrich Roderer who let his beard grow long, and so that son was not devoured by wolves. I will contact your father and his brothers and clear this up. Whether you are from another Roderer family will be shown when the seal is printed on the document. This is peculiar. Let us go to the womenfolk who are waiting for us.”

He stood and led me through several rooms, in which, even in my hurry, I saw beautiful paintings, then into his wife's living room. Actually there were two rooms. She sat in the first, larger room, and Susanna stood next to her. They did not appear to be busy at the moment and must have expected us. I saw that the rooms were dignified, but did not attempt to look further. Mathilde stood up as we came in. I greeted her respectfully. She thanked me in a friendly manner. I bowed to Susanna; she also bowed to me, and for just a moment, our eyes exchanged their brightness.

“Here I bring you my young friend from the Lüpff, Mathilde,” said Roderer. “Everyone seat yourselves around the big table. I must relate to you important events.”

He urged us to the table, showed us our places, and after we sat down, he said: “Recently, I can't get away from events concerning the Roderers and now have yet another. I had already great fear that my daughter Susanna had shied away from the Roderer way, so quiet, so sensible, so modest, so simply orderly, so almost without flaw was her lifestyle. I almost shook my head, but now that has changed. Instead of choosing a fiancé from among the sons of the land who have their lives in order, who live as young people do, who have worthy relatives, who dress well and demonstrate suitable manners, she chooses a groom, selects a lover whom nobody knows, whose name she

doesn't even know, who wears only a round hat and gray canvas clothing, who is not even extraordinarily handsome, only that he has brown hair and brown eyes, whom the locals view as a traveling actor, who is a fool and builds a cabin on the Lüp Hill in order to paint the swamp, who never shows a single person a painting, who never concerns himself about anyone and doesn't associate with anyone, and who, lastly and finally, is also even a Roderer. Amazing, isn't it, that it is a Roderer who caused my daughter to demonstrate she hasn't strayed from the Roderer family.”

“But father,” said Susanna to this, “you yourself talked about the man on the Lüp Hill and went to see him. And then it's only natural that I noticed him when he encountered me.”

“Noticed him,” replied Roderer, “and then?”

“You will see, father, that he's the right one,” she said, “when you think of the others and how they are.”

“Yes, the right one is always the right one,” said Roderer, “and you and your mother have conspired that I should say: love one another eternally, because you said you will eternally love one another, right? Well, it will surely be right.”

“My husband told me about you,” said Mathilde. “Yesterday we spoke again about you. My husband's wishes in all matters have always been mine, and they also are in this. You have gotten to know him and he you this summer. If you would like to get to know us a little better now, that would be a good thing.”

“I am very thankful for this kindness,” I answered. “What I already know has given me admiration. And I believe I am able to express the hope that my behavior will not let you regret your kindness.”

“Surely not, surely not,” she said, “otherwise Roderer would not have brought you here. And if you bring happiness to Susanna's heart and Susanna brings happiness to your heart, then I will give my blessing to the day that brought you into this house.”

“May this blessing come soon,” I said, “and may God's blessing soon be upon what we wish for, if we deserve it. I ask you in this moment, gracious lady, for permission to kiss your motherly hand for the first time.”

She offered me her white, fine, and gentle hand but did not let it be kissed, rather pressed mine in a friendly way and looked at me with those big, brown eyes which Roderer had told me made him happy, and in which I recognized Susanna's eyes, which will make me happy.

“If Roderer is your name,” she said, “then it is good; the Roderer's are almost always good, and Susanna is very good.”

“I knew that after I had seen her eyes,” I said. “And I will always be good and gentle with her.”

“Amen,” she said.

Now we spoke of trivial things. Susanna sat next to me and laid her hand upon mine. I believed then that this first festive visit was to be over, and I got up. I said my farewells to Mathilde, to Roderer and Susanna. Roderer escorted me to the wagon, which again brought me back to the Lüpff Hill.

Now a new life began. I painted in the early morning already and painted most of the day with an enthusiasm and with fire that earlier I had not known at all. Everything worked out better, and very often it seemed clear to me, as if I should be able to grasp that the inimitable scent and the unattainable color of nature would come to my canvas. The walks in the forest were discontinued. However, when afternoon came, I then set

everything aside, changed my clothes, and went to see Roderer. And when I did not go there, then I went walking far and wide, even to villages, and sat with him in the evenings at the apple tree or in the parlor of the inn.

The hostess said to me: "It is good indeed that you followed my advice. If you also would have gone to Lüpfig, to the celebration, you would have really enjoyed yourself. It was marvelous on the meadows and stubble-fields at the forest's edge. The highborn Herr Roderer, his highborn lady, Susanna, and her fiancé and other elegant young men and girls were present and took great pleasure in it. I did tell you that Firnberg Castle would please you very much. So go there now. Go out even more often and especially, also out among the people. You certainly have become younger and much more handsome since then, and your eyes are quite merry. And when Susanna marries, you must be present. You must be happy and drink a toast, even if Herr Roderer has to have you taken home. Once is not enough. In the future, follow my advice to the letter in all things."

I said that I would endeavor to do so.

At Roderer's, I met with Count Sternberg and the other young men. What Susanna had predicted came true. I treated them as the better classes treat each other in the big cities, and they showed me respect.

Roderer had not many, but exceptional paintings. There were some of the best from the Dutch and Italians. There were fewer German paintings. Everything was from the old school. I spent much time looking at these things. In his book collection was the best of almost every language, especially the poets. All of the epic poets were present. And so they were often read aloud and very well. His forester read exceptionally well; the best, however, was always Roderer himself. There still must have been memories

from his youthful endeavors that played in. Quite often we walked to the properties and establishments nearby and observed what was happening. Now and then they also visited me, and I showed Mathilde and Susanna my paintings willingly, but other people, never. Our time spent together seemed to be appropriate. Susanna became ever more beautiful; she looked at me ever friendlier, and I loved her ever more.

Winter finally came after we had been blessed with an uncommonly long and lovely autumn. Only eight days before Christmas Eve did the first snow fall. It put an end to my painting. The big painting was almost completed, except for the final touches. I had put an unspeakable amount of time and effort into this painting.

When hard-packed snow lay upon the open fields and there was a sled path, I said my goodbyes in order to go to Vienna and give my parents a more exact account of my experiences than I could through letters.

Roderer also came to Vienna and visited my father. Then it was revealed that we really did belong to Roderer and his family. My father knew very well that he was descended from a Roderer who was called Friedrich and had been a colonel. He allegedly lived in a castle and had been very wealthy. It was said that he had had four brothers, all of whom, out of frugality, did not marry, and with whom he had lived in discontent. These are precisely the four Peter Roderer boys. That is quite clear, and the wealthy colonel is the black sheep Friedrich, the fifth Peter Roderer son. Further, my father knew that a son of this colonel, by the name of Friedrich, who had a brother in the German Order and had been the grandfather of my father, had gone to Russia out of love for a beautiful Jewess. But the Jewess was worthless, and later, Friedrich had married the daughter of a Russian commoner who had saved him from the wolves and taken care of him. Then there is something unclear. Either he must have fled or kidnapped the girl,

because she was a serf. In short, my father could not learn more, because his father himself did not know exactly. They experienced persecution, misery, and the like. But the marriage must have been recognized, because Friedrich was later in Russia again and, as manager of mines, made his fortune. There are two yellow letters to my father's grandfather in existence that were written by his brother Joseph Roderer. In the first letter, Joseph announced his marriage, and in the second, Joseph asked for information about Friedrich's place of residence. My father's father, also named Friedrich, was in Siebenbuergen and had properties there. My father, again named Friedrich, sold these and settled in Vienna. He also knew that in Holland there were allegedly descendants of Peter Roderer, another son of the colonel. Thus the family tree became fully established from the memories of my father and Roderer. We, the Friedrich Roderers, are the older branch of the colonel. And the Peter Roderers are the younger one. Since the German Herr could have no children and the descendants of Joseph died out, these two branches are now the only branches of Roderers.

There was a great celebration over these revelations. All the Roderers on our side of the family came to us, namely, my two uncles and their five sons, and a feast was held. My grandmother was happy that the Roderer family had now been expanded with one stroke. She was the living nucleus of our branch. And as the old history was investigated, more and more memories came to her, and from her lips followed story after story.

Peter Roderer traveled home again, and, as planned, in the spring all of the Roderers came together in Fimberg and brought all of their female relations along. Now Peter Roderer was there with his son, who also was named Peter and had come from England. His three brothers were there with their wives, seven sons, and three daughters.

My eighty-eight-year-old grandfather was there with our eighty-year-old grandmother and four daughters, my aunts. My father was there with me and my sister, and my two uncles were there with their wives and five sons, in addition to whom I must also mention Mathilde, the wife of the older Peter Roderer, and Susanna, my bride. The family reunion was celebrated, and Peter Roderer held several celebrations. All of the male Roderers had the short beard, except those for whom it first had to grow, and all the beards were brown. Only my father's was already mixed with white, just like those of the three brothers of the older Peter. That of the older Peter was white, and my grandfather's was snow-white. At this gathering, Susanna was also promised to me once and for all. The wedding was to be held on *Petrus-Paulus Day*.<sup>7</sup> Also at this gathering, my father and my future father-in-law expressed the wish that from now on until the wedding I should take a trip through the countries of Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy. I did not see the reason for this, but in my happiness I did not want to be contrary and agreed. When the Roderers disbanded, I traveled on the road to Holland. I was already back in plenty of time before *Petrus Day* and had added yet another country on my own initiative, namely Switzerland.

After I had greeted all of my future relatives in Firnberg, I went into my cabin.

There I remained for two days in front of my painting. Then I went to Susanna, asked to discuss something with her, and said to her: "My beloved bride, you greatest good of my heart here on earth! Listen to me. My big painting, which except for a few details is finished, cannot portray the gloominess, simplicity, and abundance of the moor. I painted with the fervor that your love gave to me and will never be able to paint this way again. For that reason this painting must be destroyed, and no more can come from

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<sup>7</sup>June 29th

my hand. If you say I will lose you if I give up my aspirations, then with terrible pain, I must lose you but carry out my intention. Now speak.”

“No, you will not lose me,” she answered. “My father taught me about paintings from childhood on. Your paintings are extraordinarily beautiful, but if your thoughts are loftier and you feel humbled because of what you produce, destroy them. I will love you even more. We will bind our hearts. They will create something, and it will not be small and lowly and insignificant.”

We parted.

In the cabin I took the painting from its frame, took the frame apart, and packaged it in its box. Then I cut the canvas of the painting from its wooden frame, cut it up in little pieces and slowly burned these pieces in the oven. Then I disassembled the base frame and burned it as well. Then I burned all my sketches and finally the paints, brushes, and the palette. What else was left of the equipment I determined to destroy later. That in this summer season smoke came from my chimney did not amaze my neighbors, the innkeepers, because often in the past summer, for my own reasons, I had had a fire in my oven.

Now I felt a freedom, happiness, and greatness in my heart like a brightly lit universe.

I traveled to Vienna to make preparations.

On *Petrus-Paulus Day* was the wedding. It was celebrated in Firmberg. All of the Roderers, who in the spring had been here, came once again to celebrate with us and to bind the family ties yet firmer. The wedding was held in Lüpfig among a great gathering of people. My hostess clasped her hands together when she saw that I was marrying Susanna. Her husband Christian carried a large bouquet of flowers from the

Lüpf to Firnberg. As we were sitting at the meal, Peter Roderer, my father-in-law, stood up with a glass of Rhein wine and spoke: “The Friedrich Roderer present here, the youngest of this name, recently demonstrated that he is a Roderer through and through. My daughter Susanna also did not fail to show us that she is a Roderer. Today we have joined both together in marriage, therefore, something more Roderer-like must come from them than from other Roderers – may it be greater than anything ever achieved by another Roderer and may it be granted to me to extend their good fortunes until the end of time.”

“The good fortune of both Roderers until the end of time!” cried out several guests. All of them stood up and toasted.

We thanked them in the most obliging way.

And on this day there was also great happiness in Firnberg. The Roderers drank as if they had to fulfill what the hostess had said to me when she predicted that I would be at Susanna's wedding with the count, and as if they would finally, most assuredly have to be brought home by Peter Roderer's wagon.

## The Village on the Heath

### 1. The Heath

In the actual meaning of the word, it is not to a heath, where I want to lead the kind reader and listener, but rather far from our city, to a sad, delightful little patch of land, which they call the heath, because since time immemorial only short grass has grown upon it, here and there a trunk of a heath-pine or the crooked birch trees, at the edge of which now and then hung a tuft of wool from the few sheep and goats, which at times roamed here. Furthermore, there was the juniper bush in all of its breadth, but no other adornment was around; for this one would have had to consider only the distant, blue mountains, which drew a beautiful blue ribbon around the dull-colored terrain.

It is often the case that sensitive people or those into whose hearts nature has planted all kinds of miraculous poetry and odd feelings seek out just such places and grow fond of them, because there they can follow their dreams and inner voice: thus, it also happened on this patch of heath. Namely, a black-eyed boy of ten or twelve years of age also often came with the goats and the sheep, actually in order to tend to them; but when the animals scattered – the sheep in order to enjoy the short, tasty grass; for the goats, however, there was no suitable fodder on the ground, and they were left more to their contemplations and the pure air, only occasionally plucking one or the other of the tender sprouts – he began in the meantime to form an acquaintance with all kinds of creatures, for which the heath provided, and made an alliance and friendship with them.

There was a somewhat elevated point there at which the gray rock, also a co-inhabitant of the heath, readily was found and thrust itself upwards, as it were, and in fact

at the top with an overhanging ledge formed a shelter and speaker's platform. The juniper also grew more densely here, spreading out into a multi-branched thicket next to many beautifully blooming thistles. But there were no trees far and wide, which made the view much lovelier than elsewhere, especially to the south, where the far moorland – so unhealthy for its inhabitants, so beautiful for the distant eye – swam out into all levels of the horizon in a soft light-blue. The place was called the Roßberg for reasons that are unknown, since in human memory, a horse never roamed here, which, generally speaking, would have been too precious a possession for the heath.

Our little friend now preferred wandering to this spot more than anything else, even when the animals under his care wandered far away on their errands, since he knew from experience that none of them left the flock, and in the end he found all of them together again no matter how far he had to search for them; actually, the search was an adventure for him, especially when he had to wander far and wide. On the hill of the Roßberg, he established his empire. By and by, he carved a seat on the overhanging ledge with much effort and arduous hammering with pointed stones, in the beginning spacious enough for one, then suitable for three. Also one shelf or the other was discovered or fashioned, or other comfortable places and corners where he put his linen rucksack and his bread and the countless treasures of the heath, which he often collected and carried here. There also was company for him in abundance. First of all, many large blocks, which made up his fortress, were all known to him and named, each of them different in color and appearance; not to mention the countless small ones, which were often more colorful yet and more brilliant. He divided up the large ones, each according to whether they delighted him by their fantastic appearance or angered him by their

coarseness: he loved all of the small ones. Then there was the juniper, an obstinate companion, its tenacious limbs indomitable when it was suppose to relinquish an exquisite, fragrant branch for a shepherd's staff or yield to a path being made; – its branches were stiff, covered with needles, but also bursting with millions and millions of blue and green berries, gifts of honor, which the boughs yielded year in, year out to the abundant guests of the heath. Then there were the wondrous little flowers of the heath, burning firey-red or sky-blue between the golden grass of the rocks or sprouting up between the branches of the juniper were those countless small flowers, which open up small, white mouths with little, yellow tongues inside – and also growing up between the stones here and there were some strawberries, two raspberry bushes, and even a long hazel switch. Bad company, even if beautiful, was also not lacking, with which he was well-acquainted through his father. For example, here and there although rare were poisonous berries, which he only spared because they were so shiny black, so black, like nothing else on the entire heath, aside from his eyes, which he obviously could not see.

One should almost no longer talk about the living and moving companions at all, so much is already known, but this companionship has only now been fully explained. I want to say nothing of the thousands and thousands of little golden, ruby, emerald creatures and worms, that climbed, ran, and worked on stone, grass, and stalk, because he had not seen anything gold, ruby, or emerald, except what the sky and the heath showed now and then – but something else must be mentioned. One of his favorites was a buzzing, purple-winged jumper that flew up in front of him by the dozens and touched down again, even when he traveled through its territory – then there were its countless cousins, the larger and smaller grasshoppers, ugly green colored *Heiducken*, cheery and

restlessly chirping and slurring, so that on sunny days there was a trembling song along the entire heath – then there were the snails with and without shells, brown ones and striped ones, domed ones and flat ones, and they made their silver trails over the heath grass or over his felt hat, upon which he liked to set them – then the flies, buzzing, singing, peeping, blue, green, glass-winged – then the bumble bees, which sleepily buzzed by – the butterflies, especially a small one with sky-blue wings, and on the backside, silver-gray with lovely little eyes, then yet an even smaller one with wings like the idle glow of sunset – then at last was the bunting that sang at many places; the gold bunting, the red robin, the heath-lark, so that the entire sky often was filled with church music from them; the thistle-finch, the grass-midge, the plover, and others and yet others. All of their nests were in his monarchy and were visited and protected. Sometimes he also saw a little red field-mouse slip by and spared it, when it suddenly froze and looked at him with its shiny, startled, little eyes. Wolves or other dangerous scoundrels had not been encountered since the old days of all his forefathers, aside from an occasional egg-stealing weasel, which he pursued rigorously.

In the middle of all of these splendors, he stood, or walked, or jumped, or sat – a marvelous son of the heath: from his little, deep-brown face full of goodness and intelligence shown, with a flashing, unconscious gleam, coal-black eyes full of love and cleverness that richly reflected that element full of danger, which in the loneliness of the heath had begun to spring up in him: a dark, radiating fantasy. Around his forehead was an unruly forest of dark-brown hair simply given over to the winds of the expanse. If I were allowed, I would compare my favorite shepherd boy with that shepherd boy from the Holy Book, who also on the heath outside of Bethlehem found his heart and his God

and the dreams of future kingly greatness. But as thoroughly poor as our little friend, that shepherd boy surely was not; since for the entire day, he had nothing other than a big piece of black bread – from which he, inconceivably, nourished his blossoming body and his even more blossoming intellect – and clear, cool water, which flowed from near the Roßberg, filled a small well, and then quickly rushed down the length of the heath in order to unite with other sister tributaries and flow towards that distant moor which we pondered above. For the good times, one or two pieces of goat cheese were also in the bag. But he had one source of nourishment in quality and quantity that even the wealthiest city-dweller cannot boast: around him, an entire ocean of the most curative air, and above him, a fullness of light that gave him color and health. Evenings when he came home, which was very far away, his mother prepared a milk-soup for him or an exquisite mash out of millet. His coat was made out of linen bleached [by the sun]. In addition, he had a wide felt hat, which he seldom wore, rather it mostly hung in his castle on a wooden nail, which he had pounded into a crack in the stone.

However, he was always happy and often did not know how to contain himself out of joy. From his royal seat, he ruled over the heath. Sometimes, he wandered through it far and wide, sometimes he sat, high above on the ledge or speaker's platform, and as far as the eye could see, his fantasy went that far as well, or it went even further and covered the entire view of the distance with a net threaded with thoughts and illusions; and the longer he sat, the more intensely they came to him, so that in the end, he often sat helpless under the net's spell. He knew no fear of loneliness; indeed, when no human being was to be seen far and wide, and nothing but the hot midday air shimmered along the entire length of the heath, then the whole throng of his inner being

was sure to appear and populate the heath. He then often climbed up on the stone ledge and immediately held a sermon and speech – below the kings and judges, and his people and the generals, and children and their children stood, numerous, like sand on the beach; he preached repentance and conversion – and all of them listened to him; he described the promised land to them, promised that they would do heroic deeds, and finally wished for nothing more ardently than that he also would be able to work a miracle. Then he climbed down below and led them to the farthest and most remote parts of the heath, which surely took him a quarter of an hour to reach – now he showed them the entire land of his forefathers and took it all in with the point of his sword. Then it was divided up among the tribes, and all were dependent upon themselves for their own defense.

Or he built Babylon, a terrible and sprawling city – he built it from the small stones of the Roßberg and announced to the grasshoppers and beetles that a powerful empire would exist here, which nobody could defeat except Cyrus, who will come either tomorrow or the next day to punish the godless King Balthazar just as Daniel predicted long ago.

Or he excavated the Jordan, i.e., the stream that flowed from the Roßberg and led to other streams – or he did not do any of this, but rather fell asleep on the open ground and let himself be carried away by a colorful tapestry of dreams. The sun looked down upon him and enticed redness onto his slumbering cheeks, as beautiful and as healthy as ripe apples, or as ripe and healthy as the light side of fully matured hazelnuts. And when she finally had drawn large, clear beads of sweat onto his forehead, then she took pity on the boy and woke him with a hot kiss.

He lived this way on the heath for many days and many years and became bigger and stronger, and into his heart came deeper, darker, and more silent forces, and he became filled with pain and longing – and he did not know how this happened. He had grown up, and what the heath could give, it had given; his mature intellect hungered for bread, for knowledge; and his heart thirsted for wine, for love. His eyes looked over the distant band of the moor, and still farther out, as if there must be something out there that he was missing, and as if some day he must gird his loins, take up his staff, and go very far from his flock.

The meadow, the flowers, the field and its heads of grass, the forest and its innocent little creatures are the first and most natural playmates and teachers of a child's heart. Just allow the little angel his inner God and simply keep the demons far away, and he will raise and educate himself wonderfully. When his fertile heart hungers after knowledge and emotions, then unlock the greatness of the world, of people, and of God to him. And with that, let us take our leave from the boy on the heath.

## 2. The Heath-House

A good hour away from the Roßberg stood a house, or moreover a sprawling cottage. It stood at the edge of the heath far from any path traversed by humans; it stood all alone, and the surrounding land was also a heath, only different from the one upon which the boy herded goats. The house was made entirely from wood, consisted of two rooms and a little room in the back, all with massive brownish-black load-bearing beams upon which many a little beer mug hung, painted with lovely, festive, toasts. The windows, luminous and spacious, looked upon the heath, and the house was surrounded

by the stable, shed, and barn. There was also a little garden in front of it, in which vegetables grew, an elder bush, and an old apple tree stood – farther away yet were three cherry trees and unimpressive plum bushes. Cool water flowed in front of the house, but sparingly; it flowed from the high, strong wood shaft into a gutter below, which was chiseled out of a single heath stone.

It had become very lonely in this house; in it lived only an old father and an old mother and an even older grandmother – and they were all sad, because he had been lured away, far into the unknown; he who with his youthful presence had livened up the house and who had been the joy of all. Of course, a very little sister played at the threshold of the door, but she was still very little and was still very childish, because she always asked when her brother Felix would return. Because the father had to look after the field and pasture, another shepherd boy had to be hired; however, this one set bird snares on the heath, always rushed home very early, and fell asleep right after the evening meal. All of the creatures on the heath mourned the handsome curly-headed boy who had been drawn away from them.

It had been a sad, beautiful day, on which he had gone away. His father was a reasonable, calm man, who had never scolded him, and his mother loved him as the apple of her eye; – and from her heart, which he often and enjoyably listened to, he absorbed that tenderness and wealth of imagination, of which she could make no use, except for pure love for her son. She honored his father as master of the house, who must slave away day and night in order to maintain their livelihood, since the heath was meager and only with great effort sparingly bore fruit and often not even that, if God sent down a hot year over it. For that reason, they lived in a peaceful marriage and loved one another

dutifully from the heart and stood by one another in times of need and worry. That is why the boy never knew quarrel and trouble, the poisonous effects of discord that weigh on a child's heart, except when a disruptive ram ran off, which he always beat back to the flock with efficient, capable blows of his fists, which this naughtiest animal willingly endured from him and only from him, because it well knew that he was its protector and reliable comrade. The father also loved his son very much and surely not less than the mother, but because of the modesty of his humble status, he never showed his love, least of all to his son – however, one could easily recognize this love by the restlessness with which he came and went and by his frequent glances toward the Roßberg when the boy by chance came home from the heath later than usual – and the boy knew and recognized this love very well, even if it was not expressed.

From parents such as his, he did not experience any resistance when he voiced his decision to go out into the world, because he really was not able to remain at home any longer. Yes, for a long time his father had already been aware of how the boy struggled with illusions and things, which from childhood on had never occurred to him; for that reason, he regarded it as originating from the loneliness of the heath and reflected upon a remedy. His mother, however, had noticed nothing strange about her son, because actually her heart beat in his anyway; she only agreed to his leaving out of a foreboding instinct that he carry out what he must.

Yet another person had to be asked, not by the parents, but rather by him: the grandmother. He did not love her quite as much as his mother, but rather he honored and revered her; but she also had been the one from whom he received the beginnings of those threads from which he first weaved his pleasures of the heath, then his heart, and

finally his entire future destiny. Already beyond the bounds of human life, she sat like a phantom in the garden behind the house in the sun, always lonely and always alone in the company of her departed ones, spinning her own inner, eternal stories from the past. But as she sat there, she was not the usual image of extreme old age, except when she often suddenly addressed one or the other of her inner creations as living and changing in front of her; or she gently smiled or prayed or spoke to herself, wondrously playing in nonsense and fantasy, in incomprehension and fullness of spirit: thus she pointed, like a mighty ruin, back to a memorable existence. Indeed, a good judge of people, if one ever were to come here, would have easily recognized from the few flashes that still occasionally surfaced, that here a wealth of imagination of an uncommon sort had been passed over, unrecognized by those around her, unrecognized by its possessor, in the poor vessel of a farm woman from the heath, passed over by life. Her warm-hearted daughter, the mother of the boy, was only a weak reflection of herself. In her entire life full of hard work, the old woman had read only one book, the Bible; but in this book she read and wrote for seventy years. Indeed, she now no longer did this, and she no longer requested someone read aloud to her; but she often recited entire passages from the prophets, and the ways and wisdom of that book were marked in her being, so that in the end even her usual manner of speech hinted at something both foreign and Middle Eastern. She told the boy these Bible stories. He often sat there now on Sunday afternoons crouched down at the elder bush – and when the miracles and the heroes appeared and the terrible battles and God's judgments – and when his grandmother spoke with fervor, and her old spirit overcame the helplessness of the body – and when now sunken back into the days of her youth, with her weary mouth she began to speak tenderly and feverishly with a being

that he did not see and with words that he did not understand but, deeply touched, instinctively felt – and when she gathered all the heroes of the story around her and her own departed interfered and now all spoke in confusion, then he felt a terrible inner dread, and even more so when he did not understand her anymore at all – he just opened wide all of the gates of his soul and let in the fantastic things, and on the next day took the entire turmoil with him onto the heath, where he reenacted all of it.

Now he wanted to make his intentions known to his grandmother, so that one day, by chance, she would not miss him and would not be hurt, as if he had died.

And so – early one morning he stood next to his parents in front of the door, ready for travel, wearing his poor linen clothes, his wide hat on his head, the juniper staff in his hand, his rucksack on his back, in which there were two shirts and cheese and bread. Sewn into his shirt pocket, he had the little bit of money that his family could part with.

His grandmother, always the first awake, was already kneeling in her usual manner in the middle of the meadow at her wooden stool, which she carried there, and was praying. The boy threw a glance to the edge of the heath, which darkly cut into the light sky – then he walked to his grandmother and said: “Dear mother, I am going now, farewell and pray for me!”

“Child, you must attend to the sheep, the dew is too early and too cool!”

“I am not going to the heath, grandmother, rather away into the wide world, in order to learn and become skillful, as I told all of you yesterday.”

“Yes, you said that,” she replied, “you said that my child – with pain I bore you, but also I gave you skills to become like one of the prophets and seers – go with God, but come back, Jakobus!”

Jakobus had been the name of her son, who had also gone away once, more than sixty years ago, but had never returned.

“Mother,” he said again, “give me your hand.”

She gave it to him; he shook it and said, “farewell, farewell.”

“Amen, Amen,” she said as she stopped praying. Then the boy turned to his parents; his heart was so very swollen up – he said nothing, but rather suddenly hugged his mother, and she, crying hotly, kissed him on both cheeks and gave him yet another coin that she once had received as a baptism present and always had saved, but he did not take it. He simply offered his hands to his father because he did not dare hug him. His father made the sign of the cross on his forehead, on his mouth, and his chest. And when doing this his rough hand trembled and there was a heavy twitching around his mouth, the boy no longer held himself back. With a gush of tears, he threw himself at his father’s chest, whose left arm clenched him for a second; then he let him go and without a word pushed him toward the heath. His mother, however, cried out to him yet again and said he should also bless his little sister, who had been completely forgotten in her little bed. He made three crosses over the sleeping angel, then he quickly stepped out and, determined, went toward the heath.

Then go with God, you innocent lad, but bring the jewel back again, which you are so recklessly carrying away!

When he arrived at the Roßberg, the sun came up and looked into two trusting, confident, but red eyes, red from crying. At the house on the heath, it reflected in the windows and on the scythe of his father, who went out to mow.

### 3. The Heath-Village

The first evening was dreary and lonely, and when they went to bed during the summer twilight and looked upon his empty bed, both parents suffered heartache. The lad, who perhaps even now still was wandering upon a dusty military road, noticed by nobody, indeed disdained by most, nearly broke the two tender hearts in the remote house on the heath, since they would have to endure his absence from now on, perhaps forever. But they suppressed their pain, and each bore it alone, because it was too shameful and awkward to express it.

But a second day came and then a third and a fourth, and each day brought the same brilliant expanse of sky over the heath and shone down onto the window and the gray, aged roof of the house, just as friendly and delightful as if he had still been there.

And then day followed day.

The work and joy of the farmers, monotonous through the millennia and never ending through the millennia, here also pulled a part of the primordial chain silently and magically through the cottage, and on each of its links hung a little drop of forgetfulness.

The grandmother carried her wooden stool onto the heath as she had always done and prayed at it, and she and little Marthe asked [God] daily when Felix would return. His father mowed rye and barley – his mother made cheese and bound sheaves – and the hired goat-herder went out onto the heath daily. No one knew anything about Felix.

Then the sun rose and set; the heath turned white and then turned green; the elder tree and the apple tree blossomed many times – little Marthe had grown up and went along to cut hay and to harvest, but she no longer asked [about Felix] – and his

grandmother, inconceivably living on forever, like a person forgotten by death, also no longer asked, because he had slipped her mind or had become one of her mysterious, imaginary companions.

The fields of the heath-farmer gradually improved as if the sky wanted to bless his loneliness and reward him. And it went so well for him that, with handsome oxen, he now was able to load several sacks of grain [onto his wagon] and haul them away, from which he brought home some coins and news of the outside world. Once a journeyman carpenter came with his travel pack to Father Niklas, the heath-farmer, and brought greetings and a letter from Felix and told them that he was a smart, hard-working student in the far away capital, that everyone loved him, and that one day he could even become chaplain in the great cathedral. The journeyman carpenter was well received for the night and left behind pure joy when he departed the next day. Thus, it happened that once or twice each year a traveler made the detour over the heath for the sake of the handsome, friendly boy, who wanted to send greetings to his kind mother. And even once, a traveler came striding up and made a portrait of the little house along with the well and lilac bush and apple tree.

Other changes also began on the heath. Once, many gentlemen came and surveyed a piece of the heath that, since human memory, had not belonged to anyone. And an old farmer came and with many sons and people built a house upon it and began to cultivate the surveyed spot. He had brought an exotic grain, which took root in the soil of the heath, and in the following year, a forest of green tassels gently swayed next to Father Niklas's property, where in earlier springs only sloe and Liebfraushuhe still had bloomed. The old farmer was a friendly man, a man of much knowledge who enjoyed

offering advice and help and sharing his knowledge with the original inhabitants of the heath; and he maintained good neighborly relations with Father Niklas. Now, they even traveled together to the city. There they sold their grain much more easily, and at the grain market in the Golden Horse, these farmers from the heath were well-known and well-received.

By and by new settlers came; also, a road was built over the heath by the property owners, so that now sometimes a fancy wagon traveled it, the likes of which no one had ever seen on the heath. The sons of the old farmer also began farming, and one of them, it was whispered, would become the beautiful Marthe's groom. And thus, before seven years had gone by on the land, five houses with stalls and barns, with gables and roofs already stood surrounding the little, old, gray heath-house, and fields and meadows and roads and fences stretched for almost a quarter of an hour in the direction of the Roßberg, which still was as lonely as always; and on Pankratius Day, Father Niklas had the pleasure of being elected judge of the village on the heath – the first since the creation of the world to hold such an office and rank on this land.

Again, year after year went by; the fruit tree seedlings, delicate shoots – like those that the old farmer next door had brought and shared with Niklas – now already stood as mature trees and produced an abundance of fruit, and on some Sundays a drink of fruit wine. – Marthe was wed to the neighbor's son, Benedikt, and they worked their own land. – The heath had turned white and then green again; but the father's hair remained white; and the mother already began to resemble the grandmother; and only the grandmother remained unravaged and unchanged, forever sitting at home, a dreamy remnant, more or less, as if waiting for Felix's return. But Felix, as Jakobus earlier,

appeared to be missing. For three years no word came and no travelers. – He was not to be found in the capital, where even Benedikt went to search for him. And in the council offices, the council men, citing from a thick book, told him that Felix supposedly left the country, perhaps even going overseas. His father already stopped mentioning him; Marthe had a child and did not think of him, the villagers did not know him and also did not regard him as one of their own who had left. His grandmother only asked about Jakobus once in a while; – but the heart of his mother carried him inside unfaded and with pain since the day he had left them and had cried at her bosom – his mother’s heart carried him into the house in the evenings and onto the fields in the morning – and it was also only the heart of his mother that recognized him when suddenly on the day before Pentecost, a strange, wild, sun-burned man came wandering through the glowing sunset, a staff in his hand, a little satchel on his back, and stopped in front of the house on the heath.

“Felix” – “Mother!”

A cry and a shutter of the heart.

The maternal heart is the most beautiful and permanent place for a son, even if he already has gray hair – and everyone in the entire universe has only one such heart.

The old woman almost collapsed from sobbing, and he, for years, perhaps no longer accustomed to crying, let the stream flow from his eyes and raised her up to him and hugged her and stroked her gray hair, not noticing that his father and sister and half of the village stood around them both.

“Felix, my Felix, where did you come from?” she finally asked.

“From Jerusalem, mother, and from the heath of the Jordan. – God bless you father, and God bless you grandmother! Now I will stay with you all for a long time and God willing, forever.”

He embraced his trembling father and then his old grandmother, who stood humbly, almost bashfully, beside him – and then his father again; the handsome, old, tanned man with snow-white hair, whom Felix had left while he [himself] had thick, dark locks, and his father stood there twice as charming in the awkward embarrassment in which he found himself while in the presence of his distinguished son; the heart of his mother, however, always conscious of its enduring standing, showed nothing of the kind. She did not see his body and his clothes, rather her eyes were fixed upon his face the whole time, and they shone and sparkled and almost welled up with tears of joy and pride, because Felix had become so handsome and splendid.

Finally, when his heart was somewhat satisfied, little Marthe came to mind; he asked about her and lowered his eyes to look for her. Then his mother presented to him a radiant woman with bright, blue eyes, a child in her arms, like a Madonna whom he had seen in paintings in Switzerland – he recognized little Marthe in the child. But he dared not kiss the mother of the child, and she also stood awkwardly before him and only looked upon him with kindness – finally, they greeted and kissed one another heartily as brother and sister, and the reliable Benedikt shook his hand and told him about how, two years ago, he had so diligently searched for him far and wide. “I was in the land of Egypt,” said Felix, “and you would have had difficulty finding me there, because I was in the desert.”

He greeted everyone in a friendly manner, even the farmers and their wives and children, who had arrived in front of Niklas's house and who, respectfully curious, stood around. He tipped his hat and, although unknown to him, shook their hands.

Finally, they all went into his house, and following the custom of the heath, many of the neighbors went in and were present as he unpacked gifts and spoke about his travels. It became quiet on the street as people, according to local custom, departed early for their beds, and the red clouds of Pentecost glowed yet for a while above the village.

#### 4. The Heath-Dweller

And when on the following day, the first rays of the sun shone and the inhabitants of the village on the heath were in their holiday dress ready to go to the distant church, there was one more villager and one more churchgoer. For many of them, the night had obscured his return, but the morning revealed the new arrival to them again, which delighted them: some out of curiosity, others out of affection – but every one of them had an uncomfortable shyness, even his parents, about what it was that had brought him back to them and if he would not be an outside influence on the usual equality and order of the village.

But he stood outside already dressed in his attire from the heath and his wide hat and looked around with large, shining, gentle eyes, when his mother approached him and asked if he also was going to church or if he was tired and wanted to worship at home.

“I am not tired,” he answered in a friendly tone, “and I will go with you;” since he saw that his mother was dressed for church and that his father also was coming out of the house in his Sunday coat.

Festive groups appeared here and there on the village meadow; some came closer and greeted them, others held back bashfully, especially the girls; and yet others, who stayed home and had to look after the village in the loneliness of the holiday, stood in the doorways of their homes or elsewhere and watched.

And while the dew still sparkled on the heath grasses and glowed and while the coolness of the morning drifted, everything was already set in motion for them to arrive on time – and thus Felix took the old woman by the hand and led her as tenderly around the gentle hill on the heath as she had once led him when he was still a young boy and was allowed on Sunday mornings to leave the goats and sheep at home so that he could go out and hear the word of God. His father, inwardly pleased, walked alongside; some of the others in front, some behind. Finally, the last group had disappeared behind the hill, the onlookers stepped back into their homes, and, shortly thereafter, that glimmering loneliness, which likes so much to be in abandoned villages on cheerful Sunday mornings, disappeared over the roofs; – the hours passed, drier and hotter, here and there, a thin blue column of smoke ascended; and in the middle of the garden of the house on the heath, the gaunt grandmother kneeled and prayed. – And when finally after hours of stillness, the distant ring of a bell came through the thin, gentle, calm air, as it now and then happened on especially quiet days, then a figure kneeled down on the ground and rapped her chest; – thereafter it was still again and remained still. The rays of the sun sank upon the houses, ever steeper, then slanting once more so that the shadows were on

the other side – finally, the afternoon came, and with it all the churchgoers – they took off their Sunday best and the shawls from their overheated bodies, changed into lighter clothes, and each household enjoyed its prepared Pentecost meal.

And what was it then that had been brought back to them with Felix, and why did it take him so long to return, and where had he been?

They did not know.

He had come along to church; – with almost childlike reverence, as earlier, he had listened to the words of the priest; meekly, at his mother's side he returned home; And when his father began speaking at the table, Felix obligingly quit talking and listened – and towards evening, he sat with his grandmother in the shade of the elder bush and talked with her, who mumbled peculiar and unintelligible stories to him – – and so when throughout the day his mother looked curiously into his eyes, half overjoyed, half filled with pain; when she searched for the earlier tender features – for her formerly cheerful, true-hearted, handsome son of the heath – and look! She did find him: in faint traces, the image of the good-hearted boy was evident in the face of the man, but infinitely more handsome – so handsome that she often thought for a moment, she could not be his mother; also when he directed the calm mirror of his eyes toward her, so understanding and so kind – or when she looked at his cheeks, almost as young as before, only much more deeply tanned so that in contrast, his teeth shone like pearls, the same teeth that had already sparkled so innocently and healthy in the child – and around them still the same sweet lips that now, however, were mature and manly and so beautiful as if a sweet word would immediately be spoken from them, be it love or be it advice – – .

“He has remained good,” she rejoiced in her maternal heart, “he has remained good even if he is much more distinguished than we are.”

And indeed, there was a certain radiance of chaste purity about the man so that he was recognized and honored by the simple heart of this woman from the heath.

What was it that lived in him and had carried him untouched through the world so that he brought back his body as a temple just as he had earlier taken it away out of loneliness? --

They did not know; only ever more cheerful and almost naively did his heart reveal itself, just like the hours of the quiet holiday slipped by gradually.

Late in the evening, as they were all sitting around the white beech table, -- and Marthe was also there with her child and Benedikt and other neighbors -- he told them about the Promised Land, how he had been there, how he had seen Jerusalem and Bethlehem, how he sat on Mount Tabor, and bathed himself in the Jordan; -- he had seen Mount Sinai, that terribly fissured mountain, and he had wandered in the desert. -- He told them that his wooden trunks would come with the postman; then he would show them soil that he had brought from the Holy Land -- he also had dried flowers and herbs from that land of footsteps of the Lord, and whatever else the soil there produced and brought forth -- and the heaths and deserts there were much holier, much hotter, and much lonelier than these here, which more readily could be called a garden -- and as he spoke, everyone gazed at him and listened -- and they forgot that bedtime had passed, that the sunset had long since faded, that the stars had come out and were shining in a thick cluster above their roofs.

He said nothing about the cities, people, and their activities, and they had not asked. The words from his mouth were so pleasant that what he said was the right thing, and they did not ask him about anything else.

At last, Marthe took the sleeping child home. Benedikt also left, as did the neighbors, and his parents went to bed even more blissful and content than yesterday, and even his father thought that Felix was almost like a preacher and priest of the Lord.

He also went to the heath immediately after the holiday. He sat upon his speaker's platform; the bugs, the flies, the moths, the song of the heath-lark, and the eyes of the field-mice were unchanged. He roamed the area. The suns' rays intensified – the distant moor was obscured; a trembling and chirping and singing – – – and when his father saw him wandering, he had to run his fingers through his thin, gray hair and stroke the wrinkles on his face with his well-calloused hand, in order not to believe that his boy was still going to the heath and that only the goats and the sheep were missing; that it was as before, and that the long, long time had only been a dream. Because he mingled with the villagers day after day; because all the children already knew him; because of the friendly way he spoke with everyone, also with the homely; and because he walked through the new fields in his linen attire – this caused the neighbors to clearly view him as one of them, and yet it was also quite apparent how very different he was from them.

We must tell about a certain deed before we continue to make more known about his life, which lies ahead – a deed, that actually should have remained a secret, but was disclosed, which won him the hearts of all of those living on the heath.

When, at last, the wooden trunks had come with postman to the city and from there by grain-wagon to the heath; when he sought out the presents and distributed them;

when he showed them all kinds of curiosities, flowers, feathers, stones, weapons – and everything had been admired enough – that very day, Felix went to the back room when he saw that his father had gone in and sat down in the shadows of the lilac bush, as he enjoyed doing – he apprehensively entered and said with an almost shaking voice: “father, you raised me and have been kind to me my entire life – I have but poorly repaid you, because I went away and you had no help with your work and with looking after mother and grandmother – and when I returned, you did not reproach me, rather you were only friendly and kind; I cannot repay this, other than by never leaving you again and by honoring and loving you more than ever. For so many years you had to go without being able to look into my eyes, which would have done your heart good; – but now I will always, always stay with you. – Only because God let me be born also to help you, thus, I learned all sorts of skills, through which I earned my bread, and because I needed so little, some was left over for you. I am giving it to you now so that you can use it for your home and make good use of it in your old age, and I beseech you to accept it with gratitude.”

The old man, very red in the face and trembling from shame and joy, had jumped up and with both hands rejected the papers offered to him with these words: “What has gotten into you Felix? I am so shocked. God as my witness, that I should take the work and effort of my child – oh my God, I could give you nothing, not even a life other than that which the Lord gave you on the heath, not even the devout heart which came to you instinctively. – You owe me nothing – children are a gift from God so we raise them for their own benefit, not for ours; – forgive me, Felix, I was not able to educate you, and yet it appears to me that you have become so good, so good that I could cry from joy” – .

And hardly had he said these words, when he broke out in loud crying and felt clumsily for Felix's hand. – Felix took hold of it; he could not help himself and had to press his face against his father's shoulder and cover the coarse cloth of the coat with his hot tears. His father was soon calm again, and both ashamed and reassuring, he said the following: "You are more sensible than we are, Felix. If you remain with us, work as you like; I do not ask that you help me – there is Benedikt and his farmhands if it were necessary; also, I already have something saved so that in my old age I can hire help. – But you will work at something as is pleasing to God and is just."

But in his heart, Felix thought that in the future, if necessary, indeed he himself would rather assist and contribute to what was needed so that his heart would not hurt him so, since he could not give his father anything at all worthwhile. Ah, he had already given the best thing and did not know it, his good, overflowing heart, which is a more joyful jewel than all of the goods on earth to every father, even the toughest, because it is not visibly rewarding, but rather rewarding in the inner most depths of the soul.

His father now acted indifferent and busied himself in the room with this and that, but hardly had Felix left, than he ran quickly to Felix's mother and told her what their son had wanted to do – but she folded her hands, ran to the pictures of the saints in the room, and said a prayer that was partly a sacrilege of stormy pride and partly thankfulness of the deepest humility.

Then she went out and made it known.

It was now clear that he was good, that he was gentle, loyal, and tender; and they also saw that he was handsome and splendid – they looked no further, what might be and what might become.

He went out to the heath, far away from the village, and had a piece of land surveyed and with many workers began building a stone house. – That it would be larger than what he needed for himself was obvious to all; but when it was ready in the fall, and when it was furnished and decorated, he nevertheless, moved into it alone and thus passed the winter. The spring came filled with the richness of blossoms – and Felix sat in his house on the heath and, as before, reigned over all of its creatures, and over all of the great, silent figures that lived there now.

But what was it then that had been brought back by him to his parents and neighbors?

They did not know.

But I know. A gift had been given him that mankind values highly, but that made him misunderstood by his brothers – the only gift on this earth that no one can reject. It had begun on the heath, he had to bring it back to the heath; to whom a goddess has come with a smiling face, more beautiful than any earthly thing, this person can do nothing else, but humbly serve her.

At the time he left, he did not know what he would become – he had soaked up a wealth of knowledge: it had been his first thirst, but it had not been quenched. He went out among people he sought them in other lands – he had friends – he strived, he hoped, wished for, and worked towards an unknown goal – he even strived after worldly possessions and after wealth: but despite everything he achieved – despite knowledge, work, people, property – it was always as if something shimmered from long ago, like a magnificent peace, like gentle solitude – – – had his heart taken the heath, the innocent, dear heath of his childhood, with it? Or was his heart itself such a kind, peaceful,

magnificent heath? – He sought the deserts and wilderness of the orient, not brooding, not mourning, but rather alone, quiet, joyous, fantasizing. – And so this gentle, tranquil sea carried him back into the solitude and to the heath of his childhood – and when he now sat on the speaker’s platform, as long ago; when the heath’s sunny expanse quivered in front of him and filled with a throng of figures, as long ago; and some of them looked at him with the calm eyes of history, others with blissful eyes of love, others dragging the wide mantel of great deeds over the heath – and when they spoke of the soul and their happiness, of death and what comes after, and of other things, which words cannot express – and when deep in his inner being, he became so godly he often thought that he saw God himself standing in the distant desert, a peaceful, silver figure: then his heart became infinitely big; he became overjoyed that he could think what he thought – and he thought that now things are as good as they are.

The senile grandmother was the first to recognize him.

“There has been an infinite number of gifts scattered over this earth,” she cried out one day, “the blades of grass, the sunlight, and the mountain-winds – there are people who understand blessings of plants and spread this to all parts of the earth; there are those who build roads, build houses; then there are others who spread the gold that grows in the hearts of mankind, the word and the thoughts that God lets rise into the soul. He has become like one of the seers and prophets of old, and that he is such a person, I knew before; and I made him one of them because I planted the seeds from the Book of Books in him; because he was always pliable as wax and high-minded like one of the heroes.”

But he also spent more time alone with his grandmother than anyone else did with her; he was the only one who could get her into a lively conversation, and the only one

who could understand what she said. He often read aloud to her from a book, and the one-hundred-year-old schoolgirl listened attentively; and there was a sparkle on her face as if she understood what was being read.

Thus spring passed by, and Pentecost had arrived again: – but how different this Pentecost was from one year ago. A very terrible sultriness lay upon both the village and Felix, and on Pentecost, this sultriness dissolved for both – but how differently for both.

Before we depart from his simple life, I still want to mention this last occurrence that I know of.

Sometimes when he came from the heath and walked through the village bearing gifts for his sister's children, small stones, mussels, snail shells and such, his curls around his high forehead like a god of war and yet his dark eyes full of longing and languishing, then he was so handsome that some of the young girls of the heath carried him hidden as a secret idol in their hearts, he himself had an idol in his heart; – he had carried a single point of sweet, secret happiness from the world when he left its professions and wealth – a single sweet point through every desert – and today, tomorrow, these very days it should be made known whether he had built his house for himself alone or not. He had summoned all the strength of his soul for the proposal and with fear awaited her answer, which was delayed endlessly.

Pentecost came closer and closer, and in addition to the sultriness that hung unfamiliar and invisible over the heart of this youth, came yet another that hung over the whole village, a phantom that approached with silent steps; – namely, that radiant sky to which Felix raised his fervent eyes after he had sent the difficult proposal; that radiant sky upon which, perhaps, only he then gazed; had for weeks now remained sunny, and at

least one-hundred eyes now anxiously gazed upon it. Felix, caught up in his anticipation, had not noticed. But one afternoon, just as he was going to the village from the heath, he noticed that this year the weather was so very beautiful; for just above the withered heath stood one of those splendid phenomenon that he also often had seen in middle-eastern deserts, but never so beautiful, namely – majestic streams of light shot out from various spots from the immense dome of the sky that hung over the heath, teeming with radiant clouds, and forming diverging paths on the firmament, they illuminated dazzling golden images from the expansive heath, while the distant moor became blurred in a weak, milky mountain of vapor.

So it had often been these days, and this day ended like those preceding it. Namely, in the evening, the sky was swept clean and showed a glossy, deep yellow, shimmering dome.

Felix went to visit his sister, and when he returned to his house in the late evening, he also noticed how the villagers lamented that stalks of grain stood so thin, so delicate, their wooly tassels stretching straight up like helpless lances.

The next day was beautiful and even more beautiful days came and yet more beautiful ones.

Everything and every feeling finally faded out of the terrible fear that rose daily in the hearts of the villagers. Now, there were no more clouds at all in the sky, rather ever blue and ever mild, the sky smiled down upon the despairing villagers. Now one often saw another phenomenon on the heath that also well may have occurred before, which however had not been noticed by anyone; but now that many thousands of glances looked daily up at the sky, it came to be regarded as an omen of bad fortune: namely, a range of

forest and hills situated on the other side of the heath and not at all visible from it, now often appeared very clearly in the sky, so that not only did everyone see it, but all were also able to point to and name the individual ridges and peaks – and when in the village it became known that it was visible again, then everyone went out to look at it. And it remained, sometimes for hours, until it wavered, pulling apart in long, wide bands, disintegrating, and suddenly disappearing.

The heath-lark was silent, but instead, the endless, lonely chirping of grasshoppers and the plover's fearful cry sounded over the heath the entire day and also during the warm, dewless nights. The swift-moving little stream flowed over the gray surface more like a thin thread of silk; and the corn and barley of the villages stood pale-green and shadowy in the air, and with every breath of air with careless rustling, told of their inner emptiness. The fruit of the trees lay small and unripe upon the earth; the leaves were dusty, and there were no more flowers in the meadow, which itself extended like rustling papers between the fields.

It was the most extreme of times. The villagers frequently implored the closed-up expanse of sky. Indeed, a mountain of clouds hung again for days in the southern sky, and never yet was such an ethereal thing, as a cloud, watched by so many eyes, so longingly watched as here – but when evening came, the mountain of clouds glowed a beautiful purple, disintegrated, dissipated in many beautiful scattered, rose-colored bands in the firmament, and vanished – and millions of friendly stars took possession of the heavens.

And so the Friday before Pentecost had come; the gentle, blue had become dense. In the afternoon, Father Niklas had gone over the heath; the little stream was now also

dried up; the grass had disappeared leaving only a covering of stale, gray felt, not even enough food for a single rabbit. Only the indestructible, undying son of the heath, the mistreated and scorned bush, the juniper, stood there with iron perseverance, the only living bush in the field, as the green banner of hope, because this very year it voluntarily offered such a wealth of the largest, blue berries, so effusively as none of the inhabitants of the heath could remember. – A sudden hope dawned upon Nīklas, and as judge, he thought about discussing it with the oldest men of the village if things did not change by tomorrow or the following day. He went far and wide and inspected the crops that no one had sown and that nobody thought about, and he found them ever more fertile and plentiful, God knows, stretching into how far – but then the thought came to him of the thousands of poor creatures that would be faced with a crisis if one were to gather the berries: his only thought was that the Lord God would guide them to where the birds must fly and the deer must run in order to find other nourishment.

As he came to the field on his way home, he picked up a clod of earth and crushed it, but it crumbled apart in his hands like chalk – and the grain, aged before its time, already began to pale into a fruitless harvest. Indeed, there were clouds in the sky that criss-crossed the blue in long, milky-white stripes, fibrous and fading, otherwise always a sign of rain. But he did not trust them, because they had already been there for three days and always disappeared again as if they had been absorbed by the insatiable blue. Some other farmers also walked between the fields wringing their hands. And when the evening came and when scattered thunderstorms hung at the edge of the horizon and exchanged bolts of lightning with one another, – one farmer returning from the city saw even the half-dead grandmother on her knees in the middle of the field praying with

raised hands as if the general crisis had brought her consciousness and strength and as if she were the one person in the village whose word would have the most validity on the other side.

The clouds became thicker, but only flashed lightning, and it did not rain. When Father Niklas walked between the fences, he encountered his son, and look! – he walked with a sad face, much sadder than anyone else’s in the village.

“Good evening Felix,” his father said to him, “have you entirely given up hope?”

“Which hope, father?”

“Is there then any other than the harvest?”

“Yes, father, there is another; – that of the harvest will be fulfilled, the other will not. I want to tell you, I myself have done something for you and the village. I have written to the authorities in the distant capitol and reported this situation to them. I have friends there, and many like me – they will help you, so that you will not have to experience even a trace of need, and I also will help you as much as is in my power. But comfort yourself and comfort the village: you will not need much human assistance; I have come to know the sky and its signs on my travels, and it indicates that it will rain tomorrow. – God does make everything, everything good, and it will also be good, there where he sends pain and renunciation.”

“May your words be fulfilled, son, so that we can celebrate festive holidays together.”

“Amen,” said his son, “I will accompany you to see mother; we want to celebrate festive holidays.”

The Saturday morning of Pentecost arrived, and the entire sky was filled with clouds, but still no drops had fallen. Such is mankind. Yesterday, everyone had given up all hope of a harvest, and today, everyone believed a few drops would help it. The women and girls stood on the village square with barrels and pots and pans that they had brought, so that if it rained and the village stream filled up, they would be able to do the holiday cleaning this year too as always and celebrate a festive Pentecost. But afternoon came and still not a single drop had fallen; the clouds did not become thinner though – but evening also came, and not a drop had fallen.

The courier, whom Felix had sent into the city to the post office, came back late at night and brought a letter for him. He paid the courier, and when he was alone, walked to his desk lamp and opened the envelope with the very familiar handwriting:

“It causes me much sorrow, indeed heavy sorrow that I must deny your request. The lot you have chosen in life makes it impossible to grant. My daughter realizes that it cannot be so and has acquiesced. She will spend the summer and winter in Italy in order to recover, and through me, and through me sends you her best wishes. Otherwise your loyal, eternal friend.”

The man, when he had finished reading, stepped away from the desk with a deathly-pale face and trembling lips – tears came out through his eyelashes. He paced back and forth a few times, finally, he slowly set the letter down on the desk; with a lamp, he stepped toward a chest, took out a package of letters, placed them together nicely, wrapped them with an elegant wrapping, and sealed them shut – then he put them back in the chest.

“It has happened,” he said breathing heavily and walked to the window, setting his eyes on the dark night-sky. Below was a wilted garden – the heath slumbered – and the distant village lay in dreams filled with hope.

There was a long, long pause.

“My chosen lot in life,” he finally said straightening up – and in deep, deep pain, it was a trembling ecstasy that was his reward. Then he put the light out and went to bed.

The next morning when all the villagers opened their eyes, the entire sky over the heath was gray, and a thick, gentle rain drizzled onto the land.

Everything, everything was now resolved; the joyful, festive groups of churchgoers prepared themselves and gladly let the precious moisture soak through their clothes as they went to God’s temple to thank Him – Felix also let it soak through his clothes, went along, also and also thanked God. And nobody knew the secret his gentle, quiet eyes concealed.

Such is our knowledge of Felix, the heath-dweller. – Nothing is known of his influence and its fruits. But be that as it may – one day go consoled before your Judge, you pure man and say: “Lord, I could do nothing other than carry out your will, which you entrusted me with,” and even had this will been too easy, the Judge will judge more mercifully than mankind.

## Afterword<sup>1</sup>

While investigating the life of the author, it became clear to me that Stifter patterned much of his fiction after his own life. Many of the literary figures and events portrayed in the two works I have translated for this project closely parallel people and events in his own life, which became apparent to me during my research. I will discuss each translation separately in order to illustrate this autobiographical aspect of his writing.

Stifter begins *Nachkommenschaften* with a decidedly apologetic tone, letting Friedrich Roderer, the protagonist and narrator of the text, lament: “So bin ich unversehens ein Landschaftsmaler geworden. Es ist entsetzlich” (3). Having said this, Roderer continues berating both landscape painting and writing as trivial activities. There are an overwhelming number of landscape paintings in the world, he assures us, and also an equally unnecessary quantity of books. Through this character, Stifter lightheartedly pokes fun not only at himself, but also at his love of painting and writing:

Oft, wenn ich die unzähligen Bücher betrachtete, welche sich in öffentlichen Sammlungen befinden, oder wenn ich die Verzeichnisse neugemachter Bücher ansah, dachte ich, wie man denn noch ein Buch machen kann, wenn schon so viele vorhanden sind; ja, wenn man eine neue erstaunliche Erfindung macht, so mag man selbe in einem Buche beschreiben und erklären; aber wenn man bloß etwas erzählen will, da schon so unendlich viele etwas erzählt haben, so erscheint das sehr überflüssig. Und doch ist es mit einem Buche viel besser, als mit einer in

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<sup>1</sup> For many of my observations about Stifter's life, I referred to: Karl Pörnbacher, “Nachwort,” *Nachkommenschaften*, by Adalbert Stifter (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970) 72-88.

Öl gemalten in einem Goldrahmen befindlichen Landschaft. Ein Buch ist in sich klein, kann in einem Winkel liegen, die Blätter können herausgerissen werden, und die Teile des Einbandes können als Deckel auf Milchtöpfchen dienen; aber die Landschaft, mit deren Goldrahmen die Menschen Mitleid haben, kann mehrere Geschlechter hintereinander warten, bis sie in einem Gange eines Schlosses, oder in dem Vorhause eines Wirthauses, oder an der Außenwand eines Trödlergewölbes hängt, und endlich, wenn gar kein Gold mehr an dem Rahmen ist, und die Farben alle Töne ihres Lebenslaufes bekommen haben, in der Rumpelkammer alle Jahre in eine andere Ecke gestellt wird, und so gleichsam als ihr eigens Gespenst umgeht, während von dem Buche schon alle Blätter verbraucht sind, und die Deckel morsch und schimmelig geworden und weggeworfen sind. (5)

Despite this over abundance of landscape paintings, Friedrich continues to paint, and despite the superfluous quantity of books available, Stifter writes this novella.

Perhaps Stifter's parody of his two favorite activities, painting landscapes and writing, is partially a reaction to those around him, who viewed such activities as frivolous. In his book *Adalbert Stifter: Geschichte seines Lebens*, Stifter biographer Urban Roedl points out that this would-be artist was born into a traditional agrarian society interested only in the practical and in preserving the status quo:

Hineingeboren in die uralte Ordnung der ländlichen Welt, ist er, lange vor allem Wissen, Teil eines Lebenskreises, welcher Mensch, Natur, Arbeit und Sitte in festgefügtten Formen umschließt. Dieses Leben ist einförmig,

einfach und geregelt, ist ganz auf die tägliche Arbeit gestellt, die auch  
einförmig ist, ein Leben in Übereinstimmung mit dem regelmäßigen Gang  
der Gezeiten. Was zu tun ist, dient nur dem Notwendigen, und nur die  
gründlich und genau getane Arbeit bringt Frucht.<sup>2</sup> (32)

Given the practical and fixed outlook maintained by the simple folk of Stifter's village, it is little wonder that Stifter's growing interest in the arts was discouraged and was even regarded as *Narrheit*. In fact, anything that set the individual apart from his caste was viewed as a threat to the firm hierarchical class structure to which members of society were bound. Furthermore, Stifter's love of painting and writing later cost him the love of Fanni Greipl, whose father forbade Fanni further correspondence with and visits from the young artist, who seemingly had few or no prospects for the immediate future. However dear the price that Stifter paid for not abandoning his artistic endeavors, these pursuits enabled him to escape the banal existence of small town life in southern Bohemia and allowed him to create both simple figures and characters that mirrored his own complexity.

The similarities between Stifter and his protagonist, Friedrich Roderer, are too numerous to be simply dismissed as coincidence. After the death of his father, Stifter was admitted into the Benedictine abbey in Kremsmünster where he studied Latin and probably Greek<sup>3</sup> and where he began learning the rudiments of sketching and painting. Stifter not only excelled in his artwork, but additionally, he became the best student in his Latin grammar class, for which he claimed first prize, a book Father Placidus Hall

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<sup>2</sup> Urban Roedl, *Adalbert Stifter, Geschichte seines Lebens* (Francke Verlag. Bern: 1958) 32.

<sup>3</sup> This is speculation on my part as I have not found evidence to support this. However, since Stifter's protagonist studied both Latin and Greek, it therefore seems reasonable to assume that Stifter may have studied both as well.

presented to him for this achievement. Interestingly enough, Friedrich Roderer narrates the following about his similar experience:

Ich habe nie daran gedacht, ein Landschaftsmaler werden zu wollen. Habe ich in der lateinischen Schule in der Benedikter-Abtei nicht den ersten Preis erhalten? Muss ich daher nicht tüchtig Lateinisch gelernt haben? und auch Griechisch? und habe ich nicht auch sehr viele Erbeschreibung und Geschichte vor mir gebracht? Da hatten sie auch eine Zeichnungsschule. (5)

The preceding passage demonstrates how both Stifter and Friedrich were introduced to art in a similar way.

Another similarity Stifter and his protagonist have in common is the mission of exploring and exhausting the depths of their chosen subject matter: landscape. In so doing, they strive to capture the “*wirkliche Wirklichkeit*,” the ultrarealistic depiction of the land. Echoing Stifter’s own tendencies towards this realistic quality in his art, Friedrich observes the following about his own artistic aspirations:

Ich wollte nämlich so wie der Heldendichter Peter Roderer die wirkliche Wirklichkeit darstellen, und dazu die wirkliche Wirklichkeit immer neben mir haben. Freilich sagt man, es sei ein großer Fehler, wenn man zu wirklich das Wirkliche darstelle: man werde da trocken handwerkmäßig, und zerstöre allen dichterischen Duft der Arbeit. Freier Schwung, freies Ermessen, freier Flug des Künstlers müsse dasein, dann entstehe ein freies, leichtes, dichterisches Werk. Sonst sei alles vergeblich und am Ende – das sagen die, welche die Wirklichkeit nicht darstellen können. (40)

This passion for capturing the true essence of his subject matter causes Friedrich to question the work of other painters, echoing Stifter's own sentiments. A few pages into the beginning of the text, Friedrich laments that all of the landscape painters who travel to the Gosausee in order to paint the Dachstein, paint it differently. He does not understand the reason for this, since there is only one Dachstein, and asks what amounts to a philosophical question: why? He wants to discover the reason for this for himself and consequently decides to paint the Dachstein so realistically that no one will be able to distinguish the painted one from the real one.

Inasmuch as Friedrich makes several attempts to capture the essence of the Dachstein and to transfer this essence in all of its many subtle hues onto his canvas, an impossible goal in itself, his efforts prove to be in vain. In the afterword accompanying the Reclam edition of *Nachkommenschaften*, editor Karl Pömbacher writes about Stifter's attempt to capture the "*wirkliche Wirklichkeit*" of the Dachstein: "Auch Stifter malte mehrmals den Dachstein, 1837 entstand sein Ölbild 'Der hintere Gosausee mit dem Dachstein,' eine genau realistische Darstellung aller Einzelheiten, und versuchte unermüdlich, das durchsichtige Blau des Himmels, die Farbtöne und Schattierungen der Felsen und des Sees auf die Leinwand zu übertragen" (73-74). The obsession with perfection in his art had a destructive component.

Friedrich, like Stifter, is never satisfied with what he produces and therefore, just as Stifter did, destroys most of his paintings: "Alles, was mir von meinen Arbeiten nicht gefällt, verbrenne ich. Jene wirklich mißlungenen Dachsteinmalereien sind alle verbrannt worden, ich konnte sie gar nicht ansehen, und ich hatte keine Ruhe, solange sie auf der Welt waren" (7). Stifter considered himself a bungler because of his inability to paint the

Dachstein precisely as he saw it. In fact, Stifter was in the habit of attempting to improve upon newly painted landscapes. He brushed a stroke of paint here, then a stroke there in his pursuit of perfection, until he “improved” the painting too much. He then rubbed it out and began anew. Indeed, the destruction of a newly created landscape painting seemed to be the impetus for a new creative drive. Not only did Stifter regularly destroy his newly painted landscapes, but he also asked for paintings back from friends to whom he had already given them, promising an even better landscape painting in return. Examining this cycle of creativity and destruction in Stifter’s work further, Pörnbacher draws upon the early work of Heinrich Reitzenbeck, one of Stifter’s best friends and his first biographer:

“[...] wenn er bis dahin fleißig mit dem Verbrennen fortfährt, so dürften bei seinem Lebensende wenig Bilder von ihm vorhanden sein. Aber sei es, wie es sei, er vergnügt sich mit diesen Versuchen und stärkt sein Herz.” Stifter hatte diesen Text in einem Brief an den Herausgeber selbst gutgeheißen, und er verwendete ihn mit fast wörtlichen Zitaten für die Charakterisierung Friedrich Roderers, den er auch die Möglichkeit erwägen lässt, dass an seinem Lebensende nur ein Bild übrigbleibt, das nämlich, an dem er zuletzt gearbeitet hat. (75)

Along with the artistic similarities that Stifter and Friedrich Roderer share, there are autobiographical characteristics in the events and people described in *Nachkommenschaften*.

This autobiographical content is based on Stifter’s family members, acquaintances, and occurrences in his life. For instance, Peter Roderer, Friedrich’s

distant relative and soon-to-be father-in-law, tells of a fateful incident in his early life that parallels one in Stifter's: "Da trat eine Zeit heran, die alles änderte. Mein Vater starb eines plötzlichen Todes in der Fülle seiner besten Kraft. Ein stürzender Wagen hatte ihn erschlagen" (34). Peter Roder's explains to Friedrich that an out-of-control wagon had struck and killed his father, paralleling the untimely death of Stifter's own father. Peter further explains about his family's financial distress after his father's death that led to the eventual dissolution of his father's business to pay for outstanding debts:

Forderungen wurden angemeldet, ausstehende Schulden geaugnet,  
Handelsfreunde drückten uns, Gerichtskosten liefen hinein, frühere  
Verluste vermehrten sich, und als man, um diesem Dinge ein Ende zu  
machen, das Geschäft zuletzt auflöste, zeigte sich bei der Abwicklung, daß  
uns fast nur das kleine Anwesen geblieben war, das kaum mehr als die  
dringendsten Bedürfnisse zu decken imstande war. (35)

Peter Roderer's story closely resembles Stifter's experience and how his own mother struggled after the sudden death of the family's breadwinner.

Drawing upon Pörnbacher one last time, I want to point out another connection between Stifter and his protagonist.

Noch im Oktober 1863 bessert er auf einer Inspektionsreise bei jeder  
Gelegenheit am Text und berichtet seiner Frau am 20. Oktober 1863 aus  
Schärding am Inn: "Ich kann Dir nur einige Worte schreiben, daß Du  
doch weißt, daß ich lebe und gesund bin. Ich habe gemeint, daß ich die  
verruhten Roderer an einem Abende werde durchlesen können, und nun  
habe ich das Ausbessern begonnen, und arbeite bis heute in jeder Freien

Minute daran. Du wirst staunen, wenn Du die Handschrift wieder einmal siehst. Ich bin am Ende selber ein Roderer. [...]” (73)

Stifter clearly points out in the above excerpt from a letter to his wife that he closely identifies himself with the Roderer family. Autobiographical elements are to be found in *Das Heidedorf* just as in *Nachkommenschaften*.

The events narrated in *Das Heidedorf* center around a shepherd boy named Felix. This young protagonist, ten or twelve years old, spends most of his time out on the heath keeping watch over the family’s sheep and goats. Alone in the solitude and vast expanse of the heath and with nothing but time on his hands, Felix allows his imagination to take over and lead him where it will. In this imaginary world he builds a castle from the numerous stones he collects on the heath and builds an empire with insects and other small creatures as his subjects. Such imaginative descriptions of the heath, its inhabitants, and puerile fantasy likely have their roots in Stifter’s recollection of his own childhood. Shortly after his father’s death, it was necessary for him to take his family’s sheep and goats out into the countryside near Oberplan, where he also experienced solitude, being alone with Nature and creatures. Undoubtedly, Stifter also indulged in his fantasy and thus based the character Felix on his own childhood.

Still other facets of Stifter’s childhood can be seen in this text. For example, the description of the ancient, Bible-thumping grandmother, who seemingly is forgotten by death, closely resembles Stifter’s paternal grandmother who, according to Roedl, was also: “[...] gar eine leibhaftige Chronik des Geschlechts und des Volkes, die reiche Fülle der Sagen und Lieder bewahrend, bibelfest und tiefsinniger Bildersprache mächtig” (15).

Both Felix and Stifter leave home during their childhood. Although the circumstances are different for each, their respective journeys toward adulthood are in fact comparable. Felix follows his instincts and leaves home to go out into the world. On his journeys, he learns useful skills, meets influential people, and embarks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and consequently he fulfills a spiritual quest and walks in the footsteps of the Lord. Stifter left home under different circumstances. Shortly after his father's death, it appeared as though he would be a farmer and know nothing except the rural life of southern Bohemia. Fortunately for Stifter, he received an education at the monastery in Kremsmünster where he learned to appreciate books and later landscape painting and creative writing. This journey, though less exotic than Felix's, nonetheless provides him with the knowledge and skills that form the foundation of his adult life.

Near the end of the novella, shortly before the final climactic scene in which a slow, gentle rain finally falls from the sky, Felix receives a letter that he has anxiously awaited for some time. Apprehensively, he opens the sealed envelope and reads the following: "Es macht mir vielen Kummer, in der Tat, schweren Kummer, daß ich Ihre Bitte abschlagen muß. Ihre selbstgewählte Stellung in der Welt macht es unmöglich zu willfahren; meine Tochter sieht ein, daß so nichts sein kann, und hat nachgegeben" (49). Stifter's "selbstgewählte Stellung in der Welt" as artist and writer compelled Fanni's father to end the relationship between Stifter and his daughter. Fanni consented to her father's wishes, which devastated Stifter and from which it is conjectured that he never recovered.

These selected passages from the texts illustrate some of the many similarities between the life of the author and the characters he invented. They underscore the

ubiquity of this autobiographical facet of his written work and clearly make evident that Adalbert Stifter not only drew upon his own experiences but also on his deep belief on the connection between man and Nature.

## Conclusion

During his lifetime, Adalbert Stifter received universal acclaim for his portrayal of serene, idyllic landscapes peopled by simple, gentle, pious souls who work diligently to cultivate the land, thereby improving it. Nevertheless, recent Stifter scholarship has brought to light a darker, chaotic quality just beneath the surface of Stifter's otherwise idyllic prose. In the introduction to her book, *Adalbert Stifter: The Mania for Moderation*, Helena Ragg-Kirby<sup>1</sup> writes: "If Stifter's work is taken on a whole, it soon becomes clear that its power derives from the tension between the surface and the depths, between moderation and mania" (6). The idyllic surface of Stifter's narratives evoke a world that does not in fact exist; rather, these narratives present the reader with the author's view of how the world should be. Stifter drew inspiration for his work largely from the experiences of his own life, which was fraught with disappointment probably beginning with Fanni Greipl's father putting an end to her relationship with Stifter, the landscape painter. Shortly thereafter (1837), he married the simple, uneducated Amalie Mohaupt. This marriage was unhappy and produced no children. The couple's attempt at adopting two of Amalie's nieces ended disastrously. The two girls repeatedly ran away, and after one such incident, one of the girls drowned herself in the Danube. In his later years, Stifter drank heavily and suffered severe bouts of depression and declining health. The dark undercurrents of Stifter's fiction more accurately reflect his life's disappointments, and his writing appears to be an attempt at transcending real, experienced life by replacing it with an ideal, fictionalized life.

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<sup>1</sup> Helena Ragg-Kirby, *Adalbert Stifter's Late Prose, The Mania for Moderation* (Camden House, Rochester, NY: 2000) 6.

It is precisely the tension produced between the idyllic and the real that gives Stifter's work its depth and continues to earn him notable admirers long after his death. In fact, Friedrich Nietzsche observed that Stifter's *Nachsommer* was one of the few texts in German Literature that deserved to be read again and again. Nietzsche was not alone in his positive appraisal of Stifter's fiction. Thomas Mann noted that: "Stifter ist einer der merkwürdigsten, hintergründigsten, heimlich kühnsten und wunderlich packendsten Erzähler der Weltliteratur, kritisch viel zu wenig ergründet" (Ragg-Kirby 5). Another admirer, Lutheran Minister and German Resistance leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>2</sup> found solace in Stifter's novel *Witiko* while awaiting his execution by the Nazis. Admired for many different reasons, Stifter continues to attract readers due to his complex and richly detailed descriptions of landscapes, development of characters, and universal themes that his readers identify with.

One important theme explored in contemporary literary criticism is the struggle between man and nature. Stifter's fiction, on the other hand, illustrates a harmonious and reciprocal relationship between man and nature. Although he does not promote the concept of unspoiled wilderness, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century concern resulting from diminishing undeveloped land, he does place man in the role of steward and inheritor of the natural world. In Stifter's world man cultivates the soil, making it productive, and takes from the earth only what he needs, quite contrary to the current post-industrial paradigm that promotes a never-ending cycle of domination over and exploitation of Nature, conspicuous consumption, and resource depletion solely for the fulfillment of mankind's unlimited wants. Curiously, at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, society as a whole appears to be none the wiser about the host of serious environmental issues it faces, and so the

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<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer was found guilty by a Nazi court for conspiring to assassinate Adolph Hitler.

economics and politics of destruction continue unabated. Indeed, through his work, Stifter fosters not only stewardship and harmony, but also cause and effect, choice and consequence – for both the individual and mankind. Stifter explains this phenomenon beautifully in the first few pages of his Novella *Abdias* (1843) in which he describes the choices we make as:

a serene chain of flowers [that] hangs through the infinity of the universe and transmits its shimmer into men's hearts – the chain of cause and effect – and into man's brain was cast the most beautiful of these flowers, reason, the eye of the soul, in order to attach the chain to it and by means of it count his way down flower by flower, link by link, until he finally comes to that hand in which the end rests. And if some day we have counted correctly and if we can comprehend what we have counted: then chance will not exist for us any more but consequence, not misfortune but only guilt; for the gaps which now exist are the cause of the unexpected, and misuse creates unhappiness. (22)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stifter, Adalbert. *Brigitta and Other Tales. Abdias*. Trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly. London: Penguin, 1990.

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