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Aspects of Stifter's Concept of the Sanftes Gesetz as Displayed I n Nature and Man in the Bunte Steine Stories

Elaine M. Porter

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ASPECTS OF STIFTER'S CONCEPT OF THE MANFTES GESETZ
AS DISPLAYED IN NATURE AND MAN IN THE BUNTE STEINE STORIES

by
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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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for the degree of

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This Thesis submitted by Elaine M. Porter in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is hereby approved.

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A. William Johnson 4/19/86
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Title Aspects of Stifter's Concept of the "sanftes Gesetz" as
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Signature Elaine M. Porter

Date April 16, 1986

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ABSTRACT

Adalbert Stifter believed in a natural law which he called the sanftes Gesetz (gentle law) as the sustaining power for both mankind and nature. He sees the sanftes Gesetz at work in the powers which he deems gross (great): those gentle laws which govern the world order. His foreword to the Bunte Steine is a summary of these beliefs. Although he did not write the foreword specifically to discuss the Bunte Steine stories, these thoughts are evident in the six stories of the collection. An examination of the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in nature and in man can therefore aid in the understanding of these stories. The aspects of the sanftes Gesetz which are discussed in this thesis are supported by other material from Stifter's letters and from the critics, and then illustrated with examples from the Bunte Steine stories. This method will show that this sanftes Gesetz philosophy, as contained in the foreword to the Bunte Steine, is evident in the sanftes Gesetz stories.

These thoughts are examined in two areas in this thesis. First of all, the sanftes Gesetz in nature is discussed, with particular attention to those areas which Stifter deemed gross und klein (small). Man's place in nature is then examined, and man's relationship to nature is clarified. The second part of

the thesis is a discussion of the characteristics of the sanftes Gesetz in society, and has three focal areas: the concepts of gross and klein in the individual, love and the family as the basis for the sanftes Gesetz society, and the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in society as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to study and discuss Stifter's philosophy of the sanftes Gesetz¹ as explained in the foreword to the Bunte Steine (colorful stones), and to show that this philosophy is evident in the portrayal of nature, man and society in the stories of the Bunte Steine.² Thus the main focus of this thesis will be an examination of Stifter's philosophy as set forth in the foreword to the Bunte Steine and its relationship to the six stories of the collection.

The research and criticism on Stifter is vast, with thousands of items of secondary literature in existence. As these sources are compared, however, it appears that secondary literature is lacking in one area. Although critics mention the concepts contained in the foreword to the Bunte Steine, or discuss the symbolism or other aspects of the Bunte Steine stories, the main concepts of Stifter's philosophy as contained in the foreword have apparently not been discussed in relation to all six stories in the collection. This thesis is therefore an attempt to fill this void. An in-depth study of the concepts of Stifter's foreword to the Bunte Steine and how they materialize in the stories will be useful in two ways. First of all, the stories can be understood better when they are viewed in the

philosophical context in which they were written. Secondly, the philosophy can be better understood with added references to Stifter's letters and with examples from the six stories of the collection. This thesis should therefore be useful to the scholar who would like to have an understanding of Stifter's Bunte Steine without having to consult several volumes of secondary literature.

Existing criticism on Stifter's foreword and on the stories in the collection will be assembled and analyzed, and then summarized. The result of the comparison of these assorted views on the works will be a clearer view of both the foreword and the stories. This material will be used to gain a better understanding of Stifter's concepts of man and nature. Rather than discussing the stories one by one in depth, examples will be taken from the stories to support the discussion of the philosophy. This method will show that Stifter's philosophy, as set forth in the foreword to the Bunte Steine, does indeed relate to these stories, and that the stories and the foreword complement each other.

This thesis is divided into two parts, each of which deals with one particular aspect of Stifter's philosophy. The first part is a discussion of Stifter's concepts of nature, and deals specifically with three aspects of this philosophy: Stifter's concepts of gross und klein in nature, man's place in nature, and man's relationship to nature. The workings of the sanftes Gesetz in man are discussed in the second part. This part is

also divided into three chapters. Chapter four examines the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in the individual and the concepts of gross und klein in mankind; chapter five focuses on the sanftes Gesetz in interpersonal relationships, particularly in small groups such as the family; and chapter six deals with the sanftes Gesetz in society in general.

Although the foreword contains various other aspects of Stifter's philosophy, only those tenets directly related to his views on man and nature as set forth in the foreword to the Bunte Steine will be discussed. Related material from Stifter's letters will be used to clarify this philosophy, which is relevant to all of Stifter's writing. Since the goal of this thesis is to discuss the relationship between Stifter's philosophy and the stories of the Bunte Steine, and since the stories of the Bunte Steine contain adequate material to demonstrate Stifter's philosophy, as expressed in the foreword to the Bunte Steine, none of Stifter's other fiction works will be considered.

Some background material about the Bunte Steine stories and about the famous foreword to the collection will be necessary for further discussion. Adalbert Stifter believed in a sanftes Gesetz which regulates life: in nature generally and in man specifically. The foreword, which discusses this philosophy, was written to accompany the stories of the Bunte Steine, but the tenets of this philosophy which are discussed in it apply not only to these stories, but to many of his other works.

Stifter believed that his philosophy would be evident in his writing. The Bunte Steine stories, which were written primarily for a young audience, contain elements of Stifter's moral beliefs. Stifter believed that the moral, enduring qualities of mankind could only be preserved through education in the broadest sense of the word. After he became disillusioned by the events of the Austrian Revolution of 1848-1852, he felt the need to "educate" people in the traditional morals. The Bunte Steine stories were rewritten to serve this purpose (Smeed 1959, p. 259).³

The stories "Granit" (originally "Die Pechbrenner," 1847), "Kaikstein" (originally "Der arme Wohltäter," 1847), "Turmalin" (originally "Der Pförtner im Herrenhaus," 1848) and "Bergmilch" (originally "Wirkungen eines weissen Mantels," 1843) were published separately, and then extensively rewritten in the years 1848-1852 and retitled for the Bunte Steine collection. Although the story "Bergkristall" was also published in an earlier form entitled "Der heilige Abend" in 1845, it underwent little revision before its inclusion in the collection (Smeed 1959, pp. 259-62). The story "Katzensilber" was written especially for the collection, which was published by Gustav Heckenast in 1852 (Steffen 1955, p. 161).

It may seem strange that stories originally intended for a young audience would be prefaced with such a detailed account of Stifter's philosophy. Stifter himself referred to the foreword as "diese keineswegs für junge Zuhörer passende Vor-

rede" (1959, III, 14). This leads one to believe that this foreword is not just an explanation of the works themselves. As will be seen, the foreword is meant more as a summary of Stifter's philosophy in general than as an introduction to the stories.

The foreword consists of two distinct parts. The first part is an answer to Hebbel's criticism of Stifter's works.⁴ The foreword begins: "Es ist einmal gegen mich bemerkt worden, dass ich nur das Kleine bilde, und dass meine Menschen stets gewöhnliche Menschen seien" (1959, III, 7). This sentence is a reference to the following epigram of Hebbel's which was published in the periodical Europa in 1849 (Blackall 1948, p. 258):

Die alten Naturdichter und die neuen.

(Brockes und Gessner, Stifter, Kompert u.s.w.)

Wisst ihr, warum euch die Käfer, die Butterblumen so glücken?

Weil ihr die Menschen nicht kennt, weil ihr

die Sterne nicht seht!

Schautet ihr tief in die Herzen, wie könntet ihr schwärmen

für Käfer?

Säht ihr das Sonnensystem, sagt doch, was wär'

euch ein Strauss?

Aber das musste so sein; damit ihr das Kleine vortrefflich

Liefertet, hat die Natur klug auch das Grosse entrückt.

(Hebbel, VI, 349)

Although Stifter did not publicly rebuke this attack on his writings, he did use his foreword to the Bunte Steine as a medium of rebuttal.⁵

The second and major part of the foreword is an expression of Stifter's concepts of man and nature. It is not a discussion of Stifter's views of man and nature solely in relation to the Bunte Steine stories. On the contrary, the foreword also relates to other Stifter works. This is evident for two reasons. As Eugen Thurnher points out:⁶

Richtig ist sicher auch, dass die "Vorrede" zu den Bunten Steinen nicht als Kommentar zu diesen Erzählungen gelesen werden darf, denn die Erzählungen sind weit früher entstanden. . . . In der "Vorrede" gibt er keine Erläuterung zu den Erzählungen, die hinter ihm lagen, sondern den Aufriss zu einer Dichtung, die er jetzt als Aufgabe ergriff. Im Nachsommer nimmt Stifter ganz bewusst das Thema der "Vorrede" auf. . . . (1961, p. 376)

Another reason why the foreword is more than a commentary on the Bunte Steine stories is that the philosophy that is discussed in it appears in many other writings of Stifter. Stifter was convinced that his values and philosophy would be evident in his work. He states in the foreword:

Wenn etwas Edles und Gutes in mir ist, so wird es von selber in meinen Schriften liegen; wenn aber dasselbe nicht in meinem Gemüte ist, so werde ich

mich vergeblich bemühen, Hohes und Schönes darzustellen, es wird doch immer das Niedrige und Unedle durchscheinen. . . . (1959, III, p. 7)

In a letter to Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff he continues this discussion:

. . . aber guten Menschen eine gute Stunde bereiten, Gefühle und Ursichten, die ich für hohe halte, mitzuteilen, an edleren Menschen zu erproben, ob diese Gefühle wirklich hohe sind, und das Reich des Reinen Einfachen Schönen, da nicht nur häufig aus der Litteratur sondern auch aus dem Leben zu verschwinden droht, auszubreiten und in einer nicht ganz unschönen Gestalt vor die Leser zu treiben, das war und ist das Streben meiner Schriften. . . . (1916, XVIII, p. 93)

If Stifter's moral values and philosophy do "shine through" his works as he had hoped, then this philosophy, as expressed in his foreword, should be evident in, but not exclusive to, the stories of the Bunte Steine.

PART I

STIFTER'S VIEW OF THE SANFTES GESETZ IN NATURE

To say that nature plays an important role in Stifter's works would certainly be an understatement. The very fact that the titles of the works in the Bunte Steine are named after stones points to the importance of nature in these works.⁷ Stifter points out in the introduction to this collection that these stories are as valuable to him as the stones he carried home in his pockets as a boy. Johann Aprent, a close personal friend of Stifter's, wrote in his biography of Stifter:

Diese Freude an der Schönheit und dem reinen Blick, welchen diese Schönheit überall findet--diese beiden höchsten Dichtergaben, die für die ersten Kinderjahre wohl jedem Menschen geschenkt sind, bewahrte Stifter für sein ganzes Leben, und sie bilden einen charakteristischen Zug seines Wesens. Darum war ihm nichts klein und niedrig; alles Wirkliche war und blieb ihm ein hohes, unbegreifliches Wunder. . . . (1955, pp. 27-8)

Nature remained a wonder for Stifter, as Aprent states. Other critics point out that Stifter's real talent lies in his

ability to describe nature. Nature is often portrayed in its gentleness and simplicity in Stifter's works. According to some critics, including Martin Greiner, Stifter had a special ability to perceive nature, and then to express his perception of nature in his writings. Greiner claims, "Von den vielerlei Kräften, die zum Aufbau einer Dichtung beitragen, ist bei Stifter das Naturgefühl wohl die stärkste Kraft" (1931, p. 433). He goes on to say:

Stifters Gabe, zu denken wie der Wald, hat ihre einmorige und unnachahmliche Schönheit und wie alle grossen Erscheinungen des Lebens und der Kunst ihr Mass in sich selbst. Er ist der grosse Naturepiker, der mit unsäglicher Geduld und Treue die beiden Mächte Natur und Geschichte in seiner Dichtung miteinander verknüpft. . . . (1931, p. 438)

Since Stifter placed such value on nature in his works, it is not surprising that Stifter addresses his concept of a sanftes Gesetz in nature before he discusses the sanftes Gesetz in mankind. This thesis will do the same by beginning in the first part with a study of Stifter's concept of nature in the Bunte Steine. This study of Stifter's concept of nature will be discussed from three different viewpoints. First of all, the concept of gross und klein in nature and its related characteristics will be discussed; secondly, man's place in nature will be studied; and finally, man's relationship to nature will be examined.

CHAPTER I

CONCEPTS OF GROSS AND KLEIN IN NATURE

Stifter introduces his concept of gross und klein in one of the most-quoted sections of the foreword:

Das Wehen der Luft, das Nieseln des Wassers, das Wachsen der Getreide, das Wogen des Meeres, das Grünen der Erde, das Glänzen des Himmels, das Schimmern der Gestirne, halte ich für gross: das prächtig einherziehende Gewitter, den Blitz, welche Häuser spaltet, den Sturm, der die Brandung treibt, den feuerspielenden Berg, das Erdbeben, welches Länder verschüttet, halte ich nicht für grösser als obige Erscheinungen, ja ich halte sie für kleiner, weil sie nur Wirkungen viel höherer Gesetze sind. . . . (1959, III, 8)

It may seem strange that Stifter would say that he feels that the less obvious things in nature are more important to him than the great, world-shattering ones, especially when the stories "Granit," "Kalkstein," "Bergkristall," and "Katzensilber" are built around natural disasters. An epidemic is the setting of the inner story in "Granit." In "Kalkstein" a rainstorm and

the ensuing flooding illustrate the plight of the village school children and the true character of the village priest. The plot of "Bergkristall" centers around a snowstorm which strands two young children in a cave, from which they view the northern lights. Without the excitement of the great hailstorm and the fire in the story "Katzensilber," there would be little to hold the story together. How can Stifter say, therefore, that the earth-shattering events of nature are inferior to the inconspicuous ones? The reader must look at the stories again to see that Stifter portrayed both types of events.

The relativity of the concept of gross is discussed in the foreword to the Bunte Steine where Stifter points out that, unless one is trained to look for the laws behind natural occurrences, the occurrences themselves become the focus of attention. The more earth-shattering the occurrence, the more attention it is likely to receive. He says, for example, that electrical power is one of the gross elements in nature, but that man only sees one appearance of this power when he views lightning. In another example, he points out that:

Die Kraft, welche die Milch im Töpfchen der armen Frau empor schwellen und übergehen macht, ist es auch, die die Lava in dem feuerspeienden Berge empor treibt. . . . (1959, III, 8)

Stifter then says that it is therefore not the individual occurrence that should be labelled gross, the natural laws behind

them are what make them gross. A look at specific characteristics in Stifter's nature portrayal will show that both the gross and klein elements are important in these works.

Friedrich Stopp adds an interesting corollary to Stifter's concept of gross and klein. He claims that two other sets of expressions complete the word pair gross and klein. According to him, the concept is not complete without the related ideas of inconspicuous (unscheinbar)/conspicuous (auffällig) and constructive (konstruktiv)/destructive (destruktiv). The concept klein would then be completed with the concepts of conspicuous and destructive, while the concept gross would be completed with the concepts of inconspicuous and constructive (1954, p. 167). An evaluation of the inconspicuous, conspicuous, destructive and constructive elements in the stories will add dimension to Stifter's definition of nature as gross and klein.

Both the conspicuous and the inconspicuous sides of nature are described in the Bunte Steine stories. The story "Bergkristall" is a particularly good example of this. The most-often remembered events of the story occur during the night the children spend on the mountain. The children have been to visit their grandparents in the next village, and get lost on their way home because of a heavy snowfall. They are forced to spend the night in a rocky cave. While the children sit in the cave, they hear the cracking of the ice of a glacier and see the northern lights.

Wie die Kinder so sassen, erblühte am Himmel vor ihnen ein bleiches Licht mitten unter den Sternen, und spannte einen schwachen Bogen durch dieselben Aber der Bogen wurde immer heller und heller, bis sich die Sterne vor ihm zurück zogen und erblassten. . . . Dann standen Garben verschiedenen Lichtes auf der Höhe des Bogens, wie Zacken einer Krone, und brannten. Es floss helle durch die benachbarten Himmelgegenden, es sprühte leise, und ging in sanftem Zucken durch lange Räume. . . . (1959, III, 228)

Although this great natural event is likely to be remembered when the reader thinks about the story, the story actually contains more description of the unexciting, less conspicuous natural events that may be taken for granted. In contrast to the one paragraph which describes the northern lights, there are five pages describing the setting of the story alone. The mountain is described as it passes through the four seasons:

Dies geht fort, bis es nach und nach wieder Herbst wird, das Wasser sich verringert, zu einer Zeit einmal ein grauer Landregen die ganze Ebene des Tales bedeckt, worauf . . . Der Berg seine weiche Hülle abermals umgetan hat, und alle Felsen, Kegei und Zacken im weissen Kleide da stehen. So spinnt es sich ein Jahr um das andere mit geringen

Abwechselungen ab, und wird sich fort spinnen so lange die Natur so bleibt. . . . (1959, III, 188)

The children's trip to the grandparents' house is filled with subtle descriptions of the approaching cold weather.

Im Bache war schier kein Wasser, ein dünner Faden von sehr stark blauer Farbe ging durch die trockenen Kiesel des Gerölles, die wegen Regenlosigkeit ganz weiss geworden waren und sowohl die Wenigkeit als auch die Farbe des Wassers zeigten an, dass in den grösseren Höhen schon Kälte herrschen müsse, die den Boden verschliesse, dass er mit seiner Erde das Wasser nicht trübe, und die das Eis erhärte, dass es in seinem innern nur wenige klare Tropfen abgeben könne. . . . (1959, III, 204)

In contrast to the sudden, brief description of the northern lights, the snowstorm is described very gradually at the beginning as a harmless diversion for two children on their way home and then as a life-threatening danger which causes them to get lost. Throughout this description, the little events which often go unnoticed in a snowstorm are stressed: the trees holding the snow in their needles until the snow becomes so heavy that the branches can no longer bear its weight, the disappearance of the birds and wildlife and the stillness that appeared to the children "als ob sie das Knistern des in die Nadeln herab fallenden Schnees vernehmen könnten."

The severity of the storm increases as the children walk. At first, the snow appears on the frozen ground "als ob er mit Mehl besät wäre." The snowfall increases until the trees begin to turn gray. Then the twigs turn white. Soon the snow is so thick that the children cannot even see the trees, and the snow no longer lands on the tree needles, but falls straight to the ground. Finally:

. . . es war rings um sie, nichts als das blendende Weiss, überall das Weiss, das aber selber nur einen immer kleineren Kreis um sie zog, und dann in einen lichten, streifenweise niederfallenden Nebel überging, der jedes Weiter verzehrte und verhüllte, und zuletzt nichts anderes war als der unersättliche niederfallende Schnee. . . . (1959, III, 214)

One can see from these examples that Stifter creates a feeling toward the events in nature through his description. The style of the writing emphasizes the gentleness and quietness of the storm, but he does not leave out the details which illustrate the danger of the storm for the children. The elements which are often overlooked because of their inconspicuousness are described in detail in the writing, and the conspicuous elements are not exaggerated, but described as they appear. Both the inconspicuous and the conspicuous elements combine to form the unified whole.

The concept of the inconspicuous and the conspicuous in

nature as seen in the examples from "Bergkristall" is directly related to that of the constructive and the destructive in nature. This concept of nature as a destroyer as well as a creator is evident in Stifter's foreword. Stifter calls the destructive events Einzelheiten, and says that they pass and that their effects are soon no longer evident. He also calls these singular events Wunderbarkeiten while he calls the smaller, constructive aspect of nature a Wunder. A child notices the great, destructive elements in nature, but the mature nature observer recognizes the power of the less-noticeable constructive laws of nature. Perhaps the best illustrations of the workings of the destructive and the constructive elements in nature are contained in the story "Katzensilber."

The story "Katzensilber" centers around a somewhat wild girl who is befriended by a family with three children.⁸ Two great events mark the plot of the story, a hailstorm and a fire. The hailstorm is a good example of nature at her most destructive. The grandmother and the children are on the hillside when the hailstorm strikes, and they are forced to take refuge in a hastily-built shack of twigs. After the storm, they start toward home. The destruction wrought by the storm is visible everywhere.

Aber es war kein grauer Rasen mehr. Er war zerschlagen worden, und war schwarze Erde, so wie die Steine, die durch den Regen nass geworden

wären, schwarz erschienen. . . .

Als sie zu dem Bächlein gekommen waren, war kein Bächlein da, in welchem die grauen Fischlein schwimmen, . . . sondern es war ein grosses schmutziges Wasser, auf welchem Hölzer und viele, viele grüne Blätter und Gräser schwammen, die von dem Hagel zerschlagen worden waren. (1959, III, 266)

The destruction from the hailstorm is repaired, as much as possible, by the people in the story. The remaining damage is repaired by nature; in fact, it is returned to a better state than before.

Der hohe Nussberg hatte sich über und über mit grünen Zweigen bedeckt. . . . Die zerschlagenen Stämme der Haseln, der Birken, der Eschen, der Erlen suchten durch ihren steigenden Saft die verlorenen Äste zu ersetzen und trieben Zweige, die . . . Blätter hatten, . . . deren Grösse und dunkle Farbe nie vorher auf dem Nussberge gesehen worden war. (1959, III, 289)

Nature, according to Stifter, has not only the qualities of destructiveness, constructiveness, conspicuousness and inconspicuousness; it also has the qualities of gentleness and simplicity. This may seem to contradict what has been said, especially when the examples are considered. A life-threatening

snowstorm and a halistorm can hardly be called gentle. In reference to Grillparzer's Der arme Spielmann Stifter wrote to his good friend and publisher Gustav Heckenast: "Jede Grösse ist einfach und sanft, wie es ja auch das Weltgebäude ist. . . ." (1916, XVII, 16). He was referring to greatness in mankind in this letter, but this quote also applies to his concept of gross in nature.

This simplicity and gentleness in nature is evident in another great aspect of nature: its role as a world-sustaining power. In the foreword, Stifter notes that:

. . . der Geisteszug des Forschers auf das Ganze und Allgemeine geht und nur in ihm allein Grossartigkeit zu erkennen vermag, weil es allein das Welterhaltende ist. . . . (1959, III, 8)

Joachim Müller explains this concept of a world-sustaining nature in more detail.

Das Ganze, Dauernde verlangt freilich den Geisteszug des Forschers, . . . der erkennt in dem Ruhig-Dauernden das Grossartig-Welterhaltende, denn welterhaltend ist das Beständig-Wirkende, nicht das Jähauflandende und Wiedierzusammensinkende, das sich in seinen erschreckenden Wirkungen verschwendet. Welterhaltend ist das Wohlbedachte, das sorgsam Geplante, das Weitreichende, nicht das Spontane, Momentane, Abrupt-Improvisierte. . . . (1956, p. 81)

This view of a gentle, simple, world-sustaining greatness in nature is seen in many of Stifter's stories in the Bunte Steine. The story "Kalkstein" is a good example. In this story, a young boy is told a story by his grandfather as they travel to and from another village. The story has to do with a family which isolated itself from the village, hoping to escape an epidemic. The epidemic is the great natural event which sets the stage for the story, but the grandfather does not forget to include the little world-sustaining natural events that parallel the human action.

As the epidemic breaks out in the story and causes human life to slow almost to a standstill, nature continues to thrive:

Es reiften die roten Kirschen, aber niemand dachte an sie, und niemand nahm sie von den Bäumen, es reiften die Getreide. . . . (1959, III, 35)

As one can see from the discussion and examples, Stifter does not glorify nature in his writings. He is more concerned with capturing nature as he sees it in all its aspects. His view of nature is that of a cosmos which runs by a gentle law. This sanftes Gesetz is the world-sustaining power and therefore can be considered gross. Events such as earthquakes and storms are only appearances of the natural laws behind them, and should not be classified as gross or klein. In the final analysis, Stifter does not believe that events should be

classified as either gross or klein because of the relativity of these concepts. He sums up these views in a letter to Friedrich Eulemann dated February 3, 1854:

Es gibt nichts Grosses und nichts Kleines. . . .
Wir Menschen heissen das uns Vergleichbare das von
uns Erreichbare klein--das Andere gross. . . . Gott
hat das Wort gross und klein nicht, für ihn ist es
nur das Richtige. (1916, XVIII, 189-90)

CHAPTER 2
MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE

The discussion of nature to this point has been limited for the most part to an overall view of the inner workings of the natural law. E. K. Bennett feels that action in Stifter's works is sacrificed to the description of nature. Rather than using nature as a background, against which the characters carry out the action of the plot, the characters "are merely foreground; moving against the enduring grandeur of the landscape" (1965, p. 139).

Although nature plays a very important role in Stifter's works, she does not exist in a vacuum. The stories are not mere descriptions of nature; they are about people living within the natural order. Hermann Kunisch suggests that Stifter uses nature to complete the setting for the characters and action:

Schon in früheren Erzählungen ist die Natur nicht nur Träger einer Stimmung, die von ihr auf den Menschen hinüberwirkt, oder die der Mensch in sie hineinlegt, sondern es wird im Einzelnen oder als Gesamtbild die Landschaft als Raum beschrieben, in den das Geschehen wie in seinem tragenden Grunde angesiedelt wird. Die Landschaft wird zum Lebensraum. . . . (1950, p. 72)

All of the Bunte Steine stories are centered around people, and the interaction between the characters and their natural background forms a major portion of all six stories, although it is most important in the stories "Granit," "Kalkstein," "Bergkristall," and "Katzensieber." This interaction between man and nature can be seen from two sides: from man's place in the natural order, or from man's relationship to nature. The former will be discussed in this section; the latter in the next.

Nature's relationship to man in the stories is at times friendly, at times sinister. When one thinks about the stories, it is usually the sinister side of nature that comes to mind. The storms, the disease, the death: one would hardly call these life-sustaining or life-renewing forces. A look at the various storms in the stories will illustrate Stifter's description of nature at its most sinister.

In the story "Bergkristall" the two small children find themselves in a very serious situation. They realize that they are in danger of falling asleep in the cave and freezing to death. The boy says to his sister:

"Sanna, du musst nicht schlafen; denn weisst du, wie der Vater gesagt hat, wenn man im Gebirge schläft, muss man erfrieren, so wie der alte Eschenjäger auch geschlafen hat, und vier Monate tot auf dem Steine gesessen ist, ohne das jemand gewusst

hatte, wo er sei." (1959, III, 225)

The storm that began as an exciting addition to a walk to the grandparents' house has become a life-threatening situation. Fritz Martini points out, however, that nature can also provide a type of security. He says that nature:

. . . ist furchtbar im Getöse wie in der erstarrten Stille. Sie verwandelt den Raum zur Todeslandschaft. . . . Aber der Mensch ist derart in die Natur eingeordnet, dass sie zugleich im Schrecklichen und Erhabenen für ihn zur Geborgenheit werden kann. (1964, p. 515)

Although nature has placed these children in a life-threatening situation, it also plays an active role in saving the children from freezing in the cave. The children realize they will die if they fall asleep, but they cannot keep from dozing. Nature intervenes to save them. The children are in danger of freezing, and nature comes to the rescue. The ice around them begins to crack and keeps them awake. Then the northern lights appear and fascinate the children. Finally, dawn breaks, and the children are able to find their way to the rescuers.

Another story which contains a storm is "Katzensilber." In this story, the main purpose of the storm does not seem to be to show nature's life-threatening power against the grand-

mother and the children during the storm on the hillside, but rather to show the powers of destruction and reconstruction in nature, as were discussed in the first chapter. Another possible reason for the appearance of the storm in the story is that it gives the wild girl a chance to show her ability to cope with nature's moods. When the storm hits, she quickly erects a shelter for the grandmother and the children from bundles of sticks. This ability to react to the changes in nature will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The inner story related by the grandfather in "Granit" deals with death as a part of the natural order. In this case, it is not a storm, but rather a plague which threatens the characters. "Die Seuche wurde die Pest geheissen, und in fünf bis sechs Stunden wurde der Mensch gesund und tot. . ." (1959, III, 34). The plague is described by the grandfather:

"Man weiss nicht, wie sie gekommen ist: . . .
genug, sie ist gekommen und hat sich über alle
Orte ausgebreitet, die um uns herum liegen. . . ."
(1959, III, 34)

This description of the plague shows that death is part of the natural cycle. It comes quickly and without fanfare and takes lives without warning.

In these examples, the characters are suddenly confronted with nature's dark side. Susi Gröble suggests that Stifter confronted the children with the experience of death intentional-

ly. "Das ist sein Versuch, die Angst vor dem Ende eines ungelebten Lebens zu überwinden" (1965, p. 107). This quote emphasizes again the concept that man exists as part of a greater world order. The children are to accept death as part of life because life and death are elements in the natural world order.

The concept of life and death as part of the natural order is a strong component in Stifter's view of nature. He wrote in a letter to Gustav Heckenast:

. . . es ist ein Naturgesetz, dass Menschen sterben, und haben sie recht gelebt, und ihr Alter in Kindern verherrlicht, so sterben sie nicht ganz; denn in den Ihrigen lebt die Erinnerung fort. . . . Und so ist es recht, dass die Welt immer als ein frisches, unsprüngliches herrliches Ganze da steht, als wäre sie erst gestern aus dem Haupte des Schöpfers gesprungen. . . . (1916, XVII, p. 154)

According to Stifter, then, one person's life represents a small part in the greater order of nature. Children were therefore a very important part of his view of nature because of their roles in this order. Every one of the six Bunte Steine stories has children in it, and the children often play the most important roles. They are special because they are simple, pure and close to nature. They also have a fresh, revitalizing power. This revitalizing power can also be compared with other

examples of freshness in nature. The description of the valley after the rain-storm in "Kalkstein" is a good example.

Der unermessliche Regen der Nacht hatte die Kalksteinhügel glatt gewaschen, und sie standen weiss und glänzend unter dem Blau des Himmels und unter den Strahlen der Sonne da. . . . Die Wiese vor dem Pfarrhof war frisch und grün, die Linde, die ihre älteren und schwächeren Blätter durch den Sturm verloren hatte, stand neugeboren da. . . . (1959, III, 82)

This ability of nature to sustain life is another important element in Stifter's portrayal of nature. This is evident in every Bunte Steine story except perhaps "Bergmilch," which does not deal with nature in any detail.

In the story told to the boy by the grandfather in "Granit," a young boy finds himself alone in the forest after his family dies during an epidemic. He finds another child unconscious on the ground and nurses her back to health. Nature plays a role in providing the necessities for the children to survive. They are able to find nuts, berries and potatoes to eat, they sleep on beds of grass, and they are able to follow a creek to civilization. Had it not been for the abundance of nature, the children would not have survived. As already mentioned, nature also steps in to help the children in the cave in "Bergkristall" by keeping them awake. Otherwise,

they would have frozen to death.

Stifter shows nature in these two stories as a help in time of need. It comes to the rescue when the children need it the most. On the other hand, it is nature who puts these children in the predicament in the first place. Had it not been for the epidemic or the snowstorm, the children would not be in any danger. It seems somewhat paradoxical that nature would be portrayed as both threatening and helpful to man. A closer look at Stifter's concept of the natural law will show that Stifter is not intent upon portraying nature from either side. His intent is to portray nature as it appears, both in its dangerous and helpful moods. As has already been stated, Stifter did not glorify nature; he described what he perceived it to be. As E. K. Bennett explains in his A History of the German Novelle:

The preface to the Bunte Steine may be regarded as a manifesto of the aims of the new Poetic Realism; for realism is concerned with the everydayness of life rather than with its exceptional moments, and the Poetic Realism of the middle of the nineteenth century, unlike the thoroughgoing naturalism, fifty years later, looked upon life and found it good, and recorded with loving and minute care the details of existence. . . . (1965, p. 140)

Johannes Klein suggests that, while nature is described as either threatening or helpful in the story "Bergkristall," and while its manifestations are definitely a part of the plot of the story, it is the relationship of man to nature that is important:

Das Leitmotiv des Berges ist von allen Rätzen der grossen Natur umgeben: bald friedevoll, bald unnahbar fern, in der Nähe schweigsam oder unheimlich drohend, am Schluss wieder friedevoll, doch von geheimem Ernst. Jedes Geschehnis in der Landschaft ist auch eines der Novelle, aber über sich selber sagt es nichts. Hier treten die Menschen ein. . . .
(1960, p. 252)

This quote adds dimension to the one from Bennett, which is somewhat superficial. Stifter records the minute details of nature in his works, but he does this to show the relationship of man to nature. Man is a part of the natural order, and Stifter portrays his characters in their roles as a part of nature's entirety. However, man holds a special place in the natural order because his reason and free will allow him to react against nature, as will be seen in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE

The critics disagree in their interpretation of man's place in nature in Stifter's works. Some view man as a being totally alienated from nature, while others see man as a "nature-tamer." Still others suggest that Stifter believes that God speaks to man through nature. Others point out that Stifter's mature characters are bound to nature. A compilation of these views will give a well-rounded picture of Stifter's view of man's relationship to nature.

The first viewpoint of Stifter criticism that will be discussed holds that man and nature are totally separate and that man is forever cut off from nature. Although man may live directly beside nature, he will never be able to be in complete harmony with it. The story "Katzensilber" is a good example of this view. Stifter wrote this story especially for the collection, and many feel that this story is a direct result of Stifter's disillusionment with a social order that had caused the events and the results of the Austrian Revolution in 1848 (Mason 1982, p. 128). This story is then the expression of

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. . . " feeling, an intuitive unease, that modern society, however civilized and well intentioned, is

forever cast off and separated from nature. . . .
 (Mason 1982, p. 125)

When one looks, for example, at the story "Katzensilber," such an interpretation certainly seems warranted. This story centers around a gypsy-like child of nature who is gradually adopted by a family. The family meets the girl in the forest, and over a period of years the girl overcomes her shyness enough to join the family and to learn along with the family's children. The child begins to wear clothing like the children's and learns to read and to get along in society, but she never really belongs in this environment. The parents offer to adopt the child as their own, but the child cannot adapt completely to this environment, and returns to the woods, never to be seen again.

The only real reason for the girl's return to nature is that, although this family lives a seemingly "natural" life and spends much time in nature, their way of life does not agree with her. She cannot be persuaded to go to town for the winter, preferring to remain on the farm with the grandmother, where she can be close to her beloved woods. Although the farm is located right on the edge of the woods, even this is eventually too far from her natural environment.

This story may appear a bit like a fairy tale, but the point is clear. As Konrad Steffen notes, "Der Versuch, die Natur in die Ordnung der menschlichen Kultur einzugliedern, ist gescheitert" (1955, p. 163). He points out that this is the

meaning behind the title of the story. The family tries to bring the brown girl into society, but that try consists only of a false hope. It has only the shine of silver; it is not genuine. The powers of nature are stronger than those of society, but once man bridges the gap from his natural environment to society, society's laws take over, and man is cut off from his natural origin. This is the reason the family's environment was not able to sustain the nature girl. The family lived next to a forest, but belonged to society.

A second group of critics takes the same view that man is cut off from nature, but also believes that man is able to rebridge the gap by honoring and respecting natural law. According to this view, it is man's responsibility to come back to his natural origin. This view holds that children are less corrupted by society than adults, and it is for this reason that Stifter uses children so often to portray his philosophy. Those who are closest to nature are also the ones who are protected by nature. The example of the children in "Bergkristall," as explained in chapter two, displays this phenomenon. These two children are protected by nature because of their natural innocence. Philip H. Zoldesteier discusses "Bergkristall":

Die Kinder sind nur ein besonders eklatantes Beispiel dafür, dass nach Stifters Meinung der natürliche, naive und gläubige Mensch, der sich von der Natur nicht gelöst hat oder seinen Weg wieder zu ihr zurückgefunden hat, der also in Harmonie und

Zusammenhang mit den grossen Mächten des Universums arbeitet, ganz von selbst und auf die natürlichste Weise der Welt, Erfolg haben und glücklich werden wird, und dass eine Tragik überhaupt nicht möglich ist. . . . (1970, p. 151)

Zoldester goes on to say that those characters who remove themselves from their natural environments can expect tragedy to strike. The actions of the characters determine the characters' fates.

A third related view is that God reveals himself to mankind through nature.⁹ One can see God's law at work in the sanftes Gesetz. Naturally, this revelation only comes to those who are aware of its existence. Stifter believed that one should try to see God's revelation of himself at work in nature and society through the sanftes Gesetz. "Wir wollen das sanfte Gesetz zu erblicken suchen" (1959, III, 10). Many of Stifter's characters do see God in nature, partially because they have taken the time to contemplate their world, and to watch the sanftes Gesetz at work.

Die Gestalten Stifters nehmen sich Zeit zum Nachdenken, zur Ruhe und zum Reifen. Man denke nur an die vielen gedankenvollen Spaziergänge, die Stifters Menschen immer wieder machen. . . . (Zoldester 1970, p. 80)

According to this third view, God does indeed reveal

himself to people who are in tune with nature and the sanftes Gesetz. Zoldester explains this relationship between God, man, and nature:

Es darf also ein Inneres postuliert werden, eine Substanz, ein geistiges Wesen, die "Seele" der Natur, die mit der Seele des frommen Menschen in Verbindung steht. Mit der wahrhaft erfassten Gestalt des Einzeldings ist für Stifter auch zugleich seine Wesenheit, seine Göttlichkeit erfasst. . . . (1970, p. 37)

Roman Struc points out that this is an important element in Stifter's philosophy, and the tenets of this view are particularly evident in "Bergkristall." It is this "interaction between the realms of the human and the divine" which saves the lives of the children (1953, p. 327). The children do not ever look upon themselves as lost, or pray to God for a rescue, but they are saved nonetheless. Their faith in each other and in their rescuers aids in the rescue, but it is really the intervention of God through nature which saves them.

Hugo Schmidt suggests that the fact that the story takes place at Christmas is so that the effect of the saving grace of nature can be heightened by the feelings evoked during the religious holiday. It is also noteworthy that the former title of the story was "Der heilige Abend," which again stresses the importance of the religious aspect of the narrative. The strongest argument for this view, however, comes from the text

of the story itself. The children have been rescued, and they tell their parents of their adventures on the mountain. The little girl, Sanna, explains the appearance of the northern lights, "'Mutter, ich habe heute nachts, als wir auf dem Berge saßen, den heiligen Christ gesehen.'" (1959, III, 239). The literal appearance of Christ to a still-natural child on such a religious night could hardly be considered a coincidence.

A fourth view of Stifter's relationship of man to nature is that man should be a "nature-tamer." In other words, man should be able to use nature for his benefit, while at the same time understanding it and respecting its power. This "nature taming" must be done with due respect for natural laws and from a sense of unity with nature.

Stifter sieht die Aufgabe des Menschen darin, die Natur zu zähmen und zu veredeln, ihr zu ihrem eigentlichen Wesen zu verhelfen, ohne ihr Gewalt anzutun. . . . (Zoldester 1970, p. 27)

One sees examples of these "nature-tamers" in many of Stifter's works. Many of Stifter's characters, particularly those who are close to nature, know how to use nature for their benefit without causing any destruction. This is even evident in the young characters. The boy in "Bergkristall" realizes that he and his sister cannot find their way home in the dark, but he does not panic; he simply finds a cave for shelter. The young boy whose family died in "Granit" knows how to survive

in the woods. As the grandfather tells his grandson the story of this boy, he says:

" . . . Die Pechbrennerknaben sind nicht wie die in den Marktflecken oder in den Städten, sie sind schon unterrichtet in den Dingen der Natur, sie wachsen in dem Walde auf, sie können mit dem Feuer umgehen, sie fürchten die Gewitter nicht. . . ." (1953, III, 48)

The boy knows enough about nature to nurse the sick girl back to health and to escape with her to civilization. The children are separated from each other by their families, but are united in marriage at the end of the story.

The "nature-tamers" in the stories also know how to protect themselves from such natural disasters as storms. They have watched the weather enough to be able to predict it. In the story "Katzensilber," for example, the brown girl recognizes that a storm is imminent, and hastily builds a shelter for herself and for the grandmother and children, who are not so aware of nature. Without the brown girl's foresight, the children would have taken shelter under a tree, which in this case would not have provided adequate protection. The priest in "Kalkstein" warns the surveyor that a storm is coming, and knows that the storm is approaching too quickly for the surveyor to return home safely. The surveyor is not as aware of nature as the priest, and does not believe him. He is,

however, persuaded by the priest to stay, and is later thankful because a vicious storm breaks out very quickly. Joachim Müller discusses the relationship between this nature-aware man and the storm in "Kalkstein":

Gewitterkundigkeit gehört daher für Stifters Menschen zu den Erfordernissen eines naturgemässen und das heisst naturnahen und natursicheren Lebens, und gewitterkundig ist nur der, der sich geduldig und genau in den feinsten Erscheinungen der Witterungsvorgänge versenkt. . . . (1956, p. 155)

Such natural figures as the priest have tamed nature to the point that it no longer holds an awesome threat to them, but they also realize and respect its power. They recognize its laws in action, and use them to their benefit.

The children in "Kalkstein" also know how to react to the storm which floods the valley and causes problems for them on their way to school. The morning after the storm, the surveyor has this discussion with some of the students on their way to school:

"Wenn aber das Wasser auf der Wiese so tief wäre, dass es über das Haupt eines grossen Menschen hinaus ginge?" fragte ich.

"So kehren wir wieder um," antworteten sie. Ich fragte, was sie in dem Winter täten.

"Da gehen wir auch herüber," sagten sie.

"Wenn aber Schneewasser auf der Wiese ist?"

"Da ziehen wir die Schuhe nicht aus, sondern gehen mit ihnen durch."

"Und wenn der Steg eisig ist?"

"Da müssen wir acht geben." (1959, III, 87-88)

In this instance, nature is seen as a hindrance, but from the children's point-of-view, not particularly dangerous. The children view nature as a part of their environment. They adapt their behavior to meet the situation and accept nature's changes without question. This type of flexibility enables man to contribute to the sustaining power of nature. In many instances, man survives only because he is able to adapt his behavior to his environment. In this way, he fulfills his part in the natural order.

Critics from all four of these groups note that Stifter's most mature characters are very close to nature. Zoldester points out that Stifter portrayed very natural figures such as shepherds, foresters, loggers, berry-pickers and charcoal burners. These are all people who live and work in and around nature. They have never lost sight of nature, or they have found their way back to it again. He says, "Alle reifer. Gestalten Stifters betrachten und behandeln die Natur mit Ruhe und mit Liebe" (1970, p. 37).

Zoldester's characterization of Stifter's characters in general also applies more specifically to those in the Bunte Steine. In "Granit," the main characters of the frame story are

a boy and his grandfather. Although the reader does not discover his occupation, the grandfather displays a keen awareness of nature. He imparts this wisdom to his grandson on the way to the next village. He describes the mountains and other natural features of the area, and then describes the life of the pitch burners, a group of people who work in nature. The story "Kalkstein" is centered around the life of a priest who spends much time praying and meditating in nature. The third story of the collection, "Turmalin," describes the downfall of a man who was too far removed from nature. His selfish involvement in society's evils leaves him penniless and causes his child to grow up retarded. "Bergkristall" has as its main characters two young children, and "Katzensilber" centers around a child close to nature. It has been suggested that the young girl who recognizes the white cape of the soldier in "Bergmilch" is acting on her natural instincts when she recognizes his worth in spite of the enemy uniform.¹⁰

A composite of these various views can give a good representation of Stifter's philosophy regarding man's place in the natural world. Man's society causes him to lose touch with his natural origin and instincts. Children have a special place in the natural world order because they are not yet affected by the constraints placed upon them by an unnatural society. Even though man may be cut off from his natural instincts and environment, he is not lost. The great men in Stifter's eyes have regained their status in nature by observing it to learn

its ways. Once a person has become close to nature, or if he has never lost touch with it, there is no need to fear nature. A person in tune with the natural laws is able to benefit from nature while still respecting its laws. Nature favors this sense of respect. On the other hand, nature tends to cause tragedy for those who do not know its ways or do not respect its laws. A life that is lived in conscientious accordance with natural law is a life in tune with the sanftes Gesetz.

PART II

STIFTER'S VIEW OF THE SANFTES GESETZ IN SOCIETY

It was noted in part one that Stifter believes that the sanftes Gesetz is the force that sustains the natural world. As Stifter continues in the foreword, he notes that there is a similar force at work in society:

Es gibt . . . Kräfte, die nach dem Bestehen der gesamten Menschen hinwirken. . . . Es ist das Gesetz dieser Kräfte, das Gesetz der Gerechtigkeit, das Gesetz der Sitte, das Gesetz, das will, dass jeder geachtet, geehrt, ungefährdet neben dem anderen bestehe, dass er seine höhere menschliche Laufbahn gehen könne, sich Liebe und Bewunderung seiner Mitmenschen erwerbe, dass er als Kleinod gehütet werde, wie jeder Mensch ein Kleinod für alle andern Menschen ist. . . . (1959, III, 10-11)

The appearances of the sanftes Gesetz in nature have been discussed, but the concept has yet to be discussed in relation to humanity. The main portion of the description of the sanftes Gesetz in the foreword relates to the individual's relationship to mankind. It is in this interaction between the

individual and society that one can follow the workings of the sanftes Gesetz. Like the other portions of the foreword which have already been discussed, the description of the sanftes Gesetz in society is consistent with the descriptions within the stories. This part will examine the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in society. Chapter four will discuss these values which Stifter regarded as gross and then show why the priest in "Kalkstein" is an example of a man who would be considered gross by Stifter. The discussion will then be focused on small groups such as the family in chapter five, and chapter six will be a consideration of the concepts of gross and klein in society as a whole.

CHAPTER 4

THE SANFTES GESETZ AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Stifter's discussion of the sanftes Gesetz in the foreword to the Bunte Steine continues by suggesting that the values of gross and klein that exist in nature have counterparts in man. He continues:

So wie es in der äusseren Natur ist, ist es auch in der inneren, in der des menschlichen Geschlechtes. Ein ganzes Leben voll Gerechtigkeit, Einfachheit, Bezwingung seiner selbst, Verstandesgemässheit, Wirksamkeit in seinem Kreise, Bewunderung des Schönen, verbunden mit einem heiteren, gelassenen Sterben, halte ich für gross: mächtige Bewegungen des Gemütes, furchtbar einherrollenden Zorn, die Begier nach Rache, den entzündeten Geist, der nach Tätigkeit strebt, umreisst, ändert, zerstört, und in der Erregung oft das eigene Leben hinwirft, halte ich nicht für grösser, sondern für kleiner, da diese Dinge so gut nur Hervorbringungen einzelner und einseitiger Kräfte sind, wie Stürme, feuerspielende Berge, Erdbeben. (1959, III, 10)

Before the traits which characterize a man who is gross can be discussed, it is necessary to point out that Stifter did not believe that anyone could actually attain the status of gross. It is only a goal toward which man should strive. Joachim Müller suggests that according to Stifter:

. . . ist gross nur Gott allein. Jeder Vorgang jede Erscheinung in Menschenwelt oder Natur ist nur gross, wenn und weil sie Gottes ist in Sanftheit und Mass. . . . (1956, p. 91)

Eugen Thurnher points out that a distinction needs to be made between ist gleich and wie.

Stifter trennt hier [in der Vorrede] deutlich äussere und innere Welt, die er nicht durch ein "Ist gleich", sondern nur durch ein "Wie" verbunden sieht. . . . (1961, p. 392)

This moral greatness is then something for which to strive. However, it cannot ever be obtained completely because it is not completely God-controlled.

Stifter mentions many characteristics of the man who is gross in the foreword to the Bunte Steine, but only seven of them will be discussed here: moderation, self-control, moral greatness, goodness, gentleness, and humility. The first of these qualities are moderation (Mass) and self-control (Selbstbeherrschung). These two qualities were highly valued by Stifter,

as one can see by the frequency with which they are mentioned in his correspondence. In a letter of August 21, 1847, to Aurelius Buddeus, for example, he discusses drama, in particular that of Hebbel, asserting: ". . . das Merkmal jeder Kraft ist Mass, Beherrschung, sittliche Organisierung" (1915, XVII, 248).¹¹

The story "Turmalin" could well be considered a sermon on the deleterious effects which result from a life that is not lived within the limits of self-control and moderation. The story begins with these ominous words:

Der Turmalin ist dunkel, und was da erzählt wird, ist sehr dunkel. . . . Es ist darin wie in einem traurigen Briefe zu entnehmen, wie weit der Mensch können, wenn er das Licht seiner Vernunft trübt, die Dinge nicht mehr versteht, von dem innern Gesetze, das ihn unabwendbar zu dem Rechten führt, lässt, sich unbedingt der Innigkeit seiner Freuden und Schmerzen hingibt, den Halt verliert, und in Zustände gerät, die wir uns kaum zu enträtseln wissen. . . . (1959, III, 133)

This story is about a man whose preoccupation with the material benefits of his wealth and status leads him to his destruction. His wife deserts him for an actor, and leaves him with a small child. The man disappears from Viennese society, and then he is found dead in a basement several years later.

He is penniless, and his daughter has grown up retarded from a lack of social contact. Eve Mason says of this story:

The rentherr's subjective eccentricity in itself constitutes "guilt" because it is one-sided. In particular his flitting from one pursuit to another without sense of where he is going or why he is dropping one pursuit and taking up another is seen by Stifter as a symptom of a deep want of "Mass," an inner loss of self-direction. . . . (1977, p. 555)

The child is the real victim of the situation. Stifter uses the girl to portray the results of a loss of moderation. Stifter, with his background and interest in education, shows what can happen to a child raised in an unsuitable environment. She is not healthy, and her head is too large for her body. Although this girl can speak the "reinste Schriftsprache," her ideas do not make sense. She does not have the capacity to relate coherent thoughts, and does not have a basis of common experience from which to draw ideas. Her entire life has been spent in a damp basement room with little to do but to recount her mother's supposed death or to watch the legs of the passers-by. Her physical and mental growth have been stunted due to her father's lack of moderation.

According to Stifter, Mass and Selbstbeherrschung are only possible in situations of freedom, and freedom is the true test of a man's character. These admirable qualities can only

be shown when one is able to exercise his free will. He wrote during the height of the Austrian Revolution in 1848:

Darum ist die Freiheit allein der Probestein der Charaktere, und sie macht auch allein die grossen Menschen möglich. Selbstbeherrschung bis zur Opferung des Lebens, Mass bis zur Verläugnung der heissesten Triebe ist nur in der Freiheit möglich; denn sonst kann es als Gebundensein nicht als Selbstbestimmung vorliegen. . . . (1916, XVII, 286)

Two other great moral characteristics of a man who is gross are moral greatness and goodness. Although life according to moral traditions will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, these characteristics certainly deserve mention in this chapter. Stifter was especially impressed with Grillparzer's Der arme Spielmann because the musician exemplified many of the characteristics he considered great. In a letter to Aurelius Buddeus about this work, he says of the relationship between talent and moral greatness:

. . . dass alle Kraft alle Begabung selbst der schärfste Verstand nichts ist gegenüber der Einfalt sittlicher Gesinnung und Güte. Dieses letztere ist der höchste Wert und die höchste Berechtigung des menschlichen Geschlechts. . . . (1916, XVII, 251)

This moral greatness and goodness manifests itself in

concern for others. Joachim Müller says of Stifter's concept of humaneness:

Das Sittliche ist mit dem Humanen identisch. Menschliche Grösse ist nur dort, wo sich Humanität in edler Harmonie offenbart. . . . (1956, p. 89)

This humaneness was also a goal of Stifter's writing. In a letter to Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, Stifter claimed that one of his goals was to be "mit Menschen menschlich" (1916, XVIII, 94).

Many characters in the Bunte Steine stories possess the characteristics of moral greatness and concern for others. The grandfather in "Granit" is concerned about his grandson and invites him to join him on the walk to the next village. The grandfather then talks to the boy and tells him stories to make him realize that his problems that morning with the greaseman were not as bad as they seemed at the time. The boy returns home again with the assurance that the world is not a threatening place and that his mother was not angry at him, but rather at what he had done. The priest in "Kalkstein" is a living example of greatness, as will be seen later in this chapter. The woman narrator in "Turmalin" is concerned about the welfare of the retarded girl and adopts her. The grandmother in "Bergkristall" gives the children gifts, but is more concerned that they make it home safely. The family in "Katzen-silber" tries to adopt the brown girl because they feel that the

child needs to learn to act properly in society. In "Bergmilch," the only story in the Bunte Steine to take place in wartime, the man in the white cape does what he feels is best for his country in battle, but when he realizes that he may have inconvenienced the family living in the castle, he returns to apologize, and thus shows his sensitivity toward individuals, as well as toward his cause.

Many of these characters also display another trait, that of gentleness. Stifter wrote to Gustav Heckenast:

Jede Grösse ist einfach und sanft, wie es ja auch das Weltgebäude ist, und jede Erbärmlichkeit poltert wie Pistol in Shakespeare. . . . (1916, XVII, 240-241)

It is therefore fitting that gentleness should be a trait displayed by the person who is acting according to the sanftes Gesetz. Müller points out the relationship between moral goodness, gentleness and power.

Sanfte Kraft ist nicht--wie für den naiven Menschen-- eine contradictio in adiecto, sondern eher eine Tautologie: wo Sanftheit ist, muss Kraft sein, und wo wirkliche Kraft spürbar wird, ist sie sanft, unmerklich, unscheinbar, also wörtlich: ohne sich eines Scheines zu bedienen, und das heisst: sie ist wesentlich. Das wahre Wesen der Kraft ist Sanftheit. . . .

Das Sanfte ist das Sittliche. Aus sittlicher Tiefe kommt Kraft. . . . (1956, p. 74)

A final attribute of a man who is grosz is humility. The truly great person does not even recognize his own greatness. He is so concerned with other things and other people that he does not stop to consider his accomplishments. This trait is evident in many of the characters in the Bunte Steine stories. Children are humble due to their low status in society--particularly the society in Stifter's day. Some of the adult characters also portray this humility, for example, the priest in "Kalkstein" and the grandfather in "Granit." Those characters who are not humble come to tragic ends, like the Rentherr in "Turmalin."

Those characteristics which have been discussed here are certainly not the only ones Stifter deemed important. They are, however, some very fundamental ones for the Bunte Steine stories. It is necessary to note that Stifter was not an idealist in his evaluation of humanity. He recognized both good and bad traits in mankind. In a letter to Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, he says:

In den Menschen wohnt viel Arg Selbsucht Leerheit
Tücke und Niedrigkeit; aber es findet sich auch
wieder Güte Unschuld Hilfebereitschaft Teilnahme
und Aufopferungsfähigkeit, und in einzelnen erscheint
zuweilen eine Grösse des Herzen und eine feste Liebes-
dauer. . . . (1917 XIX, 183)

According to Stifter then, the attributes of a man who is

gross are character traits, such as those discussed above. The occupation or social status of the man have nothing to do with the greatness of his character. This is why the lowly but morally-sound character of the street musician in Grillparzer's Der arme Spielmann impressed Stifter so much. The characters of the Bunte Steine are no exceptions to the view that greatness is a matter of inner values, not outer material or social status.

Many of Stifter's characters display one or more of these great inner values, but the priest in "Kalkstein" is most often regarded as a model of a man who is gross:

Die Gestalt des Pfarrers erfüllt nicht alle Bedingungen eines vorbildlichen Lebens, wie Stifter sie in seiner berühmten Vorrede zu den Bunten Steinen niedergelegt hat. . . . Aber sie erhellt wie kaum eine andere seiner Gestalten die Beziehung zwischen der Form des Denkens und der des Lebens, in dem sich das innere Wesen des Menschen sichtbar verwirklicht. . . . (Ritter 1960, p. 78)

The beginning lines of "Kalkstein" hint that the sole purpose of the story is to describe such a great person:

Ich erzähle hier eine Geschichte, die uns einmal ein Freund erzählt hat, in der nichts Ungewöhnliches vorkommt, und die ich doch nicht habe vergessen können. Unter zehn Zuhörern werden neun den Mann, der in der Geschichte vorkommt, tadeln, der zehnte

wird oft an ihn denken. . . . (1959, III, 59)

The paragraph goes on to say that the occasion for the story was a discussion of gifts and talents. The circle of listeners was wondering whether talents were distributed equally among all mankind, or whether some possessed more talent than others. This introduction to the story leads the reader to believe that Stifter feels that the priest is someone exceptionally gifted. The original version of this story, "Der arme Wohltäter," which does not have this lengthy introduction, begins on a similar note:

Es ist eine rührende Erscheinung, wenn die Vernunft als sittliches Gesetz in einem sehr hohen Masse vorhanden ist, und der Verstand als Ratgeber der Mittel nicht hinreicht. . . . (Smeed 1959, p. 260)

A closer look at this humble, yet gifted character will illuminate many of the characteristics discussed earlier in this chapter.

One of the priest's characteristics is his humility. Sometimes referred to as the "Armer im Geiste" (Utz 1949, p. 152), he could very well be one of the people Stifter refers to in his letter to Aurelius Buddeus:

Das Grosse posaunet sich nie aus, es ist blos und wirkt so. Meist weiss das Grosse nicht, dass es gross ist, aber die höchsten Künstler der Welt die lieblichste, kindlichste Naivetät und dem Ideale

gegenüber haben, das sie immer leuchten sehen, stets demüthig sind. . . . (1916, XVII, 249)

It is in this humility and simplicity that the seed of the priest's greatness is to be found. As Konrad Steffen says, "Je weniger der Pfarrer scheint, desto mehr ist er" (1955, p. 146). This statement describes the lifestyle of the priest. His entire lifework consists of helping others, particularly those of his parish. He is willing to sacrifice comfort and to lead a life of extreme poverty in order to save the money for the children. To save this money, he wears ragged clothing, eats simply, foregoes visits to the doctor, and sleeps on a hard bench with his Bible for a pillow. His entire life is centered around this goal, and he is able to live with his decision without complaint. In fact, it is not until after his death that the villagers understand the reason he led such an ascetic life.

The priest's actions are based on an empiristic view of reality. Rather than dedicating his life to helping children in general, he lives an austere life to help the children with whom he works, the children of the two small villages. The money he saves by living in poverty is kept under his mattress rather than being safely deposited in a bank. Even the fact that the money has been stolen three times does not prompt him to exchange the coins for an abstract slip of paper from the bank. He simply trusts that the money will not be stolen again. The priest has an almost childlike trust in the world. This trust is almost a form of naiveté, as Friedrich Stopp says

in his interpretation of the story:

Admittedly a fundamental characteristic of both priest and children is that they knew and followed all the rules of life and behavior with a totally unreflecting trust that all would be well, and in complete ignorance of the point at which the precepts passed into the dimension of reality, in fact, of prudence. . . . (1954, p. 119)

This almost childlike purity, simplicity and humility and the priest's devotion to God allow the priest to understand nature. Because of his inability to think abstractly, he lives in an empiristic world, in which he observes nature and is able to predict the weather. His almost instinctive prediction of an oncoming storm opposes that of the surveyor, who makes his prediction according to scientific knowledge. The surveyor claims that humans should not be able to predict the arrival of a storm with any accuracy, to which the priest answers, ". . . ich habe siebenundzwanzig Jahre in der Gegend gelebt, habe Erfahrungen gesammelt, und nach ihnen wird das Gewitter eher ausbrechen, als man denkt" (1959, III, 70). The priest's experience proves to be superior to the scientific expertise of the surveyor, as the storm arrives much more quickly than the surveyor expected. The priest continues to show the surveyor the small delights of the valley, things which would not be noticed except by those who take the time to observe nature.

The priest says about his valley, "Ich gehe gerne heraus . . . und sitze dann auf einem Stein, um die Dinge zu betrachten" (1959, III, 66).

This priest has chosen to follow God and to be close to nature in the small village. Although he does not therefore lead a life which would be considered by many as successful or great, he is in Stifter's eyes gross. Müller's description of the priest sums it up well:

. . . es ist das ergreifende Bild einfachen und frommen Menschentums, das in der Fürsorge für andere aufgeht. Gerade in der Einfalt liegt die Grösse, und das stillbescheidene, selbstlose Wirken atmet jene seelenhafte Menschlichkeit, die wahrhaft gesegnet genannt werden muss. . . . (1956, p. 77)

When Stifter was discussing Der arme Spielmann, he wrote to Aurelius Buddeus that:

. . . alle Kraft alle Begabung selbst der schärfste Verstand nichts ist gegenüber der Einfalt sittlicher Grösse und Güte. . . . Wenn es ein Dichter durch Zusammenstellung menschlicher Handlungen oder durch Darstellung eines menschlichen Charakters recht klar und recht einfach vor uns entstehen lassen kann, so hat er ein Meisterwerk geliefert. . . . (1916, XVII, 251)

Stifter's characterization of the priest in "Kalkstein" is an excellent example of such a "Meisterwerk," in which the character of a man who lives according to the sanftes Gesetz is portrayed in a very real, yet poignant manner.

CHAPTER 5
THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE AND FAMILY AS THE BASIS
FOR THE SANFTES GESETZ SOCIETY

The sanftes Gesetz is seen not only in the individual; it is also evident in all interpersonal relationships in society: in families, among friends, among countrymen, and in mankind in general. The last two chapters will look at the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in two specific areas. Stifter's concepts of love and family will be examined in chapter five with a special emphasis on the development of children. The characteristics of a society living according to the sanftes Gesetz will be investigated in chapter six.

Johannes Klein suggests that the whole theme of the foreword is love. He says that Hebbel misinterpreted Stifter's work because he concentrated on Stifter's description of nature, not realizing that the centers of the works were the characters. The relationship between the sanftes Gesetz and nature forms the cornerstone of the stories, but this relationship is held together through love. According to Klein, Stifter

. . . suchte, wie Goethe, zu erkennen, was die Welt im innersten zusammenhält, und auch für ihn war es Liebe. . . . (1960, p. 230)

Love plays an extremely important role in the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in society. Stifter speaks of the relationship between the sanftes Gesetz and love in the foreword to the Bunte Steine.

Dieses Gesetz liegt überall, wo Menschen neben Menschen wohnen, und es zeigt sich, wenn Menschen gegen Menschen wirken. Es liegt in der Liebe der Ehegatten zu einander, in der Liebe der Eltern zu den Kindern, der Kinder zu den Eltern, in der Liebe der Geschwister, der Freunde zu einander, in der süßen Neigung beider Geschlechter. . . . (1959, III, 11)

Before specific examples of love in society can be examined, a more concise definition of Stifter's concept of love needs to be made. Like the things which Stifter deemed valuable in nature, this love is not earth-shattering or dramatic; it is gentle, constant and consistent. Many critics point out that the essential characteristic of Stifter's love is the absence of passion. This fits in with Stifter's world view, because passion shows a lack of moderation. Joachim Müller suggests that Stifter saw passion as the basic sin of mankind: "Alle Leidenschaft nämlich ist Frevel an Gott, weil sie vom Menschen aus die Ordnung zerstört" (1931, p. 39).

Stifter's love is also a very wide-reaching one. This love, which is evident in such intimate relationships as marri-

age and family, is part of the love which encompasses all of mankind. The mature characters in Stifter's works are able to act on this love for all humanity. Philip Zoldester describes this type of love.

Stifters reife Liebe ist also nie eine Leidenschaft für einen ausschliesslichen Gegenstand oder ein Lebewesen. Seine Liebe zu einem solchen ist immer eingebettet in seine allgemeine, liebende Sorge für alles Lebende und alles Seiende. . . . (1970, p. 94)

Although it has been noted that Stifter's concept of love is that of an all-encompassing feeling for mankind and nature, this does not mean that Stifter discounted the value of smaller relationships. On the contrary, he considered these relationships to be the most fundamental building blocks of the society. The sanftes Gesetz works in everyday situations in society much as it does in the everyday occurrences of nature. Since most of these everyday occurrences take place in the company of friends or family, these people are especially important for Stifter.

Marriage holds a particularly prominent place in Stifter's view of society. Hermann Kunisch claims that, "Alle Liebe meint bei Stifter den Bund, das heisst die Ehe" (1950, p. 149). This view, while it may be a bit narrow, emphasizes the importance of a good marriage to Stifter. The families in the Bunte Steine stories are all headed by a couple with a stable marriage,

with the exception of the family in "Turmalin." As has been noted, this story is also not a happy one. The appearance of the actor is the crowning blow to a marriage which is already rather unstable. The child, as well as the Rentherr, suffers from the results of an unstable marriage.

One reason that marriage plays such a large part in Stifter's view of society is that it is necessary for a stable family, and it is in the family that the child is raised to be a responsible adult. Stifter believed that man was born with the building materials necessary to become a responsible adult, but that these abilities needed to be developed through proper education and upbringing.¹² According to Stifter, a person continues to learn throughout his life. Kurt Fischer gives a short summary of Stifter's concepts of education:

Der Mensch ist als Instinkt- und Triebversager bildungsbedürftig, aber er ist, mit Vernunft . . . und freiem Willen sowie eigentümlichen Geistesanlagen keimhaft begabt, auch bildungsfähig . . . uns ist unsere Menschlichkeit aufgegeben, und Bildung wird durch Lehre beizutragen haben, dass deren Verwirklichung erfolgen könne. . . . (1962, pp. 18-9)

If one is learning throughout his life, his environment plays the most important role in his development. And since the family should be one of the most stable and continuous environ-

ment in a person's life, it is probably the most important environment for development.

Families are important in the Bunte Steine stories. All of the stray children in the stories are adopted by families. The young boy in "Granit" whose parents died in the plague is taken in by relatives; the gypsy girl in "Katzensilber" is adopted by a family; and the girl in "Turmalin" is adopted by a lady and her husband after the child's father dies. It is also interesting to note the development of these adopted children once they have been placed in a stable environment. The gypsy girl in "Katzensilber" becomes educated, and the girl in "Turmalin" becomes healthier and learns to live on her own.

Since the family plays such an important role in the development of a child into a man who is gross, a closer look at its structure is warranted. An examination of specific family members and their roles in the family will clarify some of the inner characteristics of a stable family, and show how these individual members affect the education of the children.

The fathers in the stories play very inactive roles in the children's lives. They are seen as the heads of the households or as role models, but they are never confidants or friends to the children. The father does not appear at all in the story "Granit," and plays a small role in "Bergkristall." The father in "Turmalin" is the child's only link with the outside world, but cannot be seen as the child's friend. The father in "Katzensilber" accomplishes the tasks that mark him as a landowner

and head of the household, but does not spend much time with the children. The father in "Bergmilch" is described as follows:

Die grösste Rechtlichkeit und Biederkeit in seinem Wesen verfehlte nicht, auf die Kinder . . . einen grossen Eindruck zu machen. Er war ihnen das Bild der Vollkommenheit und des Wissens, und als ihnen von dem Vater im Himmel erzählt wurde, dachten sie sich denselben so wie ihren Vater auf Erden, nur älter. . . . (1959, III, 325)

One can see that the fathers are the heads of the households, and the role models for the children, but they leave the day-to-day care of the children to their wives or parents.

Hans Juergensen points out that the family is the most important place for a child's character development, but that the mother in Stifter's works plays a surprisingly small role in the development of the children.

Damit haben wir den Typus Frau vor uns, die den Helden Stifters zwar das Leben schenkt, aber sonst nicht aktiv bildet und beeinflusst. Dass ihre Existenz und ihr Wesen zum Charakter ihrer Kinder beitragen, ist nicht zu bestreiten. Doch hebt der Dichter diesen Einfluss selten hervor. . . . (1949, p. 484)

A second view of the mother is that of a gentle, stabilizing force. Although the mother does not appear often in the stories,

she is there for comfort, love and security.

Both of these views of the mother are apparent in the Bunte Steine stories. Although the story "Granit" begins with the mother berating her son for tracking in pitch, it ends with the mother forgiving her son before he goes to bed. He retires knowing that the world is again a safe, secure place. In "Turmalin" the family security is upset when the mother disappears, and the role which she might have played is not filled. This could be one contribution to the child's retardation. The mother appears at the end of the adventures in "Bergkristall," and Sanna tells her of the adventures on the mountain. Again, the mother is there after an upsetting situation to renew the child's faith in a stable world. Because the gypsy girl in "Katzensilber" never actually belongs to the family, it is difficult to decide if the mother of the family can actually play a typical mother role in the story. Of the two parents in "Katzensilber," however, she is the one who gains the girl's trust and who asks the child to stay with the family. The mother plays a rather unusual role in "Bergmilch." She is the only ordinary adult who lives in the castle. As Stifter notes: "In verschiedenen Abstufungen hatten alle drei Männer etwas Sonderbares. . . . Die Mutter allein war die immer klare und einfache. . ." (1959, III, 326). As one can see from the stories, the mother is the one who adds stability to the family during the crucial developmental years of the children.

The families in Stifter's works often include grandparents. They play an important role in the stories, probably because they take the time to be with the children, to tell them stories, and to instill in them the traditional values. The Bunte Steine stories, with the exception of "Turmalin," contain grandparents or grandparent-like figures. In "Granit," the grandfather appears at his grandson's time of need and takes him with him to the next village.¹³ Gerhard Friedrich tells of the importance of the grandfather:

Er will nicht durch unmittelbare Belehrung erziehen, sondern dem Knaben Gefühle, Erfahrungen und Einsichten ermöglichen, die Voraussetzung wirklichen Wachsens sind. . . . (1968, p. 337)

The grandparents also play a large role in "Bergkristall." Without the visit to the grandparents' house, there would be no story. The grandmother in "Katzensilber" takes the children to the woods, and tells them stories, and her stories attract the gypsy girl. The Schiossherr in "Bergmilch" takes the role of a grandfather to the children born in his castle.

The children are the main characters in the Bunte Steine stories. This seems natural for two reasons. First of all, Stifter was writing the stories primarily as a teaching device for children. He realized that children are much more interested in stories about their peers than about adults. Secondly, Stifter saw children as natural beings who were being molded

and shaped by their environment. As has already been noted in chapter one, the children still have roots in their natural origin, and have not yet been corrupted by society. The hope for the future lies therefore in the proper education of children. If the children have a strong, secure family and a good upbringing, society will benefit. Stifter wrote in a letter to Gustav Heckenast:

Die Liebe eines lebendigen Wesens wird zur Liebe des Menschen, und die höchste Freude desselben sind wohlgerathene Kinder. . . . (1916, XIX, 178)

Children with a poor upbringing tend to become burdens to society. Education is therefore extremely important because it develops the child into a useful member of society. The very fact that these stories were written as an educational tool for children points to the importance of both education and children to Stifter.

In summary, the sanftes Gesetz works through love, and this love is the love for mankind. The breeding ground for this type of love is the stable family. A child must be taught to follow the moral rules of a sanftes Gesetz society, and the main place of learning is the family. The father and mother are there as role models, and the mother also provides security. The grandparents are very important because they take the time to teach the children values and to be their companions. A child who grows up in such an environment will have the

rules of the sanftes Gesetz instilled in him, and will be able to live successfully in a sanftes Gesetz society like the one described in chapter six.

CHAPTER 6

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SANFTES GESETZ SOCIETY

One very important area that remains to be covered is the sanftes Gesetz in society. As already noted, the sanftes Gesetz finds its greatest fulfillment in human interaction, and a look at the ways in which the individual and the family interact with society will show this fulfillment of the sanftes Gesetz. This chapter will look at specific examples of families living in a society which is ruled by the sanftes Gesetz, and will show ways in which the sanftes Gesetz is holding society together.

Before this can be done, however, a look at Stifter's descriptions of the sanftes Gesetz in society will lay the foundation for further discussion. Stifter talks of powers which work together to support and to sustain mankind, and which are not influenced by the actions of the individual.

Dieses Gesetz liegt überall, wo Menschen neben Menschen wohnen. . . . Es liegt . . . in der Arbeit-samkeit, wodurch wir erhalten werden, in der Tätig-keit, wodurch man für seinen Kreis, für die Ferne, für die Menschheit wirkt, und endlich in der Ord-nung und Gestalt, womit ganze Gesellschaften und

Staaten ihr Dasein umgeben und zum Abschlusse bringen. . . . Darum sieht der Menschenforscher . . . überall nur dieses Gesetz allein, weil es das einzig Allgemeine, das einzige Erhaltende und nie Endende ist. . . . (1959, III, 11)

This chapter will focus on four characteristics of this sanftes Gesetz in society.

First of all, the sanftes Gesetz exists in a society where "Menschen neben Menschen wohnen." This suggests that if a person is to be part of the workings of the sanftes Gesetz in society, he must not allow himself to create an artificial world by becoming too isolated. This isolation can be physical or mental, but either of them is detrimental. Two stories of the Bunte Steine illustrate this isolation from society.

In the story "Bergmilch," there is a long introduction describing the water castle Ax:

In unserem Vaterland steht ein Schloss, wie man in manchen Gegenden sehr viele findet, das mit einem breiten Wassergraben umgeben ist, so zwar, dass es eigentlich aussieht, als stünde es auf der Insel eines Teiches. (1959, III, 317)

In this castle lives a man whose isolation causes him problems because he is getting old and has no heirs. His isolation remains a problem until he invites a young friend to live with him at the castle. This young man marries and starts a

family. Lulu, the young man's daughter, becomes the Schloss-
herr's heir. Hans Dietrich Irmischer points out that this
 characterization of the castle is really the characterization of
 the isolation of the Schlossherr himself:

Darüber hinaus dient die Schilderung der räum-
 lichen Verhältnisse, des Schlosses, zur indirekten
 Charakterisierung der Personen, besonders aber des
 Schlossherrn. . . . (1969, p. 166)

The owner of the castle, and to a lesser extent its in-
 habitants, are both physically and mentally removed from
 society. They live in a world of their own, with little inter-
 action with the society around them, which in Stifter's eyes,
 does not represent a sanftes Gesetz way of living because the
 people are not forced to evaluate their relationships to others.

The story "Turmalin" also contains many examples of this
 isolation from society. It is ironic to speak of the Rentherr's
 "disappearance" from society after his wife leaves because one
 cannot disappear from somewhere where one has never been.
 Although the Rentherr may have participated in society's
 functions, he never belonged in it. His isolation from others in
 society even included isolation from his wife, as G. H. Hertling
 points out. Hertling suggests that one can see this isolation in
 the arrangement of the apartment:

Schon allein die Zweiteilung der ganzen Wohnung,
 dann die Zimmeraufteilung des Rentherrn und seiner

Frau, besonders aber der Stilbruch zwischen den jeweiligen Zimmerflügeln sind beste Zeugnisse für die seelische Isolierung dieser Menschen. . . . (1977, p. 23)

Eve Mason points out that even the Rentherr's title has a negative connotation because it reiterates his isolation:

Even the name Rentherr assumes negative connotations in this context. A person not needing to earn his living can afford to withdraw into a cocoon, away from reality. . . . (1977, p. 351)

The reader's negative feelings for this character are heightened by the description of the manner in which the daughter is raised. The poor child grows up in total isolation from society.

Both "Turmalin" and "Bergmilch" emphasize the need for people to take part in society, to care about people and to be cared for by other people. The story "Turmalin" shows the deterioration of a family which ignores this need for society. The story "Bergmilch" ends on a happier note because the people in the castle reach out to include more people in their isolated world.

A second characteristic of the sanftes Gesetz in society is the need for moderation. This topic has been discussed in connection with the individual, but it deserves reiteration here. Part one focused on this characteristic in connection with the life of the individual; here it will be examined with

society as a whole in mind. Stifter says in his foreword:

Untergehenden Völkern verschwindet zuerst das Mass. Sie gehen nach Einzellnem aus, sie werfen sich mit kurzem Blicke auf das Beschränkte und Unbedeutende, sie setzen das Bedingte über das Allgemeine; dann suchen sie den Genuss und das Sinnliche, sie suchen Befriedigung ihres Hasses und Neides gegen den Nachbar . . . in der Religion sinkt das Innere zur blossen Gestalt . . . der Unterschied zwischen Gut und Böse verliert sich. . . . (1959, III, 13-14)

This lack of moderation does not become so severe in any of the Bunte Steine stories that the entire civilization falls, but it is evident in various, milder forms in the stories. Again the story "Turmalin" comes to mind. The Rentherr's loss of moderation in "Turmalin" can be characterized by his music. Stifter describes the Rentherr's music:

Es [des Rentherrn Flötenspiels] hatte keine uns bekannte Weise zum Gegenstande. . . . Was am meisten reizte, war, dass, wenn er einen Gang angenommen und das Ohr verleitet hatte, mit zu gehen, immer etwas anderes kam . . . so dass man stets von vorne an anfangen und mitgehen musste, und endlich in eine Verwirrung geriet. . . . (1959, III, 151-52)

A similar lack of moderation is evident in the whole village society of "Bergkristall." The village has become so

concerned about its own culture and its own members that it becomes too snobbish to accept the shoemaker's wife, because she comes from another village. It takes the near death of her children during the storm on the mountain for the villagers to realize their mistake, and to accept her and her children into society.

A third, and perhaps the most important characteristic of the sanftes Gesetz society is life according to moral traditions. Stifter claimed "das Merkmal jeder Kraft ist Mass, Beherrschung, sittliche Organisation" (1916, XVII, 248). Paul Hankamer describes the sanftes Gesetz society:

In eine Welt, nicht in ein Chaos wird der Mensch gesandt, in einen menschlichen Lebensraum, der ihm Grenzen, Wege und Ziele setzt. . . . Je mehr Stifter zu sich kommt, um so deutlicher wird es, dass er die Menschenwelt als sittlichen Kosmos mittels sittlicher Lebensbilder zur Darstellung bringen will und deshalb die sittliche Typik und Urbildlichkeit seiner in Raum und Zeit stehenden Menschen sucht und findet. . . . Die Dichtung Stifters gestaltet die ewige Wirklichkeit der Menschenwelt vor allem in der sittlichen Leistung schön erfüllten Daseins unter den Menschen. . . . (1938, p. 120)

Two particular aspects of the moral traditions are especially important in considering the characters in the Bunte Steine stories. The first of these is the conscience. The conscience is the means of keeping order in the moral traditions, both in the individual and in society in general. Joachim Müller explains this concept:

Der Hunger nach dem Sittlichen: das ist das eigentliche Merkmal echten Menschentums. . . . Mit dem Hunger nach dem Sittlichen ist dem Menschen auch das Wissen um das Rechte gegeben. Das Gewissen ist gleichsam das Organ des Sittlichen. . . . (1956, p. 32)

The priest in "Kalkstein" demonstrates the power of the conscience in controlling his actions. He feels guilty about his youthful lust for the neighbor girl, and carries this guilt with him throughout his life. The beautiful collars and cuffs that were bought by him through the influence of this girl are worn throughout his life as a reminder of his experience. He is ashamed every time the elegant cuffs appear from underneath his ragged robes because they remind him of his earlier life of self-centeredness and materialism. In fact, it is in response to his inability to work in the business world and his hurt upon the marriage of the girl to another that he gives up his life as a businessman to enter the ministry. The cuffs remind him of his new purpose in life.

The conscience is also evident in a larger sense as a social conscience in the stories. When the girl in "Turm.lin" is left homeless after her father's death, the members of society set up a trust fund for her future. The soldier in "Bergmilch" displays a social conscience the night of the attack, when he climbs the tower to map out the enemy's camp. He realizes that he is inconveniencing the family in the castle by his actions, and that a simple explanation could help to clear up the situation, but he must keep his actions secret for the success of the raid. He therefore sacrifices the need of the people in the castle to the needs of his countrymen in general.

The relationship between moral tradition and religion also plays a very important role in this sanftes Gesetz society. This relationship between religion and morals is apparent in much of Stifter's writing, both in his letters and in his works. Hermann Augustin points out that Stifter called reason the "hohe Schiedsrichterin des Göttlichen," and that this reason comes from God. Society, therefore, lives according to a "sittliche Gottheit" (1959, pp. 240-42). Joachim Müller notes that, although the characters in Stifter's works live in a Catholic society which is deeply embedded in the traditional dogmas of the Catholic faith, the relationship between moral traditions and religion goes deeper than the dogma alone. He writes:

Nicht nur in dieser unmittelbaren Darstellung religiöser Haltung, die im Gesamtwerk einen nur geringen Raum einnimmt, prägt sich Stifters religiöses Grund-

gefühl aus. Sondern in einem weitem Sinn ist die sittliche Haltung der Stifterischen Menschen religiös orientiert. . . . (1931, p. 40)

This inclusion of religion in the moral tradition of the society is also seen in the education of the children. Education is bound with religion in many of the stories. The priest in "Kalkstein," for example, is also the schoolteacher for the village. The need for religious education is also brought out when the gypsy girl in "Katzensilber" joins the family for their lessons. A priest is brought especially for the girl's education:

Jetzt traf man die Entscheidung, dass der junge Priester, der den Religionsunterricht besorgte, zweimal in der Woche von der Pfarre herüberkam, um das Mädchen Gott und die Gebräuche unserer heiligen Religion kennen zu lehren. . . . (1959, III, 313)

A fourth characteristic of the sanftes Gesetz society is cooperation. This characteristic is so closely related to moral traditions that it can hardly be distinguished as a single characteristic at all, but rather a compilation of the way of life already discussed. The members of the sanftes Gesetz live lives that do not infringe upon others' rights; while, at the same time, they take into account the needs of others. It is in lives like these that the sanftes Gesetz flourishes, and works to hold humanity together. Stifter describes this way of life in the foreword:

Es gibt Kräfte, die nach dem Bestehen des Einzelnen zielen. Sie nehmen alles und verwenden es, was zum Bestehen und zum Entwickeln desselben notwendig ist. Sie sichern den Bestand des Einen und dadurch den aller. Wenn aber jemand jedes Ding unbedingt an sich reiht, was sein Wesen braucht, wenn er die Bedingungen des Daseins eines anderen zerstört, so ergrimmt etwas Höheres in uns, wir helfen dem Schwachen und Unterdrückten, wir stellen den Stand wieder her, dass er ein Mensch neben den andern bestehe und seine menschliche Bahn gehen könne, und wenn wir das getan haben, so fühlen wir uns befriedigt, wir fühlen uns noch viel höher und inniger, als wir uns als Einzelne fühlen, wir fühlen uns als ganze Menschheit. . . . (1959, III, 10)

The willingness to help others, even at a great personal cost, is one expression of this type of life. The person who is oriented toward service to others in response to his call from the sanftes Gesetz is the person who is happy, productive and free. Philip Zoldeston says of this way of life:

Der tätige Mensch bei Stifter ersieht intuitiv die im Weltall wirkende moralische Weltordnung, das sanfte Gesetz, und handelt darnach. . . . (1970, p. 117)

The person living in a sanftes Gesetz society should be able to see his mission as part of a broader vision. He is not

following tradition for himself alone; he is helping to preserve society through his actions. This is why living a life that is not secluded from society, following the rules of moderation and being morally upright are so important. If the whole of humanity is to stand, the individual must do his part. He cannot upset the rights of others, as the actor Dall did in "Turmalin" by infringing on the Rentherr's marriage. He must recognize that society takes precedence over the individual, as the soldier did in "Bergmilch." When each individual acts according to the moral tradition of the society because of his willingness to help all of humanity, the true sanftes Gesetz society will prosper. The sanftes Gesetz will then ensure that the society endures. Stifter summarizes the workings of the sanftes Gesetz by comparing them with natural laws:

So wie in der Natur die allgemeinen Gesetze still und unaufhörlich wirken, und das Auffällige nur eine einzelne Äusserung dieser Gesetze ist, so wirkt das Sittengesetz still und seelenbelebend durch den unendlichen Verkehr der Menschen mit Menschen, und die Wunder des Augenblickes bei vorgefallenen Taten sind nur kleine Merkmale dieser allgemeinen Kraft. So ist dieses Gesetz, so wie das der Natur das welterhaltende ist, das menschenhaltende. (1959, III, 13)

CONCLUSION

Stifter's philosophy, as outlined in the foreword to the Bunte Steine and in his letters, is based on the concept of a sanftes Gesetz which rules both nature and mankind. According to this philosophy, the truly gross things are those which are life-sustaining, both in nature in general and specifically in mankind. The things which would be labelled klein are those which may appear great or obvious for a short time, but which are ultimately destructive. It has been seen that these concepts are evident in the Bunte Steine stories.

The nature which is portrayed in these stories has both conspicuous, destructive and inconspicuous, constructive elements. These elements are part of a greater world order. Man is also a part of this order, and his task is to live according to the sanftes Gesetz laws of the natural order. The mature Stifter figure recognizes nature and respects her power, but also knows how to use her to his benefit. Children, who are pure and not yet estranged from nature, have a special place in the natural order.

The sanftes Gesetz takes an active role in human relations: in individuals, in small relationships such as marriage and family, and in society as a whole. Stifter believed that an

individual could not really live a life that is entirely in tune with the sanftes Gesetz, but it is a goal toward which he should strive. Such characteristics as moderation, self-control, moral greatness, humaneness, and gentleness are evident in a person who tries to live according to the sanftes Gesetz. The priest in "Kalkstein" is an example of one who makes the effort to live according to the sanftes Gesetz laws.

The sanftes Gesetz is seen in interaction between individuals, as well. It is in this interaction that the love for all humanity has its roots. Because the family is the cornerstone of all human interactions, it plays an important role in the Bunte Steine stories. The family is seen as both a stabilizing factor in the life of a child and as a learning environment, where the child is introduced to the workings of the sanftes Gesetz. The characteristics of a society operating in accordance with the sanftes Gesetz include: the participation of all members in society, moderation, the importance of moral traditions in the lives of the members of the society and cooperation among the society's members. A society in accordance with the rules of the sanftes Gesetz will endure; one which is not will fall.

NOTES

NOTES

¹ Stifter used the expression sanftes Gesetz (literally "gentle law") to refer to his concept of a law which regulates both nature and mankind. The characteristics of this law will be discussed in detail in the thesis.

² To avoid controversy as to whether these works can be properly classified as novellas in the true sense of the word, they will be referred to throughout this thesis as "stories." Stifter called them Erzählungen or Studien (Bennett 1965, p. 135).

³ The differences between the first versions and the later versions of the stories illustrate the maturing effects of the Austrian Revolution on Stifter. This will not be discussed in detail in this study. For discussions on the differences between the original and final versions of the Bunte Steine stories, see Inmscher (1969), Müller (1966), Müller (1958), Rath (1964), Smeed (1959), and Utz (1949).

⁴ For further information on the Stifter/Hebbel controversy, see Stillmark (1968). Stillmark says that, although Hebbel spoke out openly against Stifter, Stifter spoke out against Hebbel only in his correspondence, beginning with a letter to Aurelius Buddeus dated August 21, 1847. There is no evidence that

Hebbel knew of Stifter's hostility toward his work.

⁵ Stillmark says of this epigram:

Stifter never made an overt reply to this rebuke, but two letters [December 6, 1850, and July 16, 1851] to his publisher and friend Heckenast reveal that he felt the smart of Hebbel's words. . . . (1968, p. 96)

For further information on this subject, Stillmark suggests: J. Müller, "Die Polemik zwischen Hebbel und Stifiers Ethos vom sanften Gesetz." Gedenkschrift für F. J. Schneider. (Leipzig, 1956, pp. 25ff). I was unable to locate this work. See also Roedl (1982, p. 107) and Swales (1977, p. 134).

⁶ Thurnher (1961) traces the development of these ideas from the Mohnkörner (1846) through Witiko (1865), and shows that they matured throughout Stifter's work, particularly after the crucial 1848 Revolution.

⁷ The Bunte Steine (colorful stones) stories were renamed after stones: "Granit" (granite), "Kalkstein" (limestone), "Turmalin" (tourmaline), "Bergkristall" (crystal quartz), "Katzen-silber" (mica), and "Bergmilch" (milk rock). The only story which directly refers to the stone in the title is "Turmalin." "Der Turmalin ist dunkel, und was da erzählt wird, ist sehr dunkel" (1959, III, 133). For discussion on the symbolism of these stones, see Cohn (1941), Klein (1960), Mühlher (1939), Schmidt (1964), and Stopp (1954).

⁸ The story "Katzensilber" is difficult to discuss in relation to the other Bunte Steine stories because of its fairy-tale and symbolic qualities. The brown girl is often considered to be the embodiment of nature rather than a real character. Mühlher says of the story:

Was das eigentümlich Unterscheidende dieser Erzählung ausmacht, ist, dass sich im "Katzensilber" die Natur in einem "Symbol", in dem sich äussere und innere Natur vereint, zwischen dem Menschen und der anonymen äusseren Natur stellt. . . . (1939, p. 302)

Stopp calls the girl the "Verkörperung heilender Kraft" (1954, p. 168), and Blackall suggests that she is "the living embodiment of the mysterious, unfathomable poetry of nature" (1948, p. 272). This character is also discussed in detail in Mason (1982) and Steffen (1955).

⁹ A brief overview of Stifter's development of a world view will help clarify this section. Stifter was raised in the dogma of the Roman Catholic church, and attended the Benedictine Gymnasium at Kremsmünster from 1818-1826. His religious education was influenced greatly by the Benedictine monk P. Placidus Hall. After Stifter left the Gymnasium, he turned toward humanism in his pre-revolution years as a student in Vienna. The outbreak of the Austrian Revolution and the sub-

sequent events in Vienna caused Stifter to re-evaluate his humanistic ideals. By the time he moved to Linz in 1848, his views had changed greatly, and he now viewed the world on a cosmic level as a unity of man and nature. The year 1848 is considered by the critics as the break between the young and the mature Stifter.

¹⁰ One can see a relationship between the white color of the title "Bergmilch" and the original title "Wirkungen eines weissen Mantels." The relationship between the color white, the white cape and the purity of the young characters is often pointed out by the critics. See Cohn (1941), Irmischer (1969) and Stopp (1954).

¹¹ Stifter considered himself a man of moderation. He wrote in a letter to Gustav Heckenast on May 25, 1848, "Ich bin ein Mann des Masses und der Freiheit" (1916, XVII, 284). Although this is fairly self-explanatory as it stands as an expression of Stifter's self-concept, Paul Hankamer argues that Stifter was only referring to his writings.

Wenn sich Stifter einen Mann des Masses nannte, so meinte er dies brennende Bedürfnis nach einem tatsächlichen wie dichterischen Bilde der Menschenwelt, in dem das allgültige Gesetz gelind oder streng offenbar ist und in welcher deshalb jedes Geschehen der Erzählung anspruchslos und doch massgebend wirkt. . . . (1939, p. 122)

¹² Stifter's interest in education led him to be appointed school superintendent for Upper Austria in 1850. Stifter helped to open a Realschule in 1850, and served as superintendent until his health forced him to retire in 1865. Stifter's educational philosophy is discussed by Fischer (1962).

¹³ It should be noted here that these relationships within the family often correspond to Stifter's own family. Stifter's father died in an accident in 1817, when Stifter was 12. He was raised by his mother and grandparents. This could explain the absence of the father and the importance of the grandparents in these stories, particularly in "Granit."

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