Caught Between the Lines: The Fictionalization of Anabaptism in Historical Novels of the *Kulturkampf* Era

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Introduction: Early Anabaptism in German Historical Fiction

The history of radical reformation and persecution surrounding the Anabaptist movement has received some attention from German writers of both historical and fictional literature in Germany. The authors' fascination with the group's early development led to a variety of Anabaptist literary representations ranging from religious fanaticism in Gottfried Keller's novella *Ursula* (1877) to peaceful discipleship in Katharina Zimmermann's novel *Die Furgge* (1989). My present study examines the depictions of early peaceful, mainline Anabaptism in fictional writings dating from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The novels *Klytia* (1883) by Adolf Hausrath (under the pseudonym George Taylor) and *Der Reichsprofos* (1904) by Wilhelm Stähle (under the pseudonym Philipp Spiess) serve as representative examples of the of the turn-of-the-century fictional literature in which these authors utilized a sympathetic treatment of the Anabaptist history of per-

secution and martyrdom to support their Kulturkampf-inspired socio-political and religio-cultural ideals.

The Kulturkampf (culture struggle), a term first used in 1873 by the Prussian statesman Rudolf Virchow, refers to the conflict between the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck and the Roman Catholic Church regarding state control. The German Kulturkampf was part of a greater development in the mid-nineteenth century in which the Roman Catholic Church found itself under frequent attacks from the emerging liberal nationalism in Europe and the United States. Bismarck, in particular, distrusted the loyalty of the Roman Catholics within the German Empire and questioned the papal infallibility proclaimed by the 1870 Vatican Council. The social milieu of the liberal Protestantism (*Kulturprotestantismus*), predominant in the Prussian state, was rooted in the secularization efforts of the Napoleonic era that resulted in a new state concept which aimed to loosen confessional ties to the state and propagate a civil and socio-cultural life that was free of papal influences. Germany and other states endeavoured to strip the Catholic Church of worldly powers and systematically reduce its duties to spiritual affairs by secularising the public sphere. Starting in 1871, Bismarck implemented a number of regulations to curtail the privileges of the Catholic Church and restrict its influences in the newly created German state. He abolished the Roman Catholic bureau within the Prussia Ministry of Culture, excluded religious teachers from state schools, dissolved the Jesuit order in Germany, and enforced compulsory civil marriage laws in 1875.

As proponents of Bismarck's initiative to suppress the influence of the Catholic Church, the authors Stähle and Hausrath aim to disguise their participation in that contemporary cultural and political war by offering a poetic treatment of the radical reform movement in their late nineteenth-century historical fiction based on sixteenth-century Anabaptist history. The critical reading of these two representative novels dealing with the Anabaptist history explores how these two authors, at the turn of the century, viewed the historical brotherhood, its commitment to particular theological and ethical precepts, and its confrontations with the established church and society. In particular, I explore how these writers' personal beliefs influence their fictionalization of the minority religion. Moreover, with respect to the authors' Kulturkampf-fuelled objectives, this study seeks to uncover underlying programmatic aims and ideological convictions cloaked by literary articulations of conflict-laden encounters between society and the marginalized group.

Both authors, Hausrath and Stähle, joined a group of late nineteenth-century writers who, all of them full-fledged professors and ministers, dealt with the challenge of presenting historical facts in a poetic form. As a professor of New Testament exegesis and church history at the University of Heidelberg, Hausrath intensively studied the ecclesiastical chronicles of the Electoral Palatinate. He was highly invested in regional and church history and founded the *Montagsgesellschaft* (Monday Society), a historical association consisting of fellow colleagues from the university. Stähle, as Protestant minister, studied the regional history of Württemberg and thereby discovered the history of early Anabaptists in the area. According to Herbert Scheffler, the interest of the authors' group in history, that particularly manifested itself after the close of the Franco-Prussian War, brought a questionable kind of historical belles-lettres to the forefront (277). Aside from their arguable literary quality, the so-called *Professorenromane* (professors novels), although claiming to be non-political, often allude to profound societal changes and political-ideological disputes of the time (Eggert 343).

Hausrath: *Klytia* and Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism in the Palatinate

During Hausrath's time as professor at the University of Heidelberg in the 1860s and 1870s, the city's political and ecclesiastical life was in unrest. The region experienced the aftermath of the *Agendenstreit* (a dispute over the employment of the service book of the Evangelical Church by King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia in 1821) and the *Konkordatspolitik* (the implementation of the concordat between the Holy See and Bavaria ratified in 1817) which led to a confrontation between Catholic and Protestant factions (Bauer 142). Toward the end of his studies on church history in 1859, Hausrath mentioned *Pfaffenintrigen* (clerical intrigues) in a letter to a friend, raising concern about a possible resurgence of Catholicism in the German states (Bauer 142). In 1863, he was involved in the establishment of the German Protestant Society in which he served as the chief secretary with the aim to promote the union of the various Protestant established churches in the country. Being a proponent of Protestantism as the dominant culture of the German Empire, he supported Prussian's Kulturkampf policy regarding secularity and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. His anti-Catholic and anti-clerical orientation becomes

particularly noticeable in his criticism of obligatory religious instruction which he considered an act of ultramontanism. He opposed the practice of ecclesiastical education in schools because he feared that *Dissidentenkinder*, children whose families parted from the dominant church, would get exposed to religious teachings that are not in accordance with their beliefs or even fall victim to ultramontane electoral politics and confessional agitation by Catholic instructors (Kappstein 83-84).

Hausrath transplanted the scenario of the manipulation of religious education described in his anti-Catholic propaganda into the sixteenth-century Palatinate. In his historical novel *Klytia*, Heidelberg's Reformed community faces a similar threat by a group of Jesuit missionaries who secretly plot to restore Catholicism after the institution of first Protestantism and then Calvinism by Elector Friedrich III in the early 1560s. Paolo, a member of the conspiracy Jesuit order, is sent out to the capital of the Palatinate Electorate that had recently changed confessions from Protestantism to Calvinism. He attempts to convert the community while being disguised as a teacher of the Heidelberg (Calvinist) Catechism. Lydia, the daughter of Thomas Erast,[1] the Elector's personal physician, attends Paolo's class and falls in love with him. During a session of meditation according to the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, Paolo kisses Lydia in the heat of the moment and consequently loses his position as a teacher. After hearing some of the townspeople's discontent about the repeated ecclesiastical changes and their plans to leave the region, he reports these people, friends of Lydia's father, to the authorities. Lydia's father is falsely accused of sedition and Lydia faces imprisonment in the Witches' Tower after having been discovered in the forest at night accompanied by an assumed witch. The young woman was lured into the forest by a false letter from Paolo and then chased by a band of terrifying men. She got injured and was rescued by the Anabaptist Werner. While Lydia awaits her trial, Paolo shows great leadership and care as he tends to a village suffering from an outbreak of the Black Plague. After Lydia and her father are released from prison, she lovingly cares for Paolo, who has fallen ill with the deadly disease. Overcoming his inner struggle concerning the true faith, he recovers from the plague, abandons his Catholic belief, and commits to a life with Lydia in the Protestant faith.

Hausrath crafts a picture of the sixteenth-century confessional disputes that is coloured with propaganda against the Catholic Church. His stereotypical depiction of the "Welsch" *Disziplinisten* (a group of influential theologians from Italy and France who were

ordered to serve in the Palatine Church) and the description of the Jesuit conspiracy to re-establish the power of the Roman Catholic Church refer to xenophobic and anti-Catholic sentiments prevailing at the time of the Kulturkampf. The fear of a Catholic resurgence illustrated in the historical novel mirrors the nineteenth-century paranoia about the revival of Catholicism in Germany. Apart from the anti-Catholic notion inherent in the narration, the author vividly captures the chaos and confusion caused by the frequent confessional changes that the populace of the Palatinate experienced after the Peace of Augsburg.

In the midst of the religious chaos and confessional disputes between Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, the Anabaptist stands as an isolated figure, excluded from the conflicts and quarrels about faith. As an ambiguous character, he appears as a good spirit and as a dissenter, who is in alliance with heresy and witchcraft. Werner distances himself socially and spatially from Heidelberg's society. In a conversation with Paolo's brother, Felix, the old Anabaptist explains that he fled the city and moved to the remote area of Kreuzgrund to avoid the religious quarrels and constant changes of mandatory faith. He reports to the Italian the hostile atmosphere in the city caused by religious disputes that resulted in verbal and physical attacks of opposing confessions. Werner also left the urban center to be able to practice the Anabaptist faith without fear of intervention from the dominant church. In the rural region of the Kreuzgrund, he remains outside the radar of secular and ecclesiastical authorities and thus is neither obligated to attend church service nor to send his children to religious instruction by city pastors.

Criticism of Catholic Sacraments

During his talk with Felix, Werner states his opinion regarding the sacraments. He addresses three fundamental principles of Anabaptist theology. First, he criticizes the administering of the Lord's Supper by Catholic and Reformed churches alike. He gives an account of the different practices of the Breaking the Bread and somewhat bizarre ways of commemorating Christ's broken body, practiced by the two state churches, concluding that "bread and wine are not enough. The spirit must come from inside" (46-47).[2] Here, Werner refers to the Anabaptist conception of communion as a spiritual act without elaborating the brotherhood's notion of true discipleship that is firmly integrated in the idea of the Lord's Sup-

per.[3] He further comments on the Catholic practice of infant baptism and confirmation and speaks disapprovingly of the Church's ritual of admission. In an Anabaptist line of argument, he points to the children's inability to differentiate between good and evil.[4] He concludes that the juveniles shall not be admitted to the community of true believers until they gain full maturity and an inner conviction. He argues that the established church encourages the adolescents to affirm their belief and membership by habit rather than genuine faith.

In connection to his observation about the children's lack of knowledge and piety, Werner criticizes Sunday school for teaching children "to babble the holy like heathens, thereby turning them into folly" (47). He particularly finds fault with the pastors who support a dogmatic and passive approach toward the biblical teachings. Furthermore, he criticizes the clergymen's preaching for money rather than by an inner calling. His complaint about the pastors' choreographed act mocking divine inspiration not only justifies the Anabaptist practice of lay preaching but also echoes the author's criticism of Catholic belief and practice.

Werner implicitly addresses three chief tenets of Anabaptist faith as he complains about the ecclesiastical situation in the city. He protests against the Catholic administration of the Lord's Supper, the baptism of infants, and the clergy's dogmatic religious instruction and interest in prosperity— issues that pertain to the Anabaptist doctrine—without, however, explicitly advocating the Anabaptist faith practice and lay preaching. In fact, Werner's Anabaptist orientation is only revealed indirectly by his negative attitude toward the dogma of the institutional church. His concern about his children's religious instruction and his anti-clerical sentiments reflect the author's personal aversion to the Catholic Church during the time of the Kulturkampf. Hausrath utilizes the historical novel as a means of propagating anti-clericalism and spreading a Catholic paranoia. He carefully employs those Anabaptist doctrines that oppose practices of the Catholic Church.[5] The Anabaptist historical resentment of the Roman Catholic Church, evolved in the sixteenth-century Reformation, is fictionalized in order to support the author's programmatic aim of promoting anti-Catholic and secularist notions.

In addition to Werner's self-exclusion from the Heidelberg society for the purpose of practicing his faith, it is precisely the Anabaptist belief that generates ostracism and persecution of his brotherhood by city officials and church authorities. The novel alludes to the Anabaptist fate of enduring harassment and persecu-

tion by the dominant society. Perceived as a sect of radical religious dissenters, the Anabaptist community of Heidelberg is forced to establish an underground church and hold secret meetings. To conceal their affiliation with the faith community in the company of non-members, believers resort to inconspicuous gestures and code talk. Werner, for instance, signals a young woman from his congregation to meet with him concerning a delicate matter: "He secretly approached her and whispered with her for a while. In the persecuted and repressed Anabaptist community silent messages, watchwords, and signs of identification and all kinds of secret messages were not uncommon" (203-204). Here, the author integrates historical information regarding the brotherhood's ways of avoiding outsiders' attention. The reference to the group's repression and persecution, and the listing of its methods of covert communication appears somewhat disconnected from the plotline and thus illustrates the difficulties of incorporating scholarly facts in a fictional realm.

A more successful blending of fictional and factual elements is given by Paolo's comment regarding the Anabaptist. Upon seeing the old man, whom he labels as "Sectirer" (sectarian), he expresses suspicion and hostility toward the faith group. He thinks to himself, "I will make sure that the bailiff visits the Kreuzgrund again," implying to initiate another round of interrogations and potential persecution of Anabaptists (204). Paolo revives the image of the Anabaptist as the persecuted outcast and rekindles the conflict between the Catholic Church and the radical reformers. The emphasis is put not as much on the depiction of the brotherhood's exclusion from society by means of harassment and oppression, as on the perceived threat of Catholic control over secular authorities. The author portrays the Jesuit as the principle opponent of the seemingly helpful and kind Anabaptist who is only within Paolo's visibility because he attempts to protect Lydia from the negative influence of the young Catholic.

Antithetical Representation: Good Spirit and Evil Sinner

Despite the Anabaptist exclusion from the Heidelberg society through self-isolation as well as social stigmatization, Werner maintains a loose connection with the native community. His relationship to the urban society is ambivalent. During infrequent visits to town, he either functions as the bad conscience or appears as a good spirit, depending on the situation. Schowalter argues that

the Anabaptist is merely a motif rather than a character. His personality is not developed in the narration and he simply takes the role of an apparition (664). In that regard, he does not build an actual relationship with Heidelberg's populace because he is not integrated in the character constellation. From the position of an outsider, Werner follows the religious disputes with a certain distance and amusement. He is perceived by others as "the odd joking farmer" (49). Although Werner claims to be a simple miller who accepts the Electors' religious changes without much of an opinion or resistance, Felix senses a hidden opposition to the sovereign's choice of faith: "Felix did not quite trust this resignation of this weather-beaten old man because the look of his eyes revealed trickiness and his whole appearance did not make the impression of mindless humility" (44). Werner's whimsical smile indicates his distance from the religious disputes fought by the city's theologians. His facial expression also evokes the appearance of an ambiguous character.

His ambivalent appearance mirrors his dual personality. Representing the radical movement as a whole, he is described in terms of the polarized concepts of Anabaptist ethical conduct and Münsterite immorality. The good-evil contrast inherent in his Anabaptist identity becomes particularly visible when he rescues Lydia from the ditch in which she had fallen and injured her foot. This hole or dungeon that detained heathens in the past and is now filled with "*Töchter der Finsterniß*" (daughters of the darkness), animals that seek the dark of the underground cell, symbolizes Lydia's moral and social downfall (214). In this moment of despair and misery, the Anabaptist comes as a saviour into the scene. He frees her from the purgatory-like pit and takes her back to the "world above" (214). In this act of salvation, the old Anabaptist appears as a good spirit exercising practical love.

Yet, his charitable action is obscured by his sinful thoughts when carrying the girl back to town. Upon feeling "the sweet load on his back" and noticing "the white hands," recalling the girl's innocent nature, Werner contemplates in form of an inner monologue: "Did not the rabble-rousers and Rottmann and other prophets teach that if a brother feels that he has not yet found his spiritual wife, he should divorce the old snake and start a new matrimony" (215)? Werner struggles with tempting thoughts that come to his mind while transporting the young woman. The reader discovers the Anabaptist's alter ego that creeps into his consciousness and rouses his suppressed desires. The seductive voice makes the case for Werner's marriage to Lydia by references to Münster, its

prophets, and leaders, for instance Bernhard Rothmann, who legitimatized polygamy during the violent Anabaptist kingdom in Westphalia. However, Werner resists the temptation and counters the arguments of the alter ego by commenting on the fatal outcome of the Münster reign. He distances himself from the "Judas brothers" and remains steadfast to the beliefs of "his own brothers" (215).

The image of the ambivalent Anabaptist is further constructed by the description of Werner's son, Jörg, who exhibits a diabolical nature. The child appears demonic with his red hair and the ability to imitate animals and even the devil acoustically. He performs this preternatural activity in precarious situations, for instance when his father talks with the perceived witch about Lydia's disappearance. Due to his devilish performances, the boy is known to the townspeople as "the devil's child" (284). His act of delivering Paolo's message to Lydia triggers a series of unfortunate events that result in the young woman's injury and her imprisonment in the Witches' Tower. His involvement in the townspeople's lives causes much harm and misery. Contrasting his appearance and actions, the father is mentioned as a "guardian angel" who attempts to compensate for his son's dark doings (353). He admonishes the child who has not yet committed to the discipleship of Christ and explains to him "he who plays with the devil, the devil holds halfway in his claws" (210).

The Anabaptist's alleged alliance with demonic forces is also expressed through his association with the old woman who performs cabalistic rituals in the forest. Hausrath brings the seemingly disparate categories of Anabaptism and sorcery together. The fusing of Anabaptism and witchcraft implied by Paolo's observation that Werner "keeps the witch company," reflects traditional opinions and anxieties about a sectarian conspiracy in the second half of the sixteenth century (282). According to Gary Waite's study on Anabaptists and witches in Reformation Europe, early modern inquisitors, preachers, and writers spread fears of a union of these two heresies in order to increase the pressure on local courts to eradicate the Anabaptists (4).[6] Paolo's statement: "witch and heretic dwell together, that is the old order," refers to the intertwined history of heresy and witchcraft (281).

Contrasting the image of the Anabaptist as the devil's minion and the witch's right-hand man in a campaign to pollute society with heretic beliefs, Werner takes the role of a peaceful, moral, and religious guide who offers valuable words of wisdom to the protagonists and performs acts of charity. In the midst of the religious quarrels and persecutions of dissidents, the Anabaptist's

home is illustrated as a picture of peace and productivity. At the time of the plague, he functions as a good soul who supports "the starving valley" by running his mill day and night to feed the suffering population (279). He surprises his opponent, the young Catholic man, with his ability to read his mind and to give him advice regarding his unfortunate situation with the physician's daughter. In a conversation pertaining to the woman's imprisonment in the Witches' Tower, Werner appeals to Paolo's conscience. The young man expresses doubts about the Anabaptist's initiative to approach him and provide him with admonition and advice: "did his guardian angel appear in the disguise of a heretic or was this son of the devil given the power to read his heart" (353)? His speculation about the old man's true nature points to the ambivalent picture of the Anabaptist fabricated throughout the narration.

In the end, the image of the guardian angel prevails. Werner's moral and charitable notions outweigh the diabolical and Münsterite influences. He supports Paolo in his decision to free Lydia by reporting himself as the guilty tempter to the authorities. Werner even promises to appear as a witness, if necessary, even though the young man has caused him to live in hiding from city officials. The Anabaptist's altruistic attitude, and his thoughts on a living Christian faith, greatly impact Paolo's character development. Quoting Werner's words, the young Italian proclaims an inner conversion to a more progressive Christianity:

> The spirit," he once told me, "becomes outward neither in dogma nor cult, but rather in life itself. Only there it appears so that one can see, feel, and hear it. We know with more certainty how to behave properly than how to teach properly. Therefore, the proper faith is that you may do God's will, rather than remembering theorems about invisible things which are not human but divine (396).

In Werner's speech about practical faith, he expresses the Anabaptist aversion to dogma. Yet, as Schowalter has argued, the reason for his anti-dogmatic attitude does not derive from the movement's established Biblicism. Rather, Werner's criticism of the Catholic mandatory church theorem reflects the modern antithesis between religion and faith and between dogma and life (664). Hausrath projects his own religious ideals onto the Anabaptist and makes him a spokesman for the enlightened deism of the nineteenth century (Schowalter 664). The Anabaptist in the historical novel functions for the author as a foil by which to condemn the force of reaction and anti-modernity of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church.

Stähle: *Der Reichsprofos* and Early South German Anabaptism

At the turn of the century, historical research experienced a profound change toward a more Anabaptist-sensitive investigation of the sixteenth century. Scholars began to fathom the nature and significance of the hitherto neglected branch of church history. In their thorough investigation of the radical reform movement, historians of the early twentieth century discovered essential ideas of Anabaptism that have become widely accepted by mainstream society, such as liberty of faith, the rejection of violence in religious matters, and the separation of church and state. Historians were eager to become acquainted with the original confessional writings of the movement's leaders and the collections of martyr testimonials.[7] In fictional literature treating the early Anabaptist movement, a similar shift toward an essence- and persecution- conscious portrayal of the brotherhood can be observed.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, historical narrations on the Anabaptist theme gradually transitioned from an illustration of the fellowship's ambivalent character to a depiction of the group's suffering from persecution by state and church authorities. The confrontation between the early movement and the state is fictionalized in a small number of narrations that approach the historical material with a greater understanding for the brotherhood's experience of ostracism and harassment. This series of literary works includes Stähle's novel *Der Reichsprofos* (1904) as well as Peter Cürlis' depiction of the Rhineland Anabaptism in his novel *Die drei Brüder vom Brockhof* (1908) and Ernst Marti's portrayal of Mennonite weavers in the Swiss Emme Valley in *Zwei Häuser, Zwei Welten* (1911). All three historical narrations indicate a familiarity with the history and the sources of the local Anabaptists and present aspects of the movement's concept of life with much earnestness. At the same time, they are concerned with the relationship between the radical movement and the Reformed state church. In the aftermath of the Kulturkampf, Stähle's and Cürlis' novels side with the established Protestant Church and portray the Anabaptist movement as an integrated element of the history of the Reformed Church. Instead of delineating the Anabaptists as an aberrant manifestation of the Reformation, as for instance Gottfried Keller has done in the nineteenth century, the authors suggest the adoption of Anabaptist church discipline and martyrdom by the Reformed Church.

Stähle's novel, *Der Reichsprofos*, serves as a particular example of the early twentieth-century fictional literature that was con-

cerned with providing a sympathetic treatment of the Anabaptist history of persecution and martyrdom, without having completely parted from the Kulturkampf agenda of promoting Protestantism as the dominant faith. In his *Heimat* novel, Stähle fictionalizes the conflict of local Anabaptist communities with the state. In 1526, the prominent leaders Reublin and Sattler, known for their significant contribution to the Schleitheim Confession, spread the Anabaptist doctrine in the dukedom of Württemberg. The movement reached its greatest proportions in the years 1527 to 1530.[8] At the same time, state authorities issued sharp mandates against the sectarians. Local officials, particularly the widely known imperial provost, Berthold Aichelin, used brutal persecution to take actions against the spread of the radical movement. Aichelin's harassment and execution of local Anabaptists is illustrated in Stähle's novel.

The story is set in South Germany during the 1530s. Bertold Aichelin, a devout Catholic, works as the chief agent of the Württemberg sovereign in suppressing Protestantism as well as revolutionary and heretic influences in the dukedom. In his office as provost of the Swabian League, he is responsible for overseeing a large territory that requires extended travels. During his absence from home, his wife Grete and her family have increasingly adopted Lutheran thoughts and Grete even develops an interest in the Anabaptist faith. While receiving a full body baptism during a nocturnal Anabaptist gathering at a forest creek, she dies. Deeply in pain and sorrow by the loss of his beloved wife, Aichelin turns into the frightful provost who persecutes and kills a large number of Anabaptists in the Württemberg and Tyrol region. In the Aalen district, Aichelin and his horsemen surprise a congregational meeting on the farm of Burkhardt, the Mantelbauer.[9] The provost seizes the resident farmer and his son, hangs them from a linden tree, and burns down a building on the farmer's property in which several Anabaptists had gathered for the upcoming Christmas convocation. Only two of the farmer's children are able to flee from the persecutors. After this brutal act, Aichelin has visions of his dead wife and falls terribly sick. He receives care by Veronika, the daughter of the Anabaptist farmer who lost his goods and life during the provost's ravage. Upon experiencing the charity provided by the young Anabaptist woman, Aichelin turns into a proponent of the Protestant belief.

Wilhelm Stähle constructs the story of sixteenth-century Anabaptism in Baden Württemberg by taking the historical figure of Bertold Aichelin as a basis. The author was well informed about the movement's early development in the dukedom. It can be as-

sumed that he gained information about the spread of the brotherhood from contemporary research, especially from Reinhold Schmid's historical writing *Reformationsgeschichte Württembergs* (1904) that was published during the 500th anniversary of the German reformer Johannes Brenz, who was commemorated by the Evangelical Union (of which Stähle was a member) in Baden Württemberg. Schmid's work, written from the perspective of the Protestant Church, considers members of the Anabaptist movement as new enemies that rose from the roots oft he Protestant Church (73). In *Der Reichsprofos*, Stähle adopts Schmid's notion of the Protestant superiority and his criticism of the group's appearance as prophets and fools, gathering freedom seeking peasants with their zealous preaching (74). Stähle's novel parallels the historian's account in terms of delineating the Anabaptist ambivalent nature associated with their clandestine nocturnal meetings and their oppositional stance to worldly authorities. Apart from this negative portrayal of the early Anabaptist underground church, the historian gives a sympathetic account of the fellowship's principles and doctrine, and acknowledges their suffering and martyrdom at the hands of state officials.

It can also be assumed that Stähle was familiar with the Anabaptists' own historical documents or historical research thereof as he refers to the testimonials from the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*. The novel's account of the provost's acts of violence and the Anabaptists' steadfast suffering of martyrdom largely corresponds to records that appear in the *Chronicle*. Aichelin's brutality is documented in the 1883 edition of *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Österreich-Ungarn* (*The Chronicles of the Anabaptists in Austria-Hungary*) as follows: "Umb dise Zeit hat der König Ferdinandus ainen (wilten, bluetdürstigen Profossen: M.R.), mit Namen Aichele ins Schwaben- oder Würtenberger landt geschickt, der vil vnschuldiges bluet vergossen" (In this time King Ferdinand sent a wild, blood-thirsty profost, named Aichele, into the area of Swabian or Württemberg; he shed much innocent blood) (27). In *Der Reichsprofos*, the narrator reports accordingly: "A chronicler of the Anabaptists put it in plain but deeply moving words: 'This Aichelin, the provost, shed much innocent blood in several provinces'" (195).

Dichotomy of Good and Evil

The spread of the Anabaptist movement in South Germany is exemplified in the novel by two strikingly different characters. Brother Wallner, the wandering preacher from Austria, represents certain aspects of the early movement that are deemed as aberrant and objectionable, whereas Father Burkhardt and his community personify Anabaptist principles that are perceived as ideal tenets of Christian faith. The contrasting attributes assigned to the two Anabaptist figures fabricate an ambivalent image of the radical reform movement that is eventually dissolved by Burkhardt's martyr death and Veronika's act of charity.[10] The seemingly parallel figure constellation of male Anabaptist leader and young female follower (Wallner and Grete, Burkhardt and Veronika) produces very different experiences of faith and represents diverging conceptions of Anabaptism.

Wallner is portrayed as an obscure member of the radical sect who asserts great control over Grete. Disguised as a chandler, he first gains entrance to her home. Grete and her mother-in-law immediately notice that he is not from the area and perceive him as "a stranger" (103). The old woman calls him "foolish" and her neighbours refer to him as "peculiar" (104). While selling his products, he promotes yet another commodity which he describes as: "something that helps the soul to be able to stand in front of its groom Jesus Christ with a clean dress and exquisite jewels (103)". The Anabaptist Wallner is presented as an intruder in the local community who advocates his faith in secrecy. The metaphor of trading a commodity when referring to the spread of the Anabaptist belief creates the impression of the movement as a dubious business. The early Anabaptist evangelism is portrayed as an obscure industry managed by ambiguous tradesmen.

Despite his strange and uncanny appearance, Grete becomes more involved with the fellowship and allows Wallner to exercise an increasing authority on her. Her frequent attendance of Anabaptist meetings causes him to gain "control over her thoughts and feelings" (124).[11] In his enthusiastic talks, he convinces the audience that salvation could only be attained by adult baptism. Eventually, Grete was "led by Brother Wallner to the realization that baptism was the only thing missing to complete salvation" (125). It appears that her wish to receive baptism is not generated by a voluntary commitment, but rather by the preacher's insistence and his control over her mind.

Her reoccurring doubts about the group's rite of admission indicate that she is not fully convinced of the movement's radical approach to baptism: "a terrible uncertainty overcame her once more. What if all of it was mere deception" (127). The novel portrays the act of baptism as a questionable ritual by which the Anabaptists deviate from the Lutheran theology. At the moment Grete is baptized by being dunked in the water three times, "she suddenly runs her hand to her heart; 'oh God, oh God!' she exclaims and collapses." (129). Her death from a sudden heart attack while receiving baptism in the stream's cold water reflects the criticism of the Anabaptist rite inherent in Stähle's novel. Schowalter has noted that the author unhistorically insinuates full body baptism (665).[12] The anachronism regarding the baptismal method signals the purpose of the ritual's depiction. On the one hand, the author employs the full body baptism to suit the storyline. Grete's death, caused by the submersion in the cold stream, provokes Aichelin's rage and his relentless persecution of Anabaptists. On the other hand, the description of the full body baptism fabricates the image of a fanatical sect whose zealous members do not flinch from physical pain when receiving admission to the fellowship.

Contrasting the ambivalent character of Wallner and the unfavourable account of the baptismal ceremony in the forest, Burkhardt and his community of believers are depicted as dedicated Christians who are genuinely concerned with the implications of the Anabaptist principles of faith. Wallner's lack of theological insight is compensated for by the Mantelbauer's explanations regarding the issue of believer's baptism. In the form of lay preaching, "because no instructor was available for faith matters, they listened to the voices of their hearts and thereby farmers whose hearts were enlightened by the spirit became preachers" (86-87). Burkhardt and his fellow Brethren discuss the matter of infant baptism and criticize the Catholic practice of the sacrament: "Have spirit and water been contiguous when the priest baptized us as we were hardly born?…We need to have baptism when both water and spirit are present, so that our heart is opening up willfully and joyfully to receive the spirit". (88)

Employing the line of argument used by early South German Anabaptists to refute pedobaptism, the Mantelbauer asserts that the requirements for the admission into the church community are not only the outward symbol of the water, but also a free and voluntary commitment to discipleship, as well as an inner readiness to receive the divine spirit, a disposition that Grete had not yet gained when she received baptism during the nocturnal ceremony.[13]

While Wallner is presented as an outsider who roams the region as a traveling preacher, and enters the native community as a foreigner proclaiming radical religious ideas that starkly contrast the doctrine of the established church, Burkhardt is a local farmer who is depicted as a hard worker and a fair and devoted leader to his community. As Father Burkhardt, he represents essential aspects of the Anabaptist piety. The community life on the Mantelhof is defined by a sense of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness to Christ), industry, and social harmony.

> The fields of the Mantelhof were plowed, harrowed, sowed. With a most colourful robe, the forest of the Aalbuch looked down to the farm and its diligent people. The Mantelbauer, Father Burkhardt, himself led the plow on the beautiful wide field. The young stableboy Frieder, whose parents lost their lives as Anabpatists due to the provost's doing, ran the horse (203).

The description of the Mantelhof's activities and personnel creates the image of an idyllic yet persecuted fellowship. The Anabaptist farm life is romanticized by the picturesque nature of the rural location as well as the diligence of the peasants who work together harmoniously. Father Burkhardt's working of the plow evokes a comparison to the biblically inspired metaphor of sowing the seeds for a thriving Christianity. As the shepherd of his congregation, he spreads the Anabaptist faith and is concerned with the development and progress of his fellowship. He is deeply dedicated to the congregation and takes care of the parentless Frieder. The fate of the child's parents points to the brotherhood's suffering from persecution and anticipates the conflict with the provost that is manifested in the attack on the Mantelhof.

Anabaptist Persecution, Steadfastness, and Forgiveness

Little is known about this attack by the provost and his horsemen. According to the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*:

> King Ferdinand sent a savage provost named Aichelin into Swabia and the province of Württemberg. He shed much innocent blood and burned down the Mantelhof not far from the town of Aalen, killing about twenty people – men and youths, women and young girls, including their servant of the Word (51).[14]

Deriving from this historical record of the invasion of the Mantelhof, Stähle develops the storyline of *Der Reichsprofos* by inventing additional characters and fictionalizing those that are mentioned in the chronicle. In the description of the attack on the Mantelbauer's farm, the author depicts the tyranny and cruelness of the historical Aichelin. The provost's merciless acts contrast the zealous and steadfast behavior of the fellowship. Perhaps inspired by the Anabaptist chronicles or a historical account thereof, Stähle's fictionalization of the Anabaptist characters does much justice to the movement's endurance of pain and their practice of forgiveness.

The Anabaptist steadfastness and the readiness to suffer for the sake of precipitating Christ's return and their own redemption are particularly illustrated in the description of the Mantelbauer's torture and execution. In the process of hanging Burkhardt on a linden tree,[15] the provost lets him back down three times and offers to spare his life if he recants his radical belief. Yet, he remains true to his faith and patiently endures the agony of being tortured nearly to death. The steadfastness of the farmer irritates Aichelin for he is not able to relate to such a commitment to one's faith. Angered by the Anabaptist's *Gelassenheit* and his confidence in a higher authority, he commands the last and fatal hanging of the farmer. In the face of death, the Mantelbauer forgives his executioner and prays for his mercy: "O provost, I have already begged for your grace in front of the throne. You, Saul, will become Paul" (248).[16] He intercedes on behalf of the provost and prays that he may experience God's forgiveness one day.

The notion of forgiveness is passed on to the Mantelbauer's daughter, Veronika. She and her brother, Günther, manage to flee the provost's raid and find shelter at the home of a true-hearted neighbor. Their escape from persecution is not mentioned in any historical records. The author simply fabricates the fate of the two children as a vehicle to represent the movement's development toward a more Lutheran position. The fictional character of Burkhardt's daughter becomes subject to the author's projections when he depicts her act of forgiveness and charity as essentially Christian rather than genuinely Anabaptist. In their approach toward the provost's sick and destitute condition, the siblings represent the conflict between Christ's teachings of love and the worldly desire for vengeance. Veronika encounters much protest when she decides to care for the sick provost. Her brother is eager to avenge the death of his family and community members when he enters Aichelin's room with an axe. However, his sister keeps him from

slaughtering the Sauline provost. Despite the great loss the provost has inflicted upon her, she comes to his defense and pleads for his pardon. By forgiving Aichelin his despicable actions, her character exemplifies a strong Christian belief and conduct. She explains her charitable attitude toward the persecutor by her intent to become a "disciple of Christ" (294).

The provost is astonished by the care and love of a Christian whom he has caused so much pain and sorrow. The thought of having killed innocent Christians and stirred God's wrath torments him.[17] In this dark moment, Veronika enlightens him about Christ's forgiveness and converts him to the Reformed belief. She adds: "Do not call me an Anabaptist any longer. Our communities are dispersed: we await with much longing the day when the Gospel can be proclaimed everywhere in the villages and towns and when we have shepherds and communities. Call me a Christian, that is what I want to be, and a Christian you should also become" (299).

She removes the label "Anabaptist" and asks to be called a Christian. The change of name indicates an inner conversion to a less radical belief. By rejecting the name "Täufer" (Anabaptist), she divorces the distinct Anabaptist practice of believer's baptism (*Taufe*) from the conception of a Christian faith. The scattered Anabaptist community in Württemberg is depicted as an ally of the Reformed Church in its mission to proclaim the Gospels.

The Anabaptist attachment to the Protestant doctrine marks the final stage of the dialectical portrayal of Anabaptism given in Stähle's historical novel. The literary depiction of the religious group undergoes changes. It starts with an image of Anabaptism as an ambiguous sect generated by the dubious preacher and his obscure ritual of nocturnal baptism. In the course of the novel, this negative Anabaptist image is challenged by the illustration of the brotherhood's suffering and martyrdom. This shift, from the negative representation of group-specific features such as underground gatherings and lay preaching, to a sympathetic portrayal of common Christian virtues such as steadfastness and forgiveness, indicates a gradual blending of the genuinely Anabaptist martyr experience with the Reformation history. In the end, the unique aspects of Anabaptist piety are entirely removed from the literary picture of the group. The novel's focus on principles shared by all Christians, particularly Christ's teaching of loving one's enemy, signals a new era of Anabaptism. The text gives the impression of Anabaptism as being a historical phenomenon that is absorbed by the Reformed Church. Stähle's affiliation with the Protestant Church as well as the Lutheran stance represented in Schmid's

historiography, encourage the Protestant-centered interpretation of the Reformation period.

Conclusion

German fictional literature dealing with sixteenth-century Anabaptist history appears in a greater volume in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the basis of this limited survey, one can suggest that authors of Anabaptist historical fiction during the turn of the century were concerned with the movement's distinct theology and its perseverance of pain. Such an awareness of Anabaptist theology and martyrdom can be attributed to advancements in the research of the sixteenth-century radical reformation and the recovery of the brotherhood's own historical documents and testimonies which has disclosed the interconnection between the group's religious doctrine and its readiness to suffer martyrdom. Although these two literary representations of the religious minority assume a tolerant stance toward Anabaptism, authors did not hesitate to point out the group's deviation from customary social and religious orders, and to interpret such historical material to suit their own ends. The Anabaptist history of nonconformity, marginalization, and oppression is presented in these two works through a contrastive depiction that includes a denigration of particular religious practices and aberrant developments within the movement on the one hand and an idealization of the believers' steadfast, moral, and charitable character on the other hand.

In their fictional treatments of the radical reform movement, Hausrath and Stähle both demonize and idealize the minority based on its separatist theology and peculiar way of life. The portrayal of Anabaptism as a fanatical fringe of the Reformation, its association with witchcraft, and its alliance with the Münsterite immoral reign contribute to an image of the Anabaptists as bizarre religionists. At the same time, the novelists identify the group's notion of discipleship as the essential element of their religious doctrine. Depicting the Anabaptist faithful acceptance of exclusion, oppression, and violent death for maintaining their beliefs, these two historical narratives idealize the brotherhood as true disciples to Christ. As social and religious outsiders, the Anabaptist figures in the two novels are characterized by an ambiguity that initially causes a rejection and then inspires these two authors to adjust Anabaptist belief and practices to suit their own convictions in order to eliminate such ambiguity.

As the pendulum swings between demonization and idealization of Anabaptism in these two novels, and as both stories end with the honouring of Anabaptist notions of steadfastness and charity, the authors are involved in an appropriation of the Anabaptist history of oppression and martyrdom for the purpose of their own religio-political agenda. Hausrath's and Stähle's novels illustrate the connection between narrated time and the prevailing situation at the time in which the narrative was written. In the novel *Klytia*, the Catholic threat experienced by the sixteenth-century Reformed Palatinate alludes to the Catholic paranoia experienced during the late nineteenth century in the German Empire. Similarly, in the novel *Der Reichsprofos*, the emphasis on aspects of martyrdom and steadfastness contributes to a literary formulation of Christian heroism that relates to the author's own confessional identity. In order to advocate for his Kulturkampf-inspired view, Stähle depicts the Anabaptist notion of discipleship as part of a larger movement. He portrays the movement's experience of persecution as an integrated part of the history of the Reformed Church, thereby promoting Protestantism as the dominant faith. With the voices of progressive Protestants instead of pious Anabaptists, the fictional characters of both novels advocate a practical Christianity that is attained by a living faith. The portrayal of the Anabaptists' practice of forgiveness and charity despite their severe persecution offers a lesson on Christ's invitation to love one's enemy. At the same time, the authors employ the depiction of the early Anabaptist notion of discipleship to advocate for their Protestant denomination. In the aftermath of the Kulturkampf, Hausrath and Stähle promote the Lutheran faith by suggesting an attachment of the Anabaptists to the Protestant doctrine. In doing so, the narrations do not only picture the Catholic Church as the brutal oppressor of the early reform movement but also arouse sympathy for the Protestant Church by perceiving the believers' experience of martyrdom as part of a shared history and tradition.

Notes

[1] Hausrath fictionalizes an important figure of Heidelberg's history. Erast had served as Friedrich III's personal physician and councillor until 1564. He was considered the most influential person in the Palatine consistory (Güß 72).

[2] All quotations of Stähle's and Hausrath's novels are translated by the author.

[3] As stated in the Schleitheim Confession, the Lord's Supper shall only be administered by those who are "united in the one body of Christ, that is the congregation of God, whose head is Christ, and that by baptism. … So it shall and must be, that whoever does not share the calling of the one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one spirit, to one body together with all the children of God, may not be made one load together with them" (Yoder, 11).

[4] Menno Simons argues in his foundational work that children lack in an understanding of New Testament teachings and thus are not able to make a distinction between good and evil and thus denounces pedobaptism. See XXXXX, pp 120, 126 and 131.

[5] According to Schowalter, Hausrath gained much of his knowledge concerning Anabaptist piety from contemporary research, chiefly that of Ludwig Keller (664). Keller, a German historian and state archivist in Münster, published pioneering works dealing with the Anabaptists, Münsterites, and the South German Anabaptist leader, Hans Denck. His vision of an ideal Christian brotherhood of humanity above the dogmatic ecclesiastical or materialistic worldviews is inherent in all of his works and strengthened Hausrath's notions of a non-dogmatic and non-clerical faith as it is advocated in *Klytia* (480).

[6] Waite has noted that the accusations of a conversion of Anabaptist heretics into a demonic witch sect were particularly made after the movement's heyday. The rise of the sixteenth-century witch hunting took place in South Germany after 1562, at a time when most Anabaptists were driven underground or into exile (132). This rise of diabolical conspiracy theories helped to activate popular concern about the sect and justified the rigorous persecution of Anabaptists.

[7] To name but a few scholars and their works at the turn of the century: Gustav Bossert, *Das Blutgericht in Rottenburg am Neckar* (1892) gives an account of the movement's spread in the area of Württemberg and depicts Michael Sattler's trail and death; Ernst Müller, *Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer* (1895), and Paul Burckhardt, *Die Basler Täufer* (1898), focus on the early Anabaptist communities in Switzerland. Johann Loserth published important works on Anabaptism in Moravia and Lower Austria, e.g. *Die Reformation und Gegenreformation in den innerösterreichischen Ländern im XVI Jahrhundert* (1898) and biographies of the movement's leaders in that area, e.g. *Dr. B. Hubmaier und die Anfänge der Wiedertaufe* (1893) and Christian Hege has portrayed early Anabaptism in the Palatinate in *Die Täufer in der Kurpfalz* (1908).

[8] According to Claus-Peter Clasen's study on the sociology of the Swabian Anabaptism, the unsettled religious and moral conditions in the dukedom provided a favourable ground for Anabaptist preachers (163). In the intermediary period in which the Württemberg population was torn between anti-Catholic tendencies and loyalty to the emperor, "zealous and determined Anabaptist preachers made a profound impression" (Clasen, 157).

[9] The term "Mantelbauer," frequently used in the novel, refers to a farmer on the Mantelhof, a property located between the Baden Württemberg towns of Aalen and Essingen. According to the *Beschreibung des Oberamts Aalen* (1854), the name refers to a farm on which Hilprant v. Mantel lived in 1336. It is assumed that a dynasty of knights had been located there (321).

[10] The contrasting figures of Wallner and Burhardt are reminiscent of Schmid's description of the two Anabaptist leaders, Sattler and Reublin whom he presents as antithetical characters (75-76).

[11] The novel's description of the Anabaptist's exertion of control parallels Schmid's characterization of Wilhelm Reublin. The historian portrays the South German leader as an excellent agitator with capitvating speech and the ability to gain power over the mind. As Shepherd Wilhelm' he reigned with unlimited power over his people (75).

[12] A full body baptism only became a common practice in the eighteenth-century Anabaptist-pietistic movement, Church of the Brethren, led by Alexander Mack.

[13] The similarity between Sattler and Burkhardt supports the assumption that Stähle fashioned the characters of the Mantelbauer and Wallner according to Schmid's description of Sattler and Reublin. In contrast to the unfavourable portrayal of Reublin, the historian images Michael Sattler as an elderly figure, who received recognition for his organisation of the Schleitheim Convention as well as his martyr death that even Lutherans considered an unjust ending of a just man (76, 79).

[14] A similar account is given in the state's records, *Beschreibung des Oberamts Aalen* (1854): "Noteworthy is that here [on the Mantelhof] during the Reformation, the infamous provost of the Swabian League, Aichelin, was sent from Ellwangen on New Year's Day to raid an Anabaptist meeting … and since none of the participants wanted to recant their belief, he partly hung, partly burned all of them, 14 people in total" (321, translated by the author). *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Österreich-Ungarn* provide additional information about the event in a footnote: "*Der Überfall im Mantelhof bei Aalen geschah zu Weihnachten (1531) durch württembergische Reiter. Aichelin nahm den Bauer und seinen Sohn und liess sie an eine Linde in Essingen aufhängen*" (28). The footnote reports how the attack on the Mantelhof took place on Christmas of 1531 by horsemen from the province of Württemberg. It also notes that Aichelin took the farmer and his son and let them hang on a linden tree in Essingen.

[15] Mayer has noted that hanging was considered a markedly dishonourable execution and that Aichelin intensified this act of killing by hanging the victim from a brittle branch rather than from common gallows. This measure was used to underscore the dishonourable character of the death penalty (35).

[16] Stähle was not the first to draw a parallel between Aichelin and Saul of Tarsus. A folk song from the year 1534 had already commented on the similarity between the Swabian provost and Saulus regarding their shared dedication to the persecution of disciples of Christ (Liliencron 82)

[17] Aichelin's fear of God's punishment and his unfamiliarity with Christ's teachings of loving one's enemy reveals the author's criticism of the Catholic's belief in purgatory and its lack of a practical faith based on the Gospels. This negative portrayal of the Catholic doctrine may relate to the anti-Catholic notions of the Kulturkampf.

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