

Contestations of literary knowledge in Adalbert Stifter's *Nachsommer*

Profound aversion to reposing once and for all in any one total view of the world. Fascination of the opposing point of view: refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic.
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, para. 470

A scene of reading in a literary text marks a moment of reflection or reflexivity. Like a dream within a dream or a step through the looking glass, it contains a deep ambiguity. It can represent an exception to the text in which it appears or an intensification of the text's dominant logic. It can reveal a hidden tendency or stabilize an emerging structure. Reading a scene of reading requires both an understanding of the scene's position within the text and a reflection on the function of reading in general. The critical reader differentiates him- or herself from the reader in the text or identifies with them, marks a distinction between two modes of reading or, alternatively, identifies an analogy or isomorphism. Below, I will leverage the ambiguity of a prominent literary scene of reading in order to contrast two major theoretical positions on the possibilities for knowledge in literature. There are epistemological stakes in reading a scene of reading: depending on how one contextualizes details, the scene of reading can either demonstrate a reader's capacity for being enchanted and misled by the literary excitations of his or her imagination, or it can stage an encounter between different kinds of visibility and thus show how the emergence of knowledge is consistently accompanied by aesthetic choices.

This set of alternatives corresponds to opposing positions in literary theory. Possible readings of a scene of reading which accentuate the conditions that make tendentious interpretation, imaginative interaction or hallucinatory experience possible tend toward a minimalist epistemological position. The most extreme and instructive of these positions is exemplified by Paul de Man, who identifies the "negative knowledge of the reliability of

linguistic utterance” as the ideal—and inevitable—result of tropologically-oriented literary studies. Interpretations which focus on reading’s capacity to combine codes of information, forms of representation and the mediality of objects into a referential system tend toward maximalist epistemological positions. Exemplary here is Joseph Vogl’s “poetology of knowledge,” according to which knowledge, far from being a referent of a statement or a determination of an external natural world, marks the visibility of a system of heterogeneous procedures whose dynamics and traces are not reducible to singular scientific or scholarly disciplines. A scene of reading which reveals only its own logic of concealment demonstrates, for de Man, the workings of an aesthetic ideology, whose *raison d’être* resides in mimicking the illusory production or pursuit of knowledge.¹ Alternatively, a scene of reading which makes visible a network of interlocking practices, artistic forms and media represents an object lesson for the analysis of literary experience as discursive practice. This is one element of what the term “poetology of knowledge” is meant to capture.² The scene of reading I will discuss involves the protagonist of a 19th-century bildungsroman reading Homer’s *Odyssey*. The novel is *Der Nachsommer* by Adalbert Stifter. I will argue that these two varieties of knowledge—of the so-called “seduction” of the reader by the text, and of the encoding of historical knowledge in forms of literary expression—depend on one another in this text.

¹ This essay and its author thus operate with the conviction that there is no monolithic “post-structuralism” uniting various European approaches to cultural analysis, whether it be under the heading of discourse theory, the critique of humanism, etc. I suspect that questions of knowledge are crucial to determining the trajectories and tensions in these approaches which remain relevant to literary studies and cultural theory today.

² Joseph Vogl has written multiple texts dedicated to explicating his position. see “Poetologie des Wissens” in: *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Poetik und Poetizität*, 460; “Robuste und idiosynkratische Theorie,” *KulturPoetik*, Bd. 7, H. 2 (2007), pp. 249-258; *kalkül und leidenschaft*, intro. The quotation from de Man is taken from the essay *resistance to theory* 10 xyz

The figure whose legibility is in question in this scene of reading is that of a woman. She is the love interest and eventual fiancée of the protagonist. She remains curiously withdrawn from Stifter's famously elaborate prose and all-seeing gaze. In a novel full of drawings, draftsmen and portraits, Heinrich finds that he cannot draw Natalie, for reasons he himself cannot explain. Despite her singular beauty, Heinrich fails to recognize her as the girl he has seen before in a series of mysterious fleeting encounters. Her appearance and relations to characters and events in the novel are not subject to unique stylization, but they consistently arrive at points of resistance or failures of representation in her relationship to Heinrich. Her appearance thus resists the grasp of Heinrich's first-person narration, but only slightly, enough to engender an enigmatic attraction for him and while also distancing herself from him.

Heinrich's reading of Homer takes on singular importance because it transforms this enigmatic figure into an allegorical presence. Recognition of the beloved becomes a textual procedure, in which the protagonist turns the epic poem into the allegorical history of the confounding woman, by imaginatively translating the ancient Greek statue of the woman standing in a room at the Asperhof onto Homer's Nausicäa, and in turn by using this intermedial assemblage of feminine figures to construct an aesthetic lineage for Natalie. This lineage has the function of making the beloved representable for the protagonist, and thus operationalizes aesthetic codes in order to solve an affective problem. All figural women are metaphors for his beloved. The question of how the tropological system deconstructs the aesthetic ideology of this particular text, revealing its "seductive metaphors" to be a mask of its transient metonymic chains, has the curious appearance of running into an open door, insofar as *Nachsommer* stages *reading as seduction*.

Any deconstruction of the scene of reading in *Nachsommer* is thus exposed to a deadly tautology: a metaphor or incongruity of literary language whose goal is the formation of a love connection cannot be subversively undone by accusations of seduction, since seduction is its goal. The trump card played at the end of each of de Man's analyses, namely the text's trope as seductive materiality, also functions as the happy end of the bildungsroman. What, then, should one do with its tropes?

Because the trope takes on the role of a narrative culmination, it also marks a distinction between its own form and the more abstract, diffuse narrative and thematic background from which it emerges. The rhetorical zero-degree of the novel—the narrative point at which the trope of the book within the book completes the protagonist's education, makes the love connection fruitful and aesthetically connects the novelistic form to the epic poem—signals the centrality of tropological operations to the text. Other deconstructionist approaches to Stifter's works, such as those from Albrecht Koschorke and Robert Stockhammer, help me to characterize these tropes as operations of textualization which are central to Stifter's prose style. My contention is that this is precisely the place where a poetology of knowledge is apt, insofar as it poses the question of what concrete procedures make the text's concluding seduction possible (rather than show how seductive materiality reveal its operations or goals as illusory). **Specifically, I will argue that scene of textual seduction integrates processes of conversion and filtration of aesthetic and scientific observation across disciplines and media into a narrative form, namely the novel of education, which is also a love story [a bit clunky, this formulation].** De Man's "negative" knowledge of language's deviousness can thus be looked at as the flip-side of a positivity in Michel Foucault's sense of the term, as a statement within a deployment of an historically

specific strategy (in this case, a strategy of education).³ Sharpened into a literary-epistemic thesis: literature is a form of knowledge which is discursively positive in direct proportion to how aesthetically negative or unreliable it is.

Stifter often thematizes the problem of the choice of the proper instrument for observation. The first meeting of mentor and protagonist, Risach and Heinrich, in *Nachsommer* famously takes place in the form of a friendly debate about how to predict the weather. Following the tropological analysis of the novel, I will show how Stifter's literary and theoretical reflections on the proper mode of observation both reserve a space for a traditionally literary mode of representation, while also intervening in unstable emerging fields of knowledge, specifically meteorology. Drawing on theoretical approaches to the connection of 19th-century meteorology and German literary expression from Joseph Vogl and Elisabeth Strowick, I will show how the dispersed, abstract objectivity of clouds and their electrical phenomena characterize Stifter's prose as well as Heinrich's education. This discursive analysis of meteorological objectivity does not run parallel to the rhetorical analysis, but rather collides with it. Both approaches to the text hinge on the same set of textual source details, despite taking different points of theoretical departure. The essay as a whole stages, in experimental fashion, an encounter between two literary theories which, despite their diametrically opposed epistemic priorities, find themselves argumentatively justified by the same text.

0. Personal-methodological interlude

This essay is positioned over a discursive and geographical gap. It was originally conceived as an attempt to come to terms with difficulties the author encountered when trying

³ On Foucault's terminology, see the archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language, 135-141

to import certain methodologies which enjoy broad acceptance in academic institutions in Germany and Austria (namely, discourse analysis and the poetology of knowledge) to Germanic Studies circles in the United States. In my personal approach to this dilemma and in this essay, I've centralized questions of knowledge. What does literature know? What can literature know? And what relationships or encounters are possible between theoretical positions which examine literature primarily as a form of knowledge and those which exclude knowledge from literary questions?

Theoretical contrasts of this kind seek to create comparative distance between the positions brought into dialogue, distance from which the alternative position from one's one becomes recognizable and potentially exciting. This staging runs the risk of creating a parallax: instead of creating new visibilities for scholars on either side of the divide in question, the comparative frame distances the author (me, in this case) equally from both sides. Readers committed to a Foucauldian approach to literature (broadly understood) may find the juxtaposition of discourse-analytical and rhetorical methods disbalanced from the outset by an anachronistic focus on a scholarly debate unrelated to the contemporary modes of representation in Austria in the 1850s; deconstructionist readers may find that the question of knowledge assumes already a distinction between textual procedures and the outside of the text and thus fails to engage with the focal point of deconstruction altogether.

The choice of object for this comparison also poses problems, though its advantages ultimately outweigh them. The scene of reading in *Nachsommer* is highly idiosyncratic, directly thematizing its affective effects on the fictional reader while also distinguishing between the reader of *Nachsommer* and the reader in the text. This makes a kind of observation of reading's functions possible, but may irritate those accustomed to the coincidence of reading and

seduction typical of de Man's interpretations. The poetology of knowledge is conceived as a method of collecting multiple texts, objects, modes of representation and forms of knowledge together around unifying "statements" which exemplify discourses⁴; the central role played by a single novel in this essay may lead scholars attached to this approach to question the horizontality of my contextualization, i.e., *Nachsommer's* embedding in contemporary forms of knowledge in my framing. Below, I argue that each of these possible sources of irritation result in a theoretical proximity between the methods in question: the materiality of the master trope in *Nachsommer*—in which the act of reading constructs fantasmatic image of the female beloved—emerges in the context of concrete procedures of representation, and the co-emergence of knowledge within these modes of representation are shown to be structurally dynamic in the operations of the novel's narrative form, i.e., education.

This essay seeks to supplement the remarkable lack of English-language scholarship on Stifter's works and *Nachsommer* in particular, as well as the lack of methodologically clear discussion in anglophone Germanic Studies of the poetology of knowledge. My wager is that these two difficulties help to resolve each other.

1. The scene of reading

In his essay "Resistance to Theory," Paul de Man describes the singular literary quality of texts. Literariness consists in a "non-grammatical residue" of formally describable uses of language, which is also not reducible to aesthetic categories (i.e., figures from the history of the

⁴ The role of the statement (dt.: Aussagesatz) has led to resistance to the poetology of knowledge as a stable methodology for cultural studies. See Steining, Gideon, "Am Ungrund. Was sind und zu welchem Ende studiert man 'Poetologien des Wissens'?" in *KulturPoetik* 7, 2 (2007), 234-258. Joseph Vogl responded to Steining's criticisms in "Robuste und idiosynkratische Theorie," (ibid.).

philosophy of art, including the typological separations of media and forms). Reading a text literarily involves nullifying its aesthetic traits, and even entails the possibility of nullifying the sculptural or imagistic qualities of sculptures and images in favor of a linguistic formalism.

Literature involves the voiding, rather than the affirmation, of aesthetic categories. One of the consequences of this is that, whereas we have traditionally been accustomed to reading literature by analogy with the plastic arts and with music, we now have to recognize the necessity of a non-perceptual, linguistic moment in painting and music, and learn to *read* pictures rather than to *imagine* meaning.⁵ de Man's insistence on the primacy of semiological functions of texts (and, it appears, of all artworks) stems from a deeply held resistance or allergy to what he considers to be the aberrant ideological manipulations of the materiality of language. The critical reader, for de Man, refuses to be seduced by the text's aesthetic effects. Rather than passing judgement on the conception of reading for which de Man advocates, I'd like to submit his opposition of aesthetic forms and reading to a practical experiment: namely, to observe the theoretical consequences of a literary scene of reading which gives in to and mobilizes precisely the aesthetic seduction against which de Man's idea of reading is positioned.

When Heinrich Drendorf picks up his host's copy of Homer's *Odyssey* toward the end of *Nachsommer*, he has just confessed his affection for the beautiful Natalie Taroni, and heard her own confession of feelings for him. She reveals to him a curious oversight on his part, namely that they had encountered each other briefly multiple times in the past (which by now the reader has long since noticed). Heinrich opens the book and sees: women. Specifically, he reads about Nausicaa's farewell to Odysseus in the sixth book of the *Odyssey*. He associates her with the statue of the woman he had seen at the rose house. While reading he recalls the statue, which he refers to as the virgin.

⁵ resistance 10

Die fremden Worte, die als lebendig gesprochen einer fernen Zeit angehörten, die Gestalten, welche durch diese Worte in unsere Zeit mit all ihrer ihnen einstens angehörigen Eigentümlichkeit heraufgeführt wurden, schlossen sich an die Jungfrau an, welche ich auf der Treppe hatte stehen gesehen. Als Nausikae kam, war es mir wieder, wie es mir bei der ersten richtigen Betrachtung der Marmorgestalt gewesen war, die Gewänder des harten Stoffes löseten sich zu leichter Milde, die Glieder bewegten sich, das Angesicht erhielt wandelbares Leben, und die Gestalt trat als Nausikae zu mir. Es war auch die Erinnerung jenes Abends gewesen, die heute meine Hand, als ich von der Treppe in den Marmorsaal und in das Bilderzimmer herauf gekommen war und in diesen keine Befriedigung gefunden hatte, zu den Worten Homers im Odysseus greifen ließ. (647)

This imaginative or hallucinatory experience of the presence of the statue while reading the text repeats in reverse the original association of the two Greek female figures. During an earlier visit to the rose house, Heinrich encounters the statue by chance during a storm. He is reminded spontaneously of the passage from Homer. The text recalls the statue and vice versa.

Die Mädchengestalt stand in so schöner Bildung, wie sie ein Künstler ersinnen, wie sie sich eine Einbildungskraft vorstellen oder wie sie ein sehr tiefes Herz ahnen kann, auf dem niedern Sockel vor mir. [...] Das Haupt stand auf dem Nacken, als blühetete es auf demselben. [...] Unter diesem Throne war die klare Wange ruhig und ernst, dann der Mund, so feingebildet, als sollte er verständige Worte sagen oder schöne Lieder singen [...] Daß sich die Gestalt nicht regte, schien bloß in dem strengen, bedeutungsvollen Himmel zu liegen, der mit den fernen stehenden Gewittern über das Glasdach gespannt war und zur Betrachtung einlud. [...] Ich dachte es sei Nausikae, wie sie an der Pforte des goldenen Saales stand und zu Odysseus die Worte sagte: »Fremdling, wenn du in dein Land kömmst, so gedenke meiner.« [...] Ich hatte eine Empfindung, als ob ich bei einem lebenden schweigenden Wesen stände, und hatte fast einen Schauer, als ob sich das Mädchen in jedem Augenblicke regen würde. (350-351)

The recollection of the text provides the presence of the statue with a disturbing and lively dynamism, and the recollection of the presence of the statue while reading dissolves the stasis of the sculpture and brings a new vitality to both female figures. The hallucination of sculptural materiality in between the lines of the Homeric text constitutes the reading experience. Art comes alive when classical sculpture and the epic poem find points of contact in the—as yet still aesthetically produced—figure of the woman.

The connection between the Greek sculpture and the Greek text attaches itself to Natalie and to modernity in the same act of reading Homer. Natalie takes on the role of the

Nausicaa of today and completes the synchronization of aesthetic experience and affective life, history and presence.

Als die Helden das Mahl in dem Saale genossen hatten, als der Sänger gerufen worden war, als die Worte jenes Liedes vernommen worden waren, dessen Ruhm damals bis zu dem Himmel reichte, als Odysseus das Haupt verhüllt hatte, damit man die Tränen nicht sähe, welche ihm aus den Augen flossen, als endlich Nausikae schlicht und mit tiefem Gefühle an den Säulen der Pforte des Saales stand: *da gesellte sich auch lächelnd das schöne Bild Nataliens zu mir*; sie war die Nausikae von jetzt, so wahr, so einfach, nicht prunkend mit ihrem Gefühle und es nicht verhehlend. Beide Gestalten verschmolzen in einander, und ich las und dachte zugleich, und bald las ich und bald dachte ich, und als ich endlich sehr lange bloß allein gedacht hatte, nahm ich das Buch, das vor mir auf dem Tische lag, wieder auf, trug es in das Bücherzimmer auf seinen Platz und ging durch den Marmorsaal und den Gang der Gastzimmer in meine Wohnung zurück. (647, emphasis added)⁶

The three faces of the women melt into one, specifically into the smiling face of Natalie, which had shown already in disparate moments each of the qualities of the faces of Nausicaa and the statue in previous scenes. Natalie's beauty has a peculiarly ancient character: "Natalie stammte also gleichsam aus einem Geschlechte, das vergangen war und das anders und selbständiger war als das jetzige" (466). The reading experience converts Natalie's face into an image.

Crucially, this imagination of Natalie—in the literal sense of her becoming an image alongside other images of women from Greek antiquity—fills a gap in Heinrich's emotional and artistic relationship to Natalie. Heinrich cannot bring himself to draw Natalie, due an inexpressible feeling he has in her presence. She stands out among other girls her age during a visit to the rose house.

⁶ Joseph Vogl also places this synthetic experience at the center of the novel in an article on the specific variety of prose textuality deployed by Stifter. However, because he *concludes* his analysis with this quote, it remains unclear (to me at least) if and how this experience of the textuality of the Greek epic corresponds to the textuality of the modern novel, what relationship it maintains to the varieties of discursive representation also present in the novel, and how the scene relates to the narrative structure of the Bildungsroman as generic form. see vogl, "der text als schleier: zu stifters nachsommer" in jahrbuch der deutschen schillergesellschaft 1993 (37), 298-312

Natalie—ich weiß nicht, war ihre Schönheit unendlich größer oder war es ein anderes Wesen in ihr, welches wirkte—ich hatte aber dieses Wesen noch in einem geringen Maße zu ergründen vermocht, da sie sehr wenig zu mir gesprochen hatte, ich hatte ihren Gang und ihre Bewegungen nicht beurteilen können, da ich mir nicht den Mut nahm, sie zu beobachten, wie man eine Zeichnung beobachtet—aber sie war neben diesen zwei Mädchen weit höher, wahr, klar und schön, daß jeder Vergleich aufhörte. Wenn es wahr ist, daß Mädchen bezaubernd wirken können, so konnten die zwei Schwestern bezaubern; aber um Natalie war etwas wie ein tiefes Glück verbreitet. (245)

Natalie is characterized first as an incomparable beauty. Education in *Nachsommer* refers to a series of events which make this beauty representable in stages. By the end of the novel, Natalie can be assimilated into a cultural history of feminine representation as a result of Heinrich's fulfilled education. *Bildung* traces a narrative arc between the interruption of representation marked by the woman to the overcoming of her unrepresentability by means of a multi-media synthesis of aesthetic forms.

This arc can be followed alongside the transformation of an element of Heinrich's experience of feminine appearance: blushing cheeks. Heinrich's first encounter with Natalie also marks his first observation of the reddened cheeks that characterize his developing artistic skill and initiation into the life of artworks, such as the statue at the rose house: "Ich wußte nicht, waren die Wangen des Mädchens überhaupt so rot, oder war es errötet" (227). When he later takes up portraiture, Heinrich notes the pleasure of drawing blushing cheeks during his endeavors to draw and paint the female face.

Besondere Freude machte es mir, daß ich nach und nach die Feinheiten des menschlichen Angesichtes immer besser behandeln lernte, besonders, was mir früher so schwer war, wenn der leichte Duft der Farbe über die Wangen schöner Mädchen ging, die sich sanft rundeten, schier keine Abwechslung zeigten und doch so mannigfaltig waren. (349)

Heinrich's pleasure in imitating the affective surface of the girls' faces on his canvas repeats itself immediately and uncannily on the marble surface of the statue. Directly afterwards, while observing (for the first time) the statue in the light of the electrical activity of the evening storm, Heinrich notes the flickering of skin-like redness across the figure's face during the fleeting

lightning strikes. “Wenn ein Blitz geschah, floß ein rosenrotes Licht an ihr hernieder, und dann war wieder die frühere Farbe da. [...] Ich blickte die Gestalt an und sah mehrere Male die rötlichen Blitze und die graulich weiße Farbe auf ihr wechseln” (350-351). Thus, a relay is formed, originating in the first impressions of Natalie’s face and Heinrich’s inability to draw it, flowing into his first portraits of local girls, translated onto his first experience of sculpture, further translated onto the face of Nausicaa, which is finally reunited with Natalie’s face while reading the *Odyssey*. Drawing the girls’ faces, reading Homer and observing the statue all interact to form an aesthetic *anagnorisis* which makes Heinrich’s love for Natalie legible and objective.

The act of falling in love is thus completed by the act of reading. The epic poem and marble sculpture provide an aesthetic phenomenality which stabilizes the affective transformation of the protagonist. This act of reading, like many events in the novel, is characterized by good timing⁷; the importance of properly implemented literary experience becomes explicit in the novel when young Gustav receives his first text by Goethe from his mother on his birthday.⁸ Literature’s proper function, in Stifter’s novel, is to circulate between mentor and mentee, parent and child, and to form and reflect the emotional development of its reader. “Seduction” is the goal and function of this quasi-Schillerian aesthetic education. *Nachsommer* demonstrates this function of literary texts within a literary text (rather than, say, in critical letters, à la Schiller).

There is something terrifically unreal about Heinrich’s reading experience. By the time he picks up the *Odyssey*, he is already primed for an aesthetically aberrant experience (to

⁷ Cornelia Zumbusch has emphasized the role of delay as a narrative function in the novel. see xyz

⁸ xyz

borrow another term from de Man), and the narration of his imaginative experience bears little resemblance to anyone else's experience of Homer. It contains no signs of realism and claims no universality. Perhaps this is why it is so thoroughly out of step with the scene of reading that Paul de Man analyzes in *Allegories of Reading*, namely that of little Marcel in Proust's *Swann's Way*. The child narrator of *Swann's Way* speaks from a position of youthfulness at the beginning of his story, and tries to capture the *ethos* of reading, i.e., of reading little Marcel's favorite books and of reading Proust's novels.

The question is precisely whether a literary text is about that which it describes, represents, or states. If, even at the infinite distance of an ideal reading, the meaning *read* is destined to coincide with the meaning *stated*, then there would in fact be no real problem. All that would be left to do would be to allow oneself to be brought nearer to this ideal perfection by taking Marcel [the protagonist and narrator, DG] for our model. But if reading is truly problematic, if a non-convergence between the stated meaning and its understanding may be suspected, then the sections in the novel that literally represent reading are not to be privileged. We may well have to look elsewhere, in Marcel's erotic, political, medical, or worldly experiences, to discover the distinctive structures of reading, or we may have to go further afield still and use a principle of selection that is no longer thematic.

The reader of *Nachsommer* is also compelled to accept the discrepancy between what the text states and what it means, since reading (for Heinrich) is just as much about falling in love and drawing and looking at sculptures as it is about the interactions with the beloved. But Proust is more devious than Stifter, and de Man is forced to question whether or not Marcel's reading experience establishes a paradigm of reading which should overflow its position in the novel and envelope Proust's reader as well.

This circular difficulty should not, however, prevent us from questioning the passage on actual reading, if only to find out whether or not it does make paradigmatic claims for itself. The uncertainty as to whether this is indeed the case creates a mood of distrust which, [...] produces rather than paralyzes interpretative discourse. Reading has to begin in this unstable commixture of literalism and suspicion. (emphases de Man's)⁹

⁹ allegories of reading 57-58

de Man's distrust of the text is placeless in *Nachsommer*, since the protagonist-narrator's seduction is formally distinct from ours, while remaining an element of our reading experience. Unfortunately, Paul de Man had little to say about actual seduction. This is the motivation behind bringing de Man to Stifter, rather than meeting him on his own turf in Proust: his notion of seduction is incomplete. Where the reader's seduction coincides with romantic seduction—i.e., when the character reading the book reads in order to fall in love with another character who is only words on a page to us—tropes no longer deconstruct texts. De Man's tropological analysis is based on the principle that a reader cannot analytically distance himself or herself from his or her own seduction; *Nachsommer* provides an opportunity to observe within a literary text the material conditions and consequences of another reader's seduction. The valency of tropological systems in literary texts is thus widened.

The majority of the newer Stifter philology takes a deconstructionist approach and examines operations in his texts, specifically in his prose, which undermine conventional understandings of realism. In particular, Albrecht Koschorke has advanced remarkable claims about the semiotic functions of reference and representation in Stifter's prose. Koschorke's argument deconstructs an overly simple concept of realism or mimesis based on a referential relationship between signifiers and objects. They are worth quoting at length.

Wenn Ordnung und Sinn für Stifter geradezu synonyme Ausdrücke sind und wenn er seine Kunst an diesen Werten ausrichtet, so ist doch Sinn bei ihm, allen weltanschaulichen Selbstkommentaren zum Trotz, nicht das Ergebnis der mimetischen Abbildung einer sinnvollen Realität: er ist—wenn sich so sprechen läßt—ein Ereignis in der Sprache, nicht in der Welt. Deshalb kann Sprache nur insofern beruhigend und therapeutisch wirken, als sie möglichst wenig aus sich heraustritt und sich möglichst wenig auf das gefährliche Terrain des Bedeutens begibt. [...] Man könnte zeichentheoretisch formulieren, daß die Fundierung der Zeichen in der Sphäre dessen, was sie besagen sollen, ihre Richtung auf das gleichsam hinter ihnen liegende Sein der Dinge aufgelöst wird zugunsten einer hermetischen Verknüpfung und Kohärenz der Signifikanten. Der Sprache kommt in Stifters Werken die Aufgabe zu, nicht die Welt

abzubilden, sondern sie zu übersetzen; und zwar zu übersetzen unter Entleerung und Auslöschung des Originals.

A similar argument has been given by Eva Geulen.¹⁰ The critiques offered by Geulen and

Koschorke, as well as Thomas Keller, of the representational notion of realism have doubtless

brought attention to the reflexive, self-referential and system-internal operations of Stifter's

prose.¹¹ A prose style which effaces the worldly or external thingness of its objects in favor of a

maximally coherent textual edifice faces questions of how different semiotic systems, symbolic

orders and textual strategies achieve optimal aesthetic effects. A scene of reading, indeed any

narrative staging of textual experience in Stifter's texts, attains a unique status in this

framework.

The "translation" of the epic poem into novelistic prose, which has the function of

emptying and erasing the original, produces new modes of representation in literary language

through an encounter of forms. A textual object is not a mere object in this context, a thing

whose thingness can be drained and turned word-like and ordered by Stifter's totalitarian

prosaic regime, but rather a filter through which aesthetic material passes and which converts

artistic forms, e.g., sculpture and portraiture, into prose. Though I am grateful to these

deconstructionist analyses of Stifter's texts, I find that they do not dedicate quite enough

thought to the variety of such procedures of filtration and conversion in his prose style.¹² In this

regard, I am inclined to agree with a brief remark made by Robert Stockhammer with regards to

Stifter and precisely these interpretations, namely that all purely tropological interpretations of

¹⁰ See xyz. For a similar examination of the paradoxically anti-representational effects of Stifter's prose, see Eva Geulen, xyz

¹¹ see thomas keller, die schrift in stifters nachsommer 1982

¹² A promising step towards an analysis of these operations in Stifter's texts has been taken by Helmut Pfotenbauer. See Helmut Pfotenbauer, "Bild und Schrift: Zur Funktion von Medienwechseln in der realistischen Literatur: Stifter, Keller," in: *Das schwierige 19. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Eda Sagarra*, Barkhoff et al. (Hrsg.), Tübingen, Max Niemeyer 2000, 207-218.

his work represent attempts to turn away from something in the texts which does not submit readily to rhetorical analysis.¹³ An analysis which turns toward the concrete and heterogenous procedures which make the scene of reading in *Nachsommer* possible requires a more differentiated approach.

3. Knowledge in the clouds

Both terms which make up this approach—“poetology” and “knowledge”—require specification. Knowledge in and of literature must be distinguished first of all from academic, in particular *analytical* philosophical determinations of the truth-quality of sentences. A single discipline does not constitute a knowledge jury (or police force), and the binary code of true/false reduces the expressibility of knowledge to a controllable, verifiable standard that separates language from its modes of representation and reduces all relations of these expressionless linguistic utterances to agreement or disagreement.¹⁴ Instead, “knowledge” circumscribes a broad field of forms and media which cannot be limited to single disciplines, institutions or formats.

‘Wissen’ wird somit als Kollektivsingular begriffen, der auf eine Vielheit von Wissensformen verweist und auf deren Wechselverhältnis aufmerksam macht: auf das Verhältnis zwischen *ars* und *scientia*, zwischen theoretischen und praktischen, expliziten und impliziten, alltäglichen und wissenschaftlichen, öffentlichen und geheimen, hegemonialen und apokryphen Wissensformen, deren immanente Regeln nicht unter ein einheitliches Format subsumierbar sind.

¹³ xyz stockhammer zusammen stellen 138-139? and kartierung der erde

¹⁴ On the difference between knowledge in the sense of the poetology of knowledge and that of analytical philosophy, see Joseph Vogl, “Poetologie des Wissens” in: *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Poetik und Poetizität*, 460-461. On the binary distinction true/false and its relationship to historically oriented theories of knowledge, see Armin Schäfer, “Poetologie des Wissens,” in: *Literatur und Wissen: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Borgards et al. (Hrsg.), Metzler 2013, 38.

This approach to knowledge is not so naive as to ignore institutional and discipline-specific attempts to appropriate expressions and events to individual orders. Knowledge results from the dynamics of border crossings and border drawings that take place at the limits normative systems.

Dabei kommen auch Dramen des Übergangs in den Blick, welche jeweils die Schwellen zu disziplinären, institutionell gesicherten, epistemologisch geordneten oder stark formalisierten Wissensgebieten markieren. Mit diesen Grenzziehungen und Verwerfungen, mit diesen normativen Regulierungen, aber auch mit institutionellen und sozialen Prozeduren von Einschließung und Exklusion erscheint Wissen als variables, umkämpftes und *polemogenes* Feld, dessen historische Dimension sich nicht am Leitfaden spezifischer Erkenntnis- und Rationalitätsformeln beschreiben und ausrichten lässt.

The singularity of knowledge is purely grammatical. The term designates the dynamics of a field of visible and sayable possibilities, as it is manipulated by speakers and modes of representation.

“Poetology” marks a theoretical approach to knowledge which correlates knowledge with the ways it emerges and becomes visible, i.e. its mode of representation. Each regime of knowledge—institutional, disciplinary, systematic, etc.—has representational preferences, and the poetology of knowledge investigates the rules and procedures each regime deploys in order to form and display its objects.

Mit der Frage der *Poetologie* wird vielmehr eine Perspektive eröffnet, die Wissensobjekte und Erkenntnisbereiche über den Prozess ihrer Herstellung und die Formen ihrer Darstellung begreift. Sie folgt der These, dass jede Wissensordnung bestimmte Repräsentationsweisen ausbildet und privilegiert, und sie interessiert sich demnach für die Regeln und Verfahren, nach denen sich ein historischer Äußerungszusammenhang formiert und abschließt und dabei die Gestalten diktiert, in denen er seine performative Kraft sichert.

The category of the statement (Äußerungszusammenhang, Aussagesatz) denotes a zero-degree of an order of knowledge rather than a quotation or sentence from a document. It is a minimal and paradigmatic form or manipulation of a nexus of elements within a broader context. The statement exemplifies a discourse, rather than provide evidence for it. Its

performative force, or the locally consistent link between its execution and its consequences, subsists only within the practices of its discourse.

Rather than simply overlapping with the master trope, the notion of the statement as an exemplary figuration of knowledge within a discourse allows literary analysis to re-contextualize elements of a text. The master trope denotes the central function of a text as a tropological system. The statement characterizes a discourse which is dispersed over a series of texts, objects and practices. The degree or intensity of contact between a text's master trope and the statement of a discourse shows the centrality of literary forms of expression to that discourse; formulated slightly differently, the contiguity of trope and statement indicates the literariness of a discourse.

The standard reactions of each of these approaches to literary texts differs accordingly. Tropological analysis asks how a text achieves its effects: which rhetorical techniques it deploys to which aesthetic or sensual ends. Poetologies of knowledge, like Foucault's discourse analysis, ask how best to contextualize a literary text: which contemporary practices, systems or objects share irreducible figurations or representations of knowledge with the text, on rhetorical, narrative or poetic levels. These contextualizations take a drastic step back from the individuality of a text, and this act of zooming out can appear sudden and unjustified before the analysis homes in on key details.

Like so: in 1803, an amateur English scientist by the name of Luke Howard published the first systematic work of meteorology, in which he provides the first typology of clouds; in 1815, his "Essay on the Modification of Clouds" was translated into German and found its way thereafter to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who oscillated between fascination and doubt regarding the possibility of a general theory of meteorological phenomena until his death in

1832.¹⁵ Later editions of Howard's essay contain poems by Goethe on clouds. In his 1825 "Versuch einer Witterungslehre," Goethe briefly lists the instruments by which man can measure atmospheric phenomena: the thermometer functions as a kind of confirmation of the human sense for warm and cold. "[D]as Thermometer beschäftigt jedermann, und wenn er schmachtet oder friert, so scheint er in gewissem Sinne beruhigt, wenn er nur sein Leiden nach Réaumur oder Fahrenheit dem Grade nach aussprechen kann." The hygrometer measures humidity, and functions similarly, but adds precision to sense perception. "Nach dem Hygrometer wird weniger gesehen." Finally, the barometer measures atmospheric pressure, and thus delivers a technically produced sign which does not correspond to a human sense.¹⁶ Goethe associates Howard's meteorology with his own morphological interests because both fields centralize "die Formung des Formlosen, ein gesetzlicher Gestalten-Wechsel des Unbegrenzten."¹⁷ Meteorology thus departs from the 18th-century scientific regime of establishing a correspondence between the visible and the sayable and devotes itself to the documentation of invisible forces. "Wer Wolken sieht," notes Joseph Vogl in an article on the emergence of clouds in the 19th century as objects of knowledge, "sieht zugleich, im selben

¹⁵ Hamblin, Richard. "The Invention of Clouds: How an Amateur Meteorologist Forged the Language of the Skies." (2001).

¹⁶ "Versuch einer Witterungslehre 1825," in: FA I/25, S. 293. On Goethe's "telluric" explanations for meteorological events in this text, see Mark Sommerhalder, *Pulsschlag der Erde. Die Meteorologie in Goethes Naturwissenschaft und Dichtung*, Berlin 1993

¹⁷ Goethe, "Luke Howard to Goethe. A biographical sketch," in: *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* (Frankfurter Ausgabe), Bd. 25: *Schriften zur allgemeinen Naturlehre, Geologie und Mineralogie*, Frankfurt/M. 1989, 235-236. Goethe wrote several texts on meteorology. See: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Das Trübe," in: *Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft*, Bd. 8: *Naturwissenschaftliche Hefte* (Leopoldina Ausgabe), Kuhn et al., Weimar 1962 [1847], S. 227-229; "Wohl zu merken," in: *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* (Frankfurter Ausgabe), Bd. 25: *Schriften zur allgemeinen Naturlehre, Geologie und Mineralogie*, Frankfurt/M. 1989, 244. "Wolkengestalt nach Howard," in: FA I/25, S. 222; "Versuch einer Witterungslehre 1825," in: FA I/25, S. 293ff.

Zug und auf dezidierte Weise, ein Unsichtbares und Unspürbares mit.”¹⁸ The hopes of Goethe and Howard for a future of atmospheric science capable of predicting weather events are still up in the air in 1857, when, close to the beginning of *Nachsommer*, Heinrich and his host, Risach, disagree about the imminent arrival of a storm—despite both consulting the same barometer, thermometer, cyanometer (which measures the blueness of the sky), hygrometer and electrometer (110-11).¹⁹

This, I will now try to show, has everything to do with what Heinrich later imagines while reading Homer. Simply put, Heinrich’s education consists in so many transformation of meteorological observation. How does one observe what is invisible? How can atmospheric forces be made visible, in such a way that does not falsely substantialize their literally ethereal nature? And what else does the observation of these invisible forces make visible?²⁰ Joseph Vogl, again: “Im Zentrum der terminologischen Frage steht vielmehr das Problem, wie sich die Bezeichnung des Sichtbaren nur dadurch rechtfertigen kann, dass sie sich auf evidente Unsichtbarkeiten bezieht.”²¹ These questions do not constitute a scientific regime of education which remains distinct from Heinrich’s aesthetic or sentimental education, but rather characterize the fundamental problem—or “statement”—of knowledge in *Nachsommer*. They also make the phantasm of the image of Natalie possible; to demonstrate how this takes place, a new analytical process of zooming in will start from this meteorological background and

¹⁸ “Wolkenbotschaft,” in: Archiv für Mediengeschichte, 2006, 72. On the distinction between the visible and the sayable, see Foucault, *The Order of Things* 71-76 xyz

¹⁹ For broader studies of literary approaches to clouds in the Goethezeit and in German Romanticism, see: Werner Busch, “Die Ordnung im Flüchtigen: Wolkenstudien der Goethezeit,” in: *Goethe und die Kunst*, Sabine Schulze (Hrsg.), Hatje: Stuttgart, 1994, and Kurt Badt, *Wolkenbilder und Wolkengedichte der Romantik*, De Gruyter: Berlin 1960.

²⁰ For an introduction to the cultural studies of meteorology, see: Urs Büttner & Ines Theilen, “Phänomene der Atmosphäre: Zur Einleitung,” in *Phänomene der Atmosphäre: Ein Kompendium literarischer Meteorologie*, Stuttgart: Metzler 2017, 1-25.

²¹ Wolkenbotschaft 75

reconvene with the same details from the novel cited above, which appear in this frame very differently.

Risach instructs his workers to cut the grass on the lawns of his estate, despite the dark rain clouds forming in the sky overhead; Heinrich believes this is a mistake, since the grass will be soaked through by the rain before morning. But the rain does not come. In their later discussion about their meteorological disagreement, Risach discloses the key to his observation. “Alle die Vorzeichen, von denen wir bisher geredet haben, sind sehr grobe,” he says of their electronic instruments; “Es sind aber noch viel feinere Vorrichtungen vorhanden, deren Beschaffenheit uns ein Geheimnis ist, die von Ursachen, die wir sonst gar nicht mehr messen können, noch betroffen werden und deren Wirkung eine ganz gewisse ist.”²² The optimal medium for the observation of invisible atmospheric forces in 1857 are *the nerves of animals*.

Der Mensch stört leider durch zu starke Einwirkungen, die er auf die Nerven macht, das feine Leben derselben, und sie sprechen zu ihm nicht mehr so deutlich, als sie sonst wohl könnten. Auch hat ihm die Natur etwas viel Höheres zum Ersatze gegeben, den Verstand und die Vernunft, wodurch er sich zu helfen und sich seine Stellung zu geben vermag. Ich meine die Nerven der Tiere. (112)

Risach introduces a distinction between standard scientific modes of observation and an

attention to finer, more locally differentiated details. “Ihr werdet wissen, daß Anzeichen

bestehen, welche nur einer gewissen Gegend eigen sind und von den Eingeborenen

verstanden werden, denen sie von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht überliefert worden sind” (111).

But this differentiation does not merely represent a provincial consciousness; it also belongs to

a mode of observation of minute events which contribute to global movements. Risach’s

answer recalls a notion from Stifter’s preface to his collection of stories, *Bunte Steine*. In the

²² On electricity as a discursive connection between atmospheric forces and nervous activity in *Nachsommer*, see Michael Gamper, *Elektropoetologie: Fiktionen der Elektrizität. 1740-1870*, Wallstein Verlag 2009, 297-308.

Vorrede, Stifter proposes the possibility of a global network of scientists all noting the miniscule movements of magnetic needles at geographical positions across the world, in order to track the passage of an enormous, invisible magnetic storm over the surface of the globe (8-9). He also describes the aesthetic potential of a human organ capable of observing electricity and magnetism. “Wenn wir, so wie wir für das Licht die Augen haben, auch für die Elektrizität und den aus ihr kommenden Magnetismus ein Sinneswerkzeug hätten, welche große Welt, welche Fülle von unermeßlichen Erscheinungen würde uns da aufgetan sein.”²³ This vision of a natural expansion of human senses is not opposed to science. Science for Stifter functions as the “spiritual eye” of man, in that it makes variable vital energies visible.

Wenn wir aber auch dieses leibliche Auge nicht haben, so haben wir dafür das geistige der Wissenschaft, und diese lehrt uns, daß die elektrische und magnetische Kraft auf einem ungeheuren Schauplatze wirke, daß sie auf der ganzen Erde und durch den ganzen Himmel verbreitet sei, daß sie alles umfließe und sanft und unablässig verändernd, bildend und lebenerzeugend sich darstelle. (9)

The organ provided by science and the nerves of animals at the rose house characterize a devotion to observation which is both scientific and poetic but irreducible to science or poetry. Stifter’s texts imagine and gather these acts of perception, observation, measuring and recording and integrate them into traditional literary forms, like the novel of education.

These variable and formative forces are represented not only by the instruments and tableaux of science, but also the literary texts which intervene in the unstable field of knowledge which these devices partially measure. The written means of representing invisible atmospheric forces make up what Elisabeth Strowick has called a temporalization of perception (“Verzeitlichung der Wahrnehmung”), in which perception becomes an event of becoming-visible and each of these events becomes legible within the syntactical order of

²³ reclam bunte steine 9

descriptive language.²⁴ Heinrich's instruments, Risach's critters and the novel in which they appear combine to form the problematic objectivity of clouds: "die Wolke ist – und das scheint ihre entscheidende Bestimmung zu sein – ein Ereignis. Sie ist ein Ereignis der Wahrnehmung, das an der Schwelle des Sichtbaren passiert; sie ist ein Ereignis der Natur, das auf unsichtbare, unspürbare Kräfte verweist; und sie ist schließlich ein semiotisches Ereignis, das am Flüchtigen und Unwiederholbaren alle Kräfte der Benennung und der Sprache versammelt."²⁵ All talk of "the cloud" refers disparate, invisible forces to the stability and legibility of a name, and this act of naming makes the event of the cloud's visibility into an event of description in language.

Heinrich's development as a producer of scientific and artistic images can be read as a reorientation of his approach to the visual field on the basis of the unclear objectivity of meteorological forces. Heinrich's childhood education is designed by his father to prepare him for a life as a "Wissenschaftler im allgemeinen" (17). He demonstrates an early fascination for drawing. Drawing in *Nachsommer* is a method by which visualization can go beyond the limits of descriptive language. "Ich könnte mir ja meine Naturgegenstände, dachte ich, eben so gut zeichnen als beschreiben, und die Zeichnung sei am Ende noch sogar besser als die Beschreibung" (39). The writing of this mode of visualization, Stifter's prose, takes on a paradoxical status: it is the written expression of the superior clarity of visualized knowledge over linguistic expression. At least, as long as the drawings are executed with mathematical precision: "Ich hatte wohl früher immer gezeichnet, aber mit mathematischen Linien, welche nach Rechnungsgesetzen entstanden, Flächen und Körper in der Meßkunst darstellten und mit

²⁴ Elisabeth Strowick, *Gespenster des Realismus: Zur literarischen Wahrnehmung von Wirklichkeit*, Wilhelm Fink: Brill Deutschland 2019, 24-31, here 28. I owe a sizable debt of gratitude to Strowick's precise and wide-ranging study, in particular the early chapter which analyzes of the many relationships between German realist literature and meteorological science.

²⁵ Vogl, *Wolkenbotschaft*, 72-72

Zirkel und Richtsheit gemacht worden waren. Ich wußte wohl recht gut, daß man mit Linien alle möglichen Körper darstellen könne" (ibid.). Later on, Heinrich abandons this concrete substantiality for a clouded, fogged representation of natural objects.

Daher war mein Auge geübt, selbst bei fernen Gegenständen das, was sie wirklich an sich hatten, zu sehen, wenn es auch noch so undeutlich war, und *dafür auf das, was ihnen durch Luft, Licht und Dünste gegeben wurde, weniger zu achten, ja diese Dinge als Hindernisse der Beobachtung eher weg zu denken als zum Gegenstande der Aufmerksamkeit zu machen*. Durch das Urteil meiner Freunde wurde mir der Verstand plötzlich geöffnet, daß ich das, was mir bisher immer als wesenlos erschienen war, betrachten und kennen lernen müsse. *Durch Luft, Licht, Dünste, Wolken, durch nahe stehende andere Körper gewinnen die Gegenstände ein anderes Aussehen, dieses müsse ich ergründen, und die veranlassenden Dinge müsse ich, wenn es mir möglich wäre, so sehr zum Gegenstande meiner Wissenschaft machen*, wie ich früher die unmittelbar in die Augen springenden Merkmale gemacht hatte. (317, emphasis added)

There is thus a distinction between modes of representation this cloudiness, but it is not the same as the distinction between art and science. Heinrich never relinquishes his self-identification as a scientist, as the final pages of the novel demonstrate (791). His turn toward painting and art demonstrates his attention to the paradoxical materiality of clouds, to cloudiness as a pictorially and linguistically challenging mode of appearance in general.²⁶

At this point, it is instructive to return to the relay discussed above, namely the feedback loop Heinrich constructs out of portraiture, sculpture and reading in order to have an aesthetic experience of Natalie of which he was incapable before. Heinrich decides that the human face is the ideal object for drawing only when he sees Natalie riding past him in an open carriage on a sunny day (in one of many chance meetings the two have before they become romantically involved).

Es saßen nehmlich in dem offenen und *des schönen Wetters willen* ganz zurückgelegten Wagen zwei Frauengestalten, eine ältere und eine jüngere. [...] Die jüngere hatte den

²⁶ For these reasons, I can't agree with Erica Weitzmann when she identifies this passage as a clichéd example of aestheticized revelation in German realism. See "Against Nature: Adalbert Stifter," in *At the Limit of the Obscene: German Realism and the Disgrace of Matter*, Northwestern University Press 2021.

Schleier zu beiden Seiten des Angesichts zurückgetan *und zeigte dieses Angesicht der Luft*. [...] Ich dachte mir, da der Wagen immer tiefer über den Berg hinabging, ob denn nicht eigentlich das menschliche Angesicht der schönste Gegenstand zum Zeichnen wäre. (167)

“*des schönen Wetters willen*”—already in 1857, the atmospheric precision of Stifter’s prose makes the term sound as outdated as Robert Musil will claim it to be on the eve of the First World War. “Der Wasserdampf in der Luft hatte seine höchste Spannkraft, und die Feuchtigkeit der Luft war gering. Mit einem Wort, das das Tatsächliche recht gut bezeichnet, wenn es auch etwas altmodisch ist: Es war ein schöner Augusttag des Jahres 1913.”²⁷ Each and every one of the turning points in Heinrich’s relay is ushered in by the sudden event of an invisible “cloudy” force becoming visible. Only shortly after he learns to capture the contorting effects of atmospheric phenomena on landscapes—“*Durch Luft, Licht, Dünste, Wolken, durch nahe stehende andere Körper gewinnen die Gegenstände ein anderes Aussehen*”—he describes his first portraits of blushing country girls. “Besondere Freude machte es mir, daß ich nach und nach die Feinheiten des menschlichen Angesichtes immer besser behandeln lernte, besonders, was mir früher so schwer war, wenn *der leichte Duft der Farbe über die Wangen schöner Mädchen ging, die sich sanft rundeten, schier keine Abwechslung zeigten und doch so mannigfaltig waren*” (349, emphasis added). Cloudiness is not just a quality of atmospheric forces and painterly representations, but also of the signals of emotion present in the human face. An electrical storm dramatically lights Heinrich’s first moving experience of the marble statue, which will later melt together with both Homer’s Nausicaa and Natalie. “*Wenn ein Blitz geschah*, floß ein rosenrotes Licht an ihr hernieder, und dann war wieder die frühere Farbe da. [...] Ich blickte die Gestalt an und sah mehrere Male die rötlichen Blitze und die graulich weiße Farbe auf ihr wechseln” (350-351, emphasis added). The ethereal movement of color across

²⁷ moe 9

the face seen in the flashes of the electrical storm return to Heinrich while he reads Homer: “Als Nausikae kam, war es mir wieder, wie es mir bei der ersten richtigen Betrachtung der Marmorgestalt gewesen war, die Gewänder des harten Stoffes löseten sich zu leichter Milde, die Glieder bewegten sich, das Angesicht erhielt wandelbares Leben, und die Gestalt trat als Nausikae zu mir” (647). *Wandelbares Leben*—this is the object of *Nachsommer*’s meteorological poetics.

Stifter’s prose notes the emphasis on non-essential, distorting and diffuse visual elements in certain modes of representation. A set of invisible forces, which, in the nascent science of meteorology, can only be measured by means of technically produced signs, become visible through the application of other modes of representation. With regards to this representation of the invisible, a further determination of Stifter’s prose can be made. Stifter’s prose is certainly an event in language more than in the the world, as Albrecht Koschorke claims. But this event’s peculiar character results from a dynamic of description which becomes necessary in the wake of natural science’s turn to forces and objects for which the human body does not possess a perceptive faculty. This opacity corresponds to an uncanny clarity of the literary representation of the difficulty of seeing. Beclouded objectivity brings about a new activity and motion in literary language’s capture of reality.

4. Concluding remarks

I have now cited twice the same set of quotations from *Nachsommer*, to different effects. Above, these details combined to demonstrate the central operation of a tropological system. There, the education figured as a translation of sculptural and imagistic materiality onto the text of the epic poem, with the function of rendering a love connection legible. Here, they

are reordered in the context of a discursive formation, namely the emergence of meteorology in the 19th century. Another aspect of these experiences becomes visible in this new context, namely the translation of a clouded objectivity through a series of disciplines and modes of representation: meteorological science, landscape painting, portraiture, sculpture and, finally, literary reading. The forces determining the dynamics of this cloud become the stage for a pedagogical relationship between Heinrich and Risach and cut across the distinction between science and art. The pictorial capture of these forces is not limited to a single, innovative realm of the natural sciences, but rather designates a mode of observation linking aesthetic experience and emotional observation. Thus, Heinrich's attempts to paint the clouds distorting his view of the Austrian mountain landscape make him capable of reading the blush on the faces of the girls sitting for his portraits, and this recognition of affective expressions of the face makes a movement of the sculpture newly visible. The textual experience in which this movement of diffuse intensities reaches an affective climax for the protagonist still functions as a master trope; it stages a seductive metaphorical capture of the previously unrepresentable face of Natalie. The nature of the metonymic chain reactions leading to this event of seduction is now more precisely recognizable as a migration of cloudy forces.

A figure of border crossings subsists throughout this comparative framework. The proper object of literary analysis becomes the aberrant course of a trope across a narrative or of a statement through a discourse. *Nachsommer* itself establishes a kind of local zone with its own paradigmatic mode of observation. Risach's comment is broadly instructive in this regard: "Ihr werdet wissen, daß Anzeichen bestehen, welche nur einer gewissen Gegend eigen sind und von den Eingeborenen verstanden werden, denen sie von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht

überliefert worden sind" (111). Nevertheless, Risach recognizes the transformations encroaching on traditional experiences of space and time in the 19th century.

Wie wird es sein, wenn wir mit der Schnelligkeit des Blitzes Nachrichten über die ganze Erde werden verbreiten können, wenn wir selber mit großer Geschwindigkeit und in kurzer Zeit an die verschiedensten Stellen der Erde werden gelangen, und wenn wir mit gleicher Schnelligkeit große Lasten werden befördern können? Werden die Güter der Erde da nicht durch die Möglichkeit des leichten Austauschens gemeinsam werden, daß Allen Alles zugänglich ist? (495)

Nachsommer is written on the threshold where atmospheric forces, pictorial representations, affective expressions, aesthetic experience, postal communication, geographic space and commodity form threaten to disperse into diffuse, illegible systems. This is not so much the prospect of all that is solid melting into air, but rather all that is in the air dispersing into scientific and aesthetic history. Stifter's novel is an event correlating the visibility of these systems with the formation of a unique prose style. I find it appropriate to take at least two approaches to this event, to attempt to represent it in theoretical form from more than one perspective. Hopefully, this multiplication of points of view makes an otherwise invisible movement in literary-theoretical thinking readable.