Heresy or Ideal Society? A Study of Early Anabaptism as Minority Religion in German Fiction

DISSERTATION

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Ursula Berit Jany

Graduate Program in Germanic Languages and Literatures

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Dissertation Committee:
Professor Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Advisor
Professor Katra A. Byram
Professor Anna Grotans
Abstract

Anabaptism, a radical reform movement originating during the sixteenth-century European Reformation, sought to attain discipleship to Christ by a separation from the religious and worldly powers of early modern society. In my critical reading of the movement’s representations in German fiction dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, I explore how authors have fictionalized the religious minority, its commitment to particular theological and ethical aspects, its separation from society, and its experience of persecution. As part of my analysis, I trace the early historical development of the group and take inventory of its chief characteristics to observe which of these aspects are selected for portrayal in fictional texts. Within this research framework, my study investigates which social and religious principles drawn from historical accounts and sources influence the minority’s image as an ideal society, on the one hand, and its stigmatization as a heretical and seditious sect, on the other. As a result of this analysis, my study reveals authors’ underlying programmatic aims and ideological convictions cloaked by their literary articulations of conflict-laden encounters between society and the religious minority.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother,

for her support and her love.
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Vita

2000..........................................................Kreuzschule Dresden

2007..........................................................M.A. Cultural Studies, Technische

           Universität Dresden

2009..........................................................M.A. German Literature, The Ohio State

           University

2009 to present ..............................................Graduate Teaching Associate, Department

           of Germanic Languages and Literatures, The

           Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Germanic Languages and Literatures
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Introduction

“Früher verjagt, heute gefragt”¹ is a phrase that fittingly captures the Anabaptists’ experience in their European homeland. When the religious movement started in the midst of the sixteenth-century European Reformation, its followers were soon harried (“verjagt”) out of the land. As alternative reformers seeking to establish an ideal Christian community through separation from the secular realm and ecclesiastical sphere, they were perceived as dissidents and heretics. Although a small number of early modern contemporaries viewed them as exceptional Christians, it was not until the twentieth century that popular opinion shifted from a condemnation of the group’s deviation from customary social and religious order to an appreciation of their peaceful community life. Over the course of time, the Anabaptists caught the public’s interest and are now a popular subject (“gefragt”) for scholars and regional novelists alike.

The history of radical reformation, persecution, and migration surrounding the Anabaptist movement has been of great interest to writers of both historical and fictional literature. The authors’ fascination with the group’s early development led to a variety of Anabaptist literary representations. While a number of scholars have investigated the

¹ In their 2006 annual meeting, the European Mennonite Conferences asserted that “nachdem die Täufer früher verfolgt wurden, sind die Schweizer Mennoniten heute stärker gefragt als je zuvor in der Geschichte,” especially in consideration of Switzerland’s Täuferjahr (a year of commemorating the Anabaptists) in 2007; the broadcasting of Peter von Gunten’s Anabaptist documentary Im Leben und über das Leben hinaus on Swiss Television in 2005; and the sixth edition of Katharina Zimmermann’s Anabaptist novel Die Furgge (1989) in 2005 (Hege Halle, Rediger 1).
development of Anabaptist historiography, my present study examines the depictions of the movement’s early communities in fictional writings dating from the early modern era to the late twentieth century.

This study of Anabaptist representations in literature is an investigation into the field of historical fiction, since all narratives apart from a few seventeenth-century works treat the early movement as a historical phenomenon. As Jerome de Groot has mentioned, the genre of historical fiction, especially the historical novel, has become an immensely popular form and remains “in robust health, critically, formally and economically” (1). The historical novel offers a poetic treatment of history’s social movements, thereby disguising participation in contemporary cultural and political debates. Although denounced as “‘Bastard’ zwischen Poesie und Geschichtsschreibung” by nineteenth-century literary critics, nearly half of all German fiction consisted of historical novels in the years 1858-1861 (Eggert 342). During the second half of the nineteenth century and again in the twentieth century, several authors of historical fiction employed Anabaptist characters and events as central themes of their writings. Integrating historical and fictional elements into literary texts, these Anabaptist-themed narratives raise important questions on key concepts such as fact and fiction, history, and identity.

My critical reading of German fiction dealing with the Anabaptist history explores how authors in their respective time periods have viewed the religious minority, its commitment to particular theological and ethical precepts, and its confrontations with the established church and society. As a prerequisite for my analysis, I identify chief characteristics and principles of Anabaptist life and piety in order to discover which of
these fundamental tenets are selected for portrayal in fictional texts. My research thus investigates which social and religious aspects of early Anabaptism, in addition to the group’s conflict with the outside world, mold the image of the radical reform movement in German fiction. Examining the corpus of Anabaptist-themed narratives dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, my study also seeks to uncover the role of historical accounts in the development of plots and characters. I ascertain the extent to which historical writing, whether sixteenth-century sources or the historians’ interpretations thereof, serves as a basis for the authors’ fictional portrayals of the faith group. In that regard, I question how writers use the historical material to fashion both sympathetic, and even idealizing, as well as negative pictures of the religious minority. Moreover, I explore how the writers’ personal beliefs influence their attitudes toward the minority religion. And, with respect to the authors’ objectives, my research seeks to uncover underlying programmatic aims and ideological convictions cloaked by literary articulations of conflict-laden encounters between society and the marginalized group.

Numerous narratives treating the Anabaptists have appeared since the movement’s early development in sixteenth-century Germany. It is therefore necessary to set a historical and thematic frame for my research. I focus primarily on narratives that depict the early Anabaptist movement through the seventeenth century. Although most historical scholars have set the time frame for the early movement from 1525 until the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48),¹ I also include some narratives that render an image of the European Anabaptists up to the early eighteenth century. This extended time frame

¹ See here, among others, Friedmann (Mennonite Piety 3) and Oyer (51).
allows me, on the one hand, to explore the literary treatment of the movement’s early stages that are marked by fundamental aspects of its sixteenth-century existence and piety, namely, the intense focus on the imitation of Christ by the experience of martyrdom, the constant fear of arrest and execution, and the sense of mission. On the other hand, it facilitates a comparison of these aforementioned features to literary representations of Anabaptist groups in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Swiss fellowships in particular, which are characterized by patterns of life shaped by conflict with state officials.

Within the historical framework of early modern Anabaptism, my research concentrates on literary depictions of the peaceful, mainline movement. Thus, fictional texts treating the Münster rebellion of 1534-35, in which a group of Anabaptists broke from the peaceful doctrine of the mainstream movement in order to establish an apocalyptic theocracy, will not be included in the corpus of fictional works analyzed in this dissertation.³ As the violent element of the Westphalian group lends itself more easily to fictional treatment than does the quiet life of the mainline Anabaptists, the so-called Münsterites have appeared as a literary theme with relative frequency. However, literature on this aberrant form of Anabaptism does not correspond to the patterns of representation of the original movement. With their violent initiative to rid the city of non-Anabaptists, the Münsterites represent an oppression of the dominant religion rather than the persecution of a religious minority.

³ A more comprehensive overview of Münster-themed literary texts is given by Katja Schupp in her monograph Zwischen Faszination und Abscheu: Das Täuferreich von Münster (2001).
Having set the thematic focus on the peaceful Anabaptist movement in early modern Europe, I further narrow the scope of my research by literary genre. In my examination of the literary representation of Anabaptist faith, life, and character, I focus on German fiction. Although a number of dramas on Anabaptism appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, more significant contributions to the literary representation of Anabaptism were made in the form of novels and novellas. The genre of historical fiction offers more depth and greater detail in the depiction of the religious minority. Therefore, a historical and textual study of Anabaptist imagery in literature is most effectively conducted by an analysis of narrative works.

Fictional literature based on the Anabaptist theme has appeared in a number of countries, including Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and the United States. All of these nations play a part in the Anabaptist history, whether as the movement’s birthplace, temporary asylum, or permanent new home. However, as Anabaptism developed against the backdrop of the Protestant Reformation, it is closely linked to early modern German history and thus receives more attention in German-language (including Swiss and Austrian) narratives than in other European or American fictional texts. Consequently, my analysis of Anabaptist representations is predominantly directed toward German literature, as it provides a serious engagement with the chief principles and issues of the

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4 In drama, the Münster rebellion also dominates the corpus of works treating the Anabaptist theme, for example: Der König von Münster (1869, Ernst Mevert) and Es steht geschrieben (1948, Friedrich Dürrenmatt). Plays treating the genuine movement are, for example: Der Mennonit (1882, Ernst von Wildenbruch), a tragedy that focuses on the Anabaptist principle of non-resistance, and the two dramas Brüder in Christo (1947, Caesar von Arx) and Barbara (1948, Heinrich Künzi) that both depict early Anabaptism in Switzerland.

5 To be sure, a few American novels treating the early Anabaptist movement have appeared in the last century. These novels—for instance, Not Regina (1954, Christmas Carol Kaufman) and Pilgrim Aflame (1967, Myron S. Augsburger)—were written by American descendants of European Anabaptists who share an interest in the movement’s spiritual heritage.
early movement. German narratives ranging from the early modern to the contemporary period present particular aspects of early Anabaptism that weave together a spectrum of literary images representing and reimagining the religious minority.

The representation of the movement’s distinct collective identity and its deviation from customary patterns of church and life has not yet been discussed by scholars in the field of literature. The critical discussion of fiction treating the Anabaptist theme only began in the first half of the twentieth century when leaders of German Mennonite communities became concerned with the authenticity of Anabaptist representations in narratives. These early critical reviews of literary texts were mostly embedded in broader research on the history of Anabaptism. Christian Neff, who received much recognition for his contribution to the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (1942), published a number of articles in the *Christlicher Gemeindekalender* and *Mennonitische Blätter* commenting on the accuracy of Anabaptist representations in German fiction.\(^6\)

The first intensive research on Anabaptist-themed literature was conducted in the 1940s by Friedrich Zieglschmid, who investigated whether personal contact with the radical reformers and their descendants or reliable accounts thereof served as sources of information and inspiration for authors such as Grimmelshausen and Fontane. Both Zieglschmid’s and Neff’s analyses of original sources for Anabaptist references in German literature were applied in a small number of studies in the 1940s and 1950s. Critical readings of Anabaptist-themed fiction by Elizabeth Horsch Bender and Mary

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\(^6\) Furthermore, Otto Schowalter provided in Neff/Hege’s *Mennonitisches Lexikon* a short survey of the entire field of German literary texts treating the Anabaptist theme, including dramas, fiction, and travel accounts. In his overview, Schowalter investigates the sources used for the portrayal of Anabaptists in literature and examines the authenticity of their characters.
Eleanor Bender, in particular, have discussed the literary works in the context of the social and religious discourse surrounding their production. Comparable to the historical research by descendants of European Anabaptism in the United States, especially by the so-called “Bender School” and their students writing in the 1950s, Horsch Bender and Bender follow a confessionalist method to analyzing literature. Taking a decisively Anabaptist approach, both scholars have made claims about the authenticity of the movement’s portrayal in selected literary works and assessed the quality of the writings based on historical and theological accuracy.

While the Horsch Bender/Bender research on literature treating the radical reformation offers an insight into the authors’ Anabaptist subject matter and an assessment of the reliability of their facts according to a religiously infused historiography, the field of Anabaptist studies has since progressed and revised some of its earlier findings. Although a revitalization of the Anabaptist movement has been noticeable in historical, theological, and sociological discussions and the number of scholarly works examining the early modern faith group has grown in the past decades, the area of German literature treating the Anabaptist history has not received adequate

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7 An analysis of German literature based on the Anabaptist theme was also presented by Maria Wiebe in her master’s thesis “Der Wiedertäufer in der deutschen Literatur des neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts” (1941). Wiebe’s discussion of selected works consists predominantly of plot summaries and brief biographical information, examining the nature of authors’ attitudes toward Anabaptism, without, however, analyzing the reasons for such attitudes.

8 The “Bender School” formed around Harold S. Bender, a prominent professor of theology at Goshen College and Goshen Biblical Seminary in Indiana. Bender is best known for his essay “The Anabaptist Vision” (1944), in which he outlined his notion of faithful discipleship to Christ, the principle of love and non-resistance, and the importance of the church as a community. He was the founder of the Mennonite Historical Library and started the Mennonite Quarterly Review.

9 The shared confessionalist approach to analyzing Anabaptist history and literature does not come by surprise; Elizabeth Horsch Bender (married to Harold S. Bender) and her daughter Mary Eleanor Bender were both affiliated with the “Bender School” and a church community of the Anabaptist denomination.
attention since the 1950s.\textsuperscript{10} My study thus makes an effort to reconceptualize research on Anabaptist themed fiction. It moves beyond the notion of authenticity as proposed by previous (mostly confessionalist) scholars and toward an analysis of the images and representations of the religious minority and its conflicts with society.

The theoretical starting point for my examination of Anabaptist representations in German historical fiction is given by historiographical theorists who argue that history itself is a narrative form rather than an account of historical truth. In the late nineteenth century, Droysen and Treitschke acknowledged the constructedness of historical writing. The two historical theorists observed historians’ use of empathy, coherence, and political/national identity when transforming historical data into stories. Roughly one century later, Roland Barthes explained that the narrative structure employed in historical writing was originally developed within the field of fiction (“in myths and the first epics”) (154). Therefore, theorists like Hayden White conclude that reality does not exist in historical writing. In his critical work \textit{Metahistory} (1973), White points to historians’ quest to achieve coherence by using narrative modes to fashion history. Asserting that rhetoric and metaphor are integral parts of historiography, he identifies a narrative prose form inherent in all historical writings.\textsuperscript{11}

As a consequence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories on the constructedness of historiographies, I approach Anabaptist historical writings (including

\textsuperscript{10} Since Horsch/Bender’s research on Anabaptist depictions in literary texts, no scholarly contributions have been made in the field of Anabaptist-themed literature since the 1950s. Previous research on the selected novels and novellas (without a particular focus on the Anabaptist theme) is referenced in the respective chapters.

\textsuperscript{11} Other historical theorists, for instance Alun Munslow (\textit{Deconstructing History}, 1997) and Keith Jenkins (\textit{Rethinking History}, 2003) have similarly conceptualized history as a set of narrative tropes.
the group’s own historical accounts) with an awareness of the historians’ religio-political/national direction and their deployment of narrative tropes. Holding historical accounts against fictional representations, the historiographies’ constructed elements may explain some of the sympathetic as well as critical pictures of Anabaptism in fiction. Furthermore, the authors’ exaggerations of and deviations from the perceived historical truth become an important means of determining the underlying objectives of their fictional texts. Identifying aspects of Anabaptist life, piety, and interaction with the dominant society that have been overplayed, underplayed, or simply fabricated in the selected novels and novellas exposes the authors’ programmatic aims and ideological objectives.

In the highly influential publication Der historische Roman (1937, translated into English in 1962), the literary theorist György Lukács is concerned with the social and political objectives inherent in historical narratives. In his critical work, he refers to the manipulative character of historical fiction that is influenced by the author’s political and ideological agenda as it is presented in the depiction of social conflict. His examination of the historical novel is part of a wider contribution to literary analysis in which he sees fiction as a product of social forces. In The Historical Novel, he seeks to understand the “social and ideological basis from which the historical novel was able to emerge” (20). Analyzing Sir Walter Scott’s well-known narrative Waverley, which he regards as the proto-type of the genuinely historical novel, Lukács shows that the economic and social unrest caused by the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars established a sense of history that was essential for the articulation of national unity: “The appeal to national
independence and national character is necessarily connected with a reawakening of national history” (25).

The Marxist undertone notwithstanding, *The Historical Novel* provides an insight into the genre of historical narratives that guides my critical reading of fiction on Anabaptist history. According to Lukács’ concept of a genuine historical novel, the purpose of the narrative is to enable the reader to gain an understanding of the social conditions of the past. This act of drawing a connection between the reader and the historical material has been highly politicized and can only be accomplished by concentrating on low characters, or as Barbara Potthast has observed, by recruiting “zur Identifikation einladende Nebenfiguren der Geschichte als Helden” (37).

As Lukács has asserted, it is the “Nebenfigur” rather than the well-known historical figure that captures the sense of the individual within history. Allowing the marginalized character to “express feelings and thoughts about the real, historical relationships,” the historical novel employs “necessary anachronisms” to knit the fictional narrative out of historical facts (Lukács 63). In my comparison of historical accounts and fictional representations of early Anabaptism, I will employ narratological tools to identify the writers’ creative process of transforming facts into fiction. Mieke Bal’s introductory work, *Narratology*, and Scholes, Phelan, and Kellog’s *The Nature of Narrative* provide the necessary terminology and means to identify and categorize narratological structures underlying Anabaptist themed fiction. Considering aspects of character selection, focalization, and opposition as well as forms and levels of narration,

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12 Eggert has referred, for instance, to the “politische Interessenahme aus aktuellen Auseinandersetzungen um die Formen der nationalstaatlichen Einigung” evident in late nineteenth-century historical novels (343).
my analysis investigates how historical narratives fictionalize the social conflicts surrounding the historical Anabaptist movement.

Examining the literary representations of the persecuted minority, I propose an organization of fictional texts into specific categories according to conceptions of Anabaptism prevailing in and beyond the different literary periods. Rather than pursuing comprehensiveness in regard to the corpus of Anabaptist narratives, my work seeks to balance close reading and chronological breadth by offering four thematic units, each of them addressing one characteristic of the historical faith group that has significantly defined the overall image of Anabaptism in fictional accounts, and providing an analysis of two to three representative works. Before the first thematic unit, I give a concise overview of the historical developments of early Anabaptism. This outline addresses events and figures that later become fictionalized in the German narratives. The introduction to the radical reform movement also expounds fundamental tenets of Anabaptist faith and chief characteristics of Anabaptist life and piety. Knowledge of this history is a prerequisite to understanding the literary treatment of the early fellowship in fictional writings. In order to avoid the loss of chronology and context that would arise if historical explanations were to be included in the discussion of each literary work, the overview of the movement’s history and principles is presented before the individual chapters.

The second chapter, “Harmonia—The Ideal Society,” charts an emergent fascination with the practical aspects of Anabaptist discipleship, in particular, social unity, simplicity, and moral conduct, and correspondingly examines some of the earliest
literary representations of the faith group in the works of Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling. Their narratives represent the few examples in German literature in which fictional accounts of early Anabaptism are based on personal contact with the religious group. The writers’ actual encounters with members of the faith community are taken into consideration when exploring the idealization of Anabaptist social and economic values in their respective texts.

In the third chapter, “Nonconformity–The Ambivalent Community,” I examine the diametrical perceptions of the Anabaptist group in nineteenth-century narratives. Attitudes toward the movement’s nonconformity and marginalization are presented in these works through a contrastive depiction that includes an idealization of the believers’ peaceful, moral, and industrious character on the one hand, and a denigration of their doctrinal principles and religious practices on the other hand. My analysis of three realist narratives takes into consideration the nineteenth-century historiographies that served as foundations of Anabaptist portrayal and identifies polemic elements and narrative structures in these historical texts that contribute to the distinct depictions and figure constellations in the literary works.

Chapter Four, “Nachfolge Christi–The Fellowship of Martyrs,” concentrates on the depiction of Anabaptist persecution and suffering in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century German fiction. As authors gain access to modern research, they approach the historical material with more consideration for the Anabaptist experience. Their fiction thus focuses on the aspect of martyrdom derived from the group’s attempt to follow Christ in his bearing of the cross. When analyzing Anabaptist representations in three
selected narratives, I examine references to the movement’s martyr literature, with its frequent descriptions of believers’ steadfastness through suffering, in regard to their role in creating an Anabaptist image that reflects the aspiration to imitate Christ. The selected narratives serve as examples for the authors’ idealizations of Anabaptist martyrdom and their emphasis on the movement’s principles of forgiveness and non-vengeance to support their own ideological objectives and programmatic aims.

The final chapter, “Conflict with the State–The Congregation of Faithful Dissidents,” examines representations of early modern Swiss Anabaptists in regional novels. As the seventeenth-century Anabaptists experience a shift from religious to political persecution due to their Scripture-based rejection of military service and the oath of alliance, their image as martyrs is superseded by that of dissenters. Depicting new forms of persecution such as forced relocation and galley slavery, twentieth-century regional fiction addresses issues such as state violence, Heimat, and exile. The reading of three representative novels explores the aspect of image formation in the context of Swiss Vergangenheitsbewältigung, and analyzes the influence of regionalist historiography on the fictionalization of the faith group.
Chapter 1: The Development of Early Anabaptism as Seen in Historical Research

A. Anabaptist Origins

In the aftermath of Martin Luther’s initial church reformation, a number of reform-minded factions developed in Central Europe during the 1520s. Luther’s and Zwingli’s proclamations of theological change ignited an extensive debate about particular religious concerns. The reformers’ notion of *sola fide*, the centrality of faith, raised the question whether infants can possess faith as the principal element of sacramental baptism. Further points under discussion pertained to the matter of authority, the enforcement of church dogma, and the idea of a practical Christianity. As a number of contemporaries grew dissatisfied with the objectives and directions that the ecclesiastical reforms of the two prominent church leaders took, they started to dispute and denounce the reform churches’ theological course, and consequently split from the reform movement to form their own religious groups.

These alternative reform groups became increasingly frustrated with the lack of personal devotion on the part of most Christians and the growing “theological obsession of the (Lutheran and Zwinglian) reform movement, which seemed to ignore the commitment to Christian living” (Hillerbrand, Division 115). Luther’s notion of *sola fideism* struck them as being an intellectual theory that neglected to address external
application in daily life (Klaassen 297). Simultaneously, they sought to employ the reformer’s concept of *sola scriptura* on a literal, rather than spiritual, level as they promoted a biblical literalism that encouraged a style of living according to the principles of primitive Christianity. Anabaptism was one radical manifestation of these sixteenth-century reform movements that advocated a Christian position marked by the application of biblical teachings and virtues in the daily walk of life.

Little consensus is found in the historical dialogue about Anabaptist origins. Although historians have generally accepted the administration of the first recorded rebaptism by Konrad Grebel and Felix Manz in January 1525 as the starting point of the dissemination of Anabaptism in Switzerland, scholars have not found a common ground in the discussion of influences that led to the initial act of believer’s baptism (Hillerbrand Division 112-13). Two disparate opinions about Anabaptist origins emerged when Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Holl discussed Luther’s influence on the formation of the radical

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13 Anabaptism—from the Greek *Ana-*-, meaning “again”—refers to the act of a conscientious re-baptism as an adult. The group associated with this practice was also known as *Wiedertäufer*. Both terms, Anabaptist and *Wiedertäufer*, were ambiguous as they defined the movement exclusively by the outward act of baptism and neglected to realize the broader concept of piety. According to Michael D. Driedger, the religious group refused to accept the name *Wiedertäufer* since it put emphasis on the practice of rebaptism of adults when in fact the Brethren did not regard infant baptism as the initial admission to a church community (1). They also rejected the label *Anabaptist* because the implied act of rebaptism had long been a criminal offense in the Holy Roman Empire, punishable by death (Roth, Swiss Brethren 348). Opponents frequently employed the ambivalent term to justify imprisonment and execution of these radical reformers. Although the religious minority used a variety of different names when referring to their faith communities, e.g. Brethren, Children of God, and Disciples of Christ, Claus-Peter Clasen has explained that contemporaries simply called them *Wiedertäufer* because most of the self-assigned names neither attained uniform acceptance, nor distinguished the Brethren from other religious groups (12-13). Despite the negative connotations in the sixteenth century, the name Anabaptist has since become an accepted term for all Reformation groups that administer believer’s baptism. Therefore, I will use this term as well as its German translation *Täufer* (a short form of *Wiedertäufer*, stressing the group’s notion of a first baptism rather than a rebaptism).

reform movement. In the second half of the twentieth century, historical research further investigated the matter of origins and formed two distinct positions. The veteran Anabaptist scholar Harold S. Bender has made an effort to disassociate the early Swiss Anabaptist movement from Müntzer and the Zwickau prophets. A proponent of the monogenetic approach, he has claimed that the Swiss-German Täufer group “was born in the heart of the Swiss Reformation and belongs ... to the great mainline Protestant movement and to no other” (Anabaptists 16).

Other historians, however, have assumed a pluralistic concept of proto-Anabaptism and have identified various sources from which the movement derived. Hans Hillerbrand has argued that Troeltsch’s claim of Zürich Anabaptism being “radikalisierter Frühzwingianismus” reveals an idealized view of the radical reform movement and does not take into account the chronological discrepancy between the time Zwingli proposed his early theological positions and the moment of contact with the Brethren after he had

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15 The historian George H. Williams first proposed the term “radical reformation” in his eponymous monograph (1962) in which he draws a distinction between those calling for church reform without the support of the government (so-called “radicals”, for instance, the Anabaptists and Spiritualists) and those who implement a government-supported reformation (for example, Luther and Zwingli). Even before Williams coined this term, Roland Bainton had already referred to these reformed-minded people “who separated church and state and rejected the civil arm in matters of religion” as the “left wing of the Reformation,” explaining that this faction of the sixteenth-century reformation was “more radical” in terms of church organization, sacraments, and creeds (124-34). More recently, Laube reiterated the classification of “radical” and “moderate” reformers, arguing that all personalities and groupings “left of Luther are, by and large, subsumed under the term ‘radical’ Reformation, ranging from the Zwickau Prophets and Karlstadt, ... the Anabaptists and Spiritualists” (10).

16 John H. Yoder, Fritz Blanke, and William R. Estep have also stressed in their respective works the Zwinglian character of the first Anabaptists and the rejection of Müntzer influences. Hanspeter Jecker referred to the 1960s research of these predominantly North American scholars with Mennonite backgrounds as confessionalist historiography that aims to rehabilitate Anabaptism as a legitimate branch of the Reformation (199).

17 Members of the movement simply referred to themselves as “brethren” (Brüder) or used the more descriptive term “baptism-minded” (Taufgesinnte) as found in many of their fundamental writings. Similarly, the group employed the term Brotherhood as a designation for their faith community. According to Hengartner, this nomenclature indicates the spiritual bond between group members; “Geistige Bruder-
already shifted away from his beginnings (Origins 155). Proposing a polygenetic approach to the emergence of Anabaptism, Hillerbrand has suggested the influence of Erasmus, Karlstadt, and Müntzer, in addition to the impact of the two prominent Reformers. He has clearly identified Luther’s and Zwingli’s programs as “initial religious stimulus” for those who later fell into disillusionment with the reforms and went their own radical way (World 58). Anabaptists received their impetus particularly from the translation of the Bible, a significant achievement of the Lutheran Reformation. As the radical reformers started reading the Scripture in the vernacular, they developed an insistence on “the priority of the Word (that) made many seek recourse directly in that text” (Hillerbrand, Division 113).

Gaining ideas and stimuli from Ulrich Zwingli’s theological course, the Zürich radicals inevitably received some Erasmian influence from the Swiss reformer. Hillerbrand demonstrated that some of the Dutch humanist’s basic motifs were reiterated by the early Anabaptists (Origins 157-61). He refutes Bender’s argument that no direct Erasmian influence equals no Erasmian influence by describing a set of humanistic notions, ethical concerns, and theological concepts of the humanist that were echoed by the early Swiss Brethren (Grebel 65). Erasmus’ stance on peace, most prominently pronounced in his tracts Dulce bellum inexpertis (1519) and Querela Pacis (1521), had a great impact on the theological and political attitudes of Zwingli; he assumed the role of the “transmitter of Erasmian pacifism to the zealots in his congregation, who would later

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und Schwesternschaft als zusammenbindende Elemente” (233). From the earliest times of the movement, the terms Bruderschaft (“brotherhood”) and Gemeinde (“church community”) have been used to express the communal spirit and feeling of solidarity among fellow believers.

18 James M. Stayer and Hans-Jürgen Goertz, to name but a few, have also taken a post-confessional or revisionist position in the discussion of Anabaptist origins (Jecker 199).
be Anabaptists” (Stayer, Sword 57). In addition to the ethic of pacifism, the sixteenth-century Täufer shared the concept of true discipleship with the Dutch humanist. Friesen has pointed out the movement’s dependence on the humanist’s interpretation of Christ’s Great Commission, which he put forward in his paraphrases of Matthew and Acts (Friesen 43-75). In this 1522 work, In Evangelium Matthaei Paraphrasis, Erasmus presents his thoughts on the Sermon on the Mount. According to Hillerbrand, the Anabaptists’ aspiration to true discipleship to Christ and their separation from the outside world both reflect Erasmus’ idea of the ethical dualism between Christians and the secular sphere, which he attained by a literal reading of this Gospel from the New Testament (Origins 158-60). His view of the sacramental practice of baptism is thus “similar to that of the Anabaptists in its insistence that to be valid baptism must be accompanied by true discipleship” (Origins 160).

The early Anabaptist movement was further influenced by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, Luther’s colleague at Wittenberg University. Gordon Rupp has assigned Karlstadt a significant role in the rise of sixteenth-century Anabaptism (308-26). One of Karlstadt’s seven communion tracts from 1524 addresses the issue of infant baptism. Rupp has suggested that the theologian’s text, “Von dem Touff der Kinder,” profoundly influenced the Swiss Brethren, particularly Felix Manz, who approached printers in Basel to publish the text. After the manuscript was repeatedly rejected, Manz submitted a writing concerning pedobaptism to the Zürich City Council that showed characteristics of the Central German dialect, therefore leading Rupp to the assumption that Karlstadt’s tract served as a guide to Manz’ position on infant baptism (310). In an earlier writing,
“Von den Empfahern, Zeichen, und Zusag des heiligen Sacraments” (1521), Karlstadt had already taken an iconoclastic stance on the nature of sacraments which he later reiterated in his seven tracts. The incompatibility of the spiritual and the physical emphasized in his radical reforms also influenced the distinctive character of the Anabaptist movement. Hillerbrand considers Karlstadt’s early pronouncement of the symbolic interpretation of the communion as a likely factor for Anabaptists’ denunciation of the bodily presence in the breaking of the bread (Origins 167). His call for spiritualizing the sacraments nurtured the Brethren’s radical position on the matter. Furthermore, the reformer’s understanding of the deliberate commitment to Christ contributed to Anabaptist insistence on Gelassenheit. Karlstadt promoted in his teachings “a ‘letting-go’ of temporal things in the awareness that God will provide for His own” (Hillerbrand, Origins 165). This notion of true discipleship to Christ corresponds to the Brethren’s disregard of worldly matters.

The question of Thomas Müntzer’s contribution to the emergence of the Anabaptist movement has caused much controversy in the debate about its origins. Responding to the frequent references to Müntzer’s influence on proto-Anabaptism by early modern church polemics,\(^\text{19}\) eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historiographies postulated a direct lineage between Anabaptists and the leader of the Peasants’

\(^{19}\) According to Hinrich van der Smissen, Reformation polemicists first used the term “Anabaptisten” for proponents of Müntzer without differentiating between the peace-loving communities in Switzerland and the revolutionary groups in Central Germany (69). Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor in the position of the head of the Zürich church, affirmed in his text about Anabaptist origins that Müntzer is the father of the movement (Fast, 77-105).
War. Although the contact between the Saxon revolutionary and the Zürich circle is documented by Grebel’s letter in which the Swiss Anabaptist community reached out to Müntzer in 1524, a causal relationship between the two radical groups remains unclear (Muralt, Schmid 16). Confessionalist twentieth-century Anabaptist historiography has attempted to dissociate proto-Anabaptism from Müntzer’s revolutionary eschatology, whereas scholars who are invested in the heterogeneous character of the movement have proposed a common ground between the Saxon radical and the sixteenth-century Täufer. Hillerbrand has ascertained parallels between the two radical factions based on Müntzer’s concept of the Bund and his repudiation of pedobaptism. In his tract “Ausgedrückte Entblößung des falschen Glaubens der ungetreuen Welt” (1524), Müntzer demands a church that consists of true believers who separate themselves from the ungodly (Origins 172). As a consequence of his call for a pure church, he questions the practice of infant baptism in “Protestation oder Entbietung” (1524) without, however, initiating believer’s baptism in his Allstedt congregation (Hillerbrand Origins 176).

In the discussion of the Anabaptists’ adaptation of Müntzer’s essential theological principles, the diverse streams and individual figures within the early movement need to be taken into consideration. Stayer has referred to the reformer’s attitude toward property and his anti-materialistic piety when affirming some cross-fertilization of ideas between him and the Anabaptist congregations in South and Central Germany (Anabaptist Community 107-22). Müntzer was concerned about equality among Christians and

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20 See here, among others, Melchior Schuler, Die Thaten und Sitten der Eidgenossen. Schuler describes the emergence of Anabaptism in Switzerland as a development that was initiated by Müntzer’s mission to the South where he promoted insurrectional concepts (64-66).

21 See here, among others, Bender, Conrad Grebel (110-124).

22 See Hillerbrand, (Origins 170-177) as well as James M. Stayer et al (Monogenesis 102-111).
fought for social justice in the uprising that was later known as the Peasants’ War. Hans Hut, the apostle of Anabaptism in Upper Austria and South Germany, is considered a significant link between the reformer’s anti-materialistic position and the practice of the community of goods by Brethren in Moravia (Stayer, Anabaptist Community 113). Furthermore, Hut’s theology received an important impetus from Thomas Müntzer in terms of the spiritual underpinnings of his theology. The late medieval German mystical-spiritualist and apocalyptic tradition integral to his Anabaptism was predominantly transmitted by Müntzer (Stayer et al 104).

A polygenetic approach to the understanding of Anabaptism reveals the diverse intellectual heritage of the early radical church community. The complexity of its origins contributes significantly to the movement’s heterogeneous character and its uniqueness vis-à-vis any other religious formation in the early modern period. Due to the assimilation of various sources, Anabaptism can neither be understood as “Zwinglian nor Catholic, neither mystic nor revolutionary in character, though exemplifying Zwinglian, humanistic, and spiritualistic qualities. Anabaptism is *sui generis*” (Hillerbrand, Origins 177). The movement’s deviation from established denominations not only formed its distinct character, but also caused its expulsion from the dominant society beginning with the first believers’ baptisms in Zürich.

The first Swiss Anabaptist circle was initiated by a small group of radical reformers who gathered in Zwingli’s Bible study series during the early 1520s.

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23 Some scholars, for instance, Hans-Dieter Schmidt, have identified a similar correlation between the eschatology of Müntzer and Hut, but simultaneously disassociated the theology of the German Anabaptist from other Täufer circles (237-256).
Regretting that Zwingli’s reformation was incomplete, they asked him to institute more radical changes in church politics and practice. During their intensive study of the Testaments, they began to perceive infant baptism as scripturally unsupported. While the young radicals demanded immediate action, the reformer was concerned about public opinion and sought to implement alterations in an orderly fashion (Clasen, Anabaptism 4). Zwingli soon shifted away from his original position of advocating for a church of voluntary believers in order to secure a unified Reformation in Switzerland. The split between him and the founding fathers of Swiss Anabaptism took place when he began to dispute credobaptism and declared the group radical. Defying Zwingli and the authorities, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Georg Blaurock held a conventicle in January 1525 where they administered the first adult baptism upon confession of faith.24 Within the first week, the three men started re-baptizing no fewer than 35 people (Clasen, Anabaptism 12).

B. Persecution and Martyrdom

The early Anabaptists were involved in active missionary work whereby they proclaimed their radical reforms, converted contemporaries, and formed a network of Anabaptist congregations within and beyond the Swiss border.25 These Täufer circles

24 A detailed account of the first believer’s baptism is given in the history book of the Hutterites: The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren known as Das große Geschichtbuch der Hutterischen Brüder (43-45). Hillerbrand sees in the simple way the first adult baptism was conducted signs of Christian primitivism, (Division 114).

25 Within the first few years, Anabaptist communities were established in Switzerland, particularly in and around the cities of Zürich, Basel, Bern, St. Gallen, and Schaffhausen, as well as parts of South Germany and Austria (see map in Clasen, Anabaptism 19).
rejected the practice of infant baptism and the sacramentalism of the established church. Instead, they promoted a Christianity attained by a distinctly spiritual way of living according to the teachings of Christ, and in separation from worldly enticements and abominations. Considered the most dramatic alternative movement of reform in the early sixteenth century, the Brethren were not able to obtain acceptance by the Swiss government (Hillerbrand, Division 112). Their deviating religious sentiments clashed with the Zürich City Council and Zwingli’s plans for the establishment of a reformed church. Grebel’s performance of the first rebaptism in 1525 was considered an act of defiance by which the movement violated the law. The Brethren’s ideas of a believer’s church based on the New Testament threatened the unity of church and state. The government declared all opposing interpretations of Christ’s teaching as heresy in order to protect the official religion. Clasen has pointed to political reasons for the rejection of more than one faith in a given territory, “lest religious differences lead to unrest and even civil war” (Anabaptism 358).

In addition to the attempts of the state and church authorities to suppress the new movement, the Anabaptist’s theology caused a self-exclusion from the dominant society. The Brethren’s belief in the two kingdoms, an idea they shared with Karlstadt and Müntzer,26 dictated their separation from the world. Considering themselves to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, they rejected any loyalty to the worldly kingdom (Lietchy 4-5). They believed that only in isolation from the established society would they be able to commit fully to a life as disciples to Christ. In this regard, the deliberate

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26 Even Luther proclaimed a theology of the two kingdoms before he shifted toward the more traditional idea of *cura religionis* in the early 1530s (Whitford 41-62).
act of adult baptism was an outward symbol of their exclusion from the state and the church of the reformers. John Oyer has indicated that the Lutherans and the Reformed Church charged the Anabaptists with sectarianism because they resented the Brethren’s conviction of their moral and spiritual superiority. As the Täufer refused fellowship with other religious groups, they implied that these Christians did not meet their devotional standards and reform ideas (6-7).

The Anabaptists’ deliberate separation from society and their refusal to accept the order of worldly citizenship resulted in a number of mandates and edicts that suppressed the radical group. Governmental and clerical authorities took measures against the spread of the movement, which turned the Anabaptists into social outcasts and forced them to establish an underground church. After the Brethren openly proclaimed their concept of a voluntary and exemplary church in the first months after their formation, “Anabaptism quickly became a clandestine sect” (Clasen, Anabaptism 360). Oyer has listed some of the rules that Anabaptists followed in order to avoid detection; for instance, hiding and disguising leaders, relocating to regions where local authorities were less hostile to the religious minority, using special greetings to maintain secrecy, and meeting in secluded places, e.g. forests, ravines, and isolated buildings on the periphery of villages (38-43).

Some Anabaptists only survived as Nicodemites; others relied on the support of so-called Treuherzige (true-hearted) or Halb-Täufer (half-Anabaptists), who, although not members of the Anabaptist community, sympathized with the group and warned them of Täuferjäger (Anabaptist hunters) (Nolt 29).

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27 Nicodemites are Anabaptists who desisted from their faith after torture and then secretly retracted the recantation and returned to the Anabaptist congregation.
When members of the Anabaptist circles were discovered and captured, they faced torture and death. Some authorities sent out investigators or even troops to hunt down Brethren; other areas introduced baptismal registers or conducted biannual visitations to trace the radical disciples in their respective regions (Clasen, Anabaptism 362-63). Authorities were eager to capture all radicals because they feared a rapid spread of the movement if tolerance was granted to individual Brethren. Those Anabaptists who recanted after being tortured by investigators were punished for their disobedience and had to pay fines. Practitioners of believer’s baptism who remained steadfast and true to their faith during the persecution process faced imprisonment and death.

A categorization of the Anabaptist movement within the broader scope of the Reformation has often led to contrasting positions, varying from heresy and revolt to martyrdom. Goertz discusses the development of these diametrical perceptions of Anabaptism and points out that the radical fellowship was indeed considered a heretic group by the early modern Catholic Church, and thus became the object of Ketzerprozesse (heresy trials) based on theological grounds (Goertz 139-40). Luther, on the other hand, did not justify the persecution of Täufer from a religious standpoint; rather, he regarded the circles of Brethren as heretical insurgencies that were to be prosecuted by civil law (Köhler 5-7). Goertz has identified parallels between the early

28 The Swabian League, for instance, sent out Berthold Aichele, a provost and Täuferjäger who hunted down numerous Anabaptists in Württemberg and Tyrol during the late 1520s (Hege, Aichele, 14-15).
29 According to Clasen, some of the Brethren who renounced their faith during inquisitions were either whipped or received the coat of arms burned onto their cheeks or foreheads with hot irons (Anabaptism 367).
30 In a sermon from the year 1533, Luther called the Anabaptists “wolves in sheep’s clothing” for he regarded their outward piety, reading of the Scripture, patience in suffering, and non-vengeful attitude as
Anabaptist movement and the peasants’ revolt, and therefore concludes that the
Täufertum was “eine religiöse und sozialrevolutionäre Bewegung” (140). Yet, he also
recognizes the Brethren’s acts of suffering as a sign of martyrdom. Even some of the
contemporary opponents of Anabaptism acknowledged the Täufer’s role as martyrs when
they deliberately suffered persecution and death for the sake of their faith (Goertz 142-
43).

Clasen has estimated a total of 715 executions of Anabaptists in Switzerland,
Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia during the years 1525 to 1618. Both
Catholics and Protestants imposed the death penalty on Brethren. While the Catholic
governments more often executed Anabaptists by burning at the stake, Protestants
abolished the medieval custom and either beheaded the radicals or drowned them (Oyer
36). Among the first Anabaptists to be executed were important leaders of the movement;
for instance, Manz was drowned two years after the initial re-baptism took place and
Blaurock was burned at the stake in 1529.

Execution was the most extreme form of persecution during the first decades of
Anabaptism, but other punishments were also administered, contingent upon the degree
of the religious crime and the territory in which it took place. Some Anabaptists were
beaten and banished from their homeland and lost their property in confiscations. Others
merely a distraction from the fact that they despised the governments as non-Christian institutions and
destroyed the divine order of church and state (Loewen 91).

31 In his essay “Reublin and Brötli: The Revolutionary Beginnings of Swiss Anabaptism,” Stayer has come
to a similar conclusion about the movement’s revolutionary quality (83-102).
32 However, this number does not include the death penalties imposed on members in the Palatinate and
Alsace, whose records of the execution have been lost (370).
were sent to the Mediterranean as galley slaves, marked as criminals by brandings and mutilations, or imprisoned until they recanted or died from starvation (Oyer 36).

The legal basis for the capital punishment imposed on Anabaptists was first presented in the imperial mandate of January 1528. The mandate stipulated the death penalty for Täufer for reasons of rebaptism and the violation of civil laws. The so-called Wiedertäufermandat (Anabaptist mandate) in the Second Diet of Speyer (1529) referred to an ancient decree that forbade rebaptism under penalty of death (Hillerbrand, Reformation 128-19). The edict of Speyer reissued the law passed by the Roman Empire in the fourth century and declared capital punishment to all Anabaptist leaders, steadfast believers, and those who refused to have their children baptized (Goertz 127-28). The imperial mandate was reiterated in Speyer in 1544 and renewed in Augsburg in 1551. However, the decree pronounced in the sessions of the Holy Roman Empire was regarded simply as a general guideline upon which the individual territories developed particular laws against Anabaptist residents. Switzerland started executing Täufer immediately after the initiation of the movement in 1525, and Bavaria issued capital punishments even for those Brethren who recanted and took the sacrament during inquisitions.

The execution of Anabaptists on the grounds of heresy and civil disobedience ended at the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War. Yet, the suppression of the religious minority lasted well into the eighteenth century, when further regulations were passed that prohibited Anabaptists from practicing their faith. Government officials continued to

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33 According to Clasen, an important procedural change was introduced in the Diet of Augsburg that allowed authorities to arrest Anabaptists without prior denunciation, similar to prosecutions of witches (Anabaptism 375-76).

34 Hessen, Saxony, and the city of Straßburg, on the other hand, were more lenient toward Anabaptists. They avoided capital punishment and instead banished the Brethren from their territories (Goertz 132-33).
imprison, fine, expel, and enslave them on the basis of non-compliance with the state church. Although the Brethren avoided persecution by fleeing from authorities and escaping from captivity, they never resisted arrests by force. In fact, they willingly submitted themselves to the death sentence because they valued their faith more highly than their lives. In a martyr-consciousness, they remained true to their faith while enduring cruel interrogations, tortures, and executions.

Suffering persecution became an integral of the group’s identity in the sixteenth century. Enduring martyrdom was considered the essence of a true and genuine Christianity.\(^{35}\) Robert Friedmann has explained the ‘theology of martyrdom’\(^{36}\) by the concept of the two kingdoms. Understanding discipleship to Christ as the group’s mission, the Anabaptists experienced much persecution by the worldly sovereignty. They accepted their role as sufferers by asserting that “the citizens of the kingdom of God will necessarily meet suffering in this world” (Hershberger 114). Furthermore, martyrdom at the hands of the secular power was considered to be of a redemptive nature, as it provided a rite of passage into eternity (Oyer 45). Friedmann has identified Anabaptists’ suffering as a means to access the new spiritual world and as a necessary element for the construction of God’s kingdom (Doctrine 114). Suffering allowed the Brethren to follow Christ in the most intimate way. The discipline with which they endured the pains of torture indicated their obedience to Christ and to the Brotherhood (Oyer 44-45).

\(^{35}\) Goertz has commented that “die Täufer haben das Martyrium vorausgesehen und als ein notwendiges Kennzeichen der wahren Kirche angenommen” (139).

\(^{36}\) This term was previously used by Ethelbert Stauffer in “The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom” (179-214).
Anabaptists held their martyrs in the highest regard. The tragedies of the persecuted Brethren were memorialized in martyr chronicles written by members of the fellowship. In 1660, Thieleman J. van Braght, the elder of a Flemish Anabaptist congregation at Dordrecht, published the *Martyrs’ Mirror*, a collection of martyr accounts that contains stories of Christian martyrdom from the time of Christ to 1500, as well as records of Brethren who experienced torture and execution from 1524 to 1660 because of their rejection of pedobaptism. Braght’s work is based on a compilation of martyr reports known as *Het Offer des Heeren* that first appeared in 1562. The *Martyrs’ Mirror* incorporates some of these earlier martyr stories and expands the “Leidenschronik” by accounts of executions that had occurred in the meantime. Braght compiled his work generations after the worst sufferings of German and Dutch Anabaptists. Living in the Dutch Golden Age, a time in which the Mennonites in North Holland enjoyed tolerance and government protection, Braght was concerned with the Brotherhood’s prosperity rather than their persecution. As Brad Gregory has mentioned, the Dutch author preserved the movement’s heroic past to generate a sense of unity in the period following severe persecution (Martyrdom 468-69).

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37 The first *Martyrs’ Mirror* was published in Dutch. The chronicle was translated into German in 1749. The first English edition appeared in Pennsylvania in 1837 (translated from the Dutch original of 1660).
38 The collection consists of the martyr accounts of 803 named Anabaptists and a large number of anonymous Brethren from Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. Gerald Studer has asserted that the primary intention of the work was to illustrate the history of persecuted sects practicing believer’s baptism since the apostolic age (170).
39 *Het Offer des Heeren* provides descriptions of Brethren’s suffering found in reports from witnesses, hymns, letters from prisons, and testimonies of their faith. This prototype of later Anabaptist martyr storybooks was reprinted in *Bibliotheka Reformatoria Neerlandica: Geschriften uit den tijd der hervorming in de Nederlanden* (1904).
Regarded as one of the most significant literary expressions of Anabaptist faith, the *Martyrs’ Mirror* was widely read by fellow believers and continues to be of interest to their contemporary descendants. The portrayal of the suppression and suffering that the early Brethren experienced has offered courage and comfort to later Anabaptists who faced harassment and persecution. Throughout the centuries, Brethren were inspired by the narratives of the martyrs who remained true to their faith despite interrogations and tortures. James Lowry has noted that the firsthand accounts and the letters written by the martyrs speak directly to the readers and enable them to witness the trials, imprisonments, and deaths of these faithful men and women (2). 

In addition to the spiritual guidance and support that the *Martyrs’ Mirror* provided for members of the faith community, Braght’s chronicle also offers source material for the history of Anabaptist persecution. Consisting of believers’ testimonials that were compiled and illustrated by members of the Brotherhood, the work reflects an understanding of the group’s history that is marked by a struggle with the established society. The identity of the group is constructed exclusively through the experience of suffering and the notion of *Imitatio Christi*. Depicting the martyrdom of church members, the Anabaptist literature of lamentation expresses the early Brethren’s aim to be true followers of Christ by repeating his passion through their own struggle with authorities. 

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40 Jeltes has called the martyr book a “collection of valuable historical material … and (a) precious monument to the suffering of the first Anabaptists” (142).
41 The Anabaptist concept of discipleship and attitude toward the cross are further discussed by J. Lawrence Burkholder, “Vision of Discipleship” (146-148).
The application of *theologica crucis*, the suffering in Christian life manifested in the external struggle with the worldly kingdom and its physical abuse of Brethren, is also emphasized in other Anabaptist writings, for instance the *Ausbund*, the Anabaptist hymnbook that was first published by Swiss Brethren in 1564. Rudolf Wolkan conducted research regarding the book’s origin and found that a number of the songs in the older section were written by *Täufer* who were imprisoned in the dungeons of Passau between 1535 and 1540 (Lieder 31-42). Therefore, the dominant tone of these early hymns is one of suffering and sorrow. A similar spirit of martyrdom is found in the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, a primary account of Anabaptist beginnings and the group’s persecution in Tyrol and Moravia from 1528 to 1665. This collection of martyr records, doctrinal statements, and testimonies of the early believers provided inspiration and strength for the Moravian Brethren who struggled continually with harassment and expulsion until their exodus to America.

**C. The Hutterite Brethren**

Hutterianism, a communitarian branch of Anabaptism rooted in the early movement in South Germany and Austria, accepted suffering as an inescapable consequence of complete obedience to God. Having developed from Hut’s Anabaptist theology that he proclaimed as a travelling missionary in the area of South Germany and

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42 Anabaptism departs from Luther’s conception of the theology of the cross as referring to the internal conflict within one’s soul. Instead, they regarded the cross as the physical torture and death they suffered for their faith (Burkholder 147-48).

43 Ursula Lieseberg’s study of the martyr songs of sixteenth-century Anabaptists explains the choice of simple compositions with a plain structure and style that expressed “eine Parteinahme mit den Getöteten und ihrer Glaubensrichtung … und zu derselben Haltung bei den Rezipienten aufforderte.” She calls these martyr songs found in the *Ausbund* “Organ der Leidensgeschichte” (10-11).

44 The chronicle provides 2,173 accounts of *Blutzeugen* who gave their lives for the sake of their faith.
Tyrol during the late 1520s, the group inherited a significant impetus from Müntzer’s mystical notion of suffering. However, Hut’s followers externalized the Müntzerite stress on internal endurance into an outward theology of martyrdom (Stayer et al 110).

The Tyrol communities faced particularly harsh persecution when the Catholic government instituted measures against the Anabaptists in 1527. During this time when Austrian and German Brethren were hiding from authorities who aggressively enforced Täufer mandates, word was spread about the tolerant stance of the Moravian ruler toward dissidents.\(^45\) In 1526, Balthasar Hubmaier, an Anabaptist theologian and martyr, had already migrated to Nikolsburg where he converted a large number of the Moravian people, among them Baron Liechtenstein, the local sovereign. Refusing to merge with Hubmeier’s community due to the non-pacifist tendencies outlined in his pamphlet entitled Von dem Schwert (On the Sword),\(^46\) the Anabaptist refugees from Tyrol left Nikolsburg and settled down in Austerlitz under the leadership of Jacob Wiedemann.

The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren reports of an act of communal sharing that took place among the migrating fellowship in order to support the impoverished members of the fleeing congregation.\(^47\) This pooling of resources initiated the sect’s practice of Gütergemeinschaft, the community of goods. According to Hillerbrand, both the economic necessity and the ideal of an apostolic Christianity were catalysts for this

\(^45\) According to Werner O. Packull, Moravia was considered the “promised land” by the Austrian and South German Brethren as well as 40 other sects who sought refuge in this territory (54).

\(^46\) Stayer has identified some of Zwingli’s rhetoric and tactics in Hubmeier’s writing regarding to the teachings on the sword. In addition, he argues that Müntzer’s ideas on the matter of temporal force continued to influence the Brotherhood in the Central German regions, particularly Hubmeier’s circle of Schwertler (the men of the sword) in Moravia (Sword 136).

\(^47\) “These men then spread out a cloak in front of the people, and each one laid his possessions on it with a willing heart—without being forced—so that the needy might be supported in accordance with the teaching of the prophets and apostles” (81).
turn toward brotherly sharing and communal living (Division 128). Unlike other Anabaptist communities that were committed to a practice of mutual aid among church members, Wiedemann’s congregation in Austerlitz followed a complete community of goods.\(^{48}\) This form of “Christian communism,” as Friedmann calls it, originated in the proto-Hutterites’ desire to set up their congregation as a living replica of the primitive church based on the example of the apostles (Hutterite Brethren 83). This concept bears a similarity to Müntzer’s proposal of an anti-materialistic piety which, according to Stayer, had been carried on by Hans Hut (Anabaptist Community 113). Being alerted of mammon,\(^{49}\) the evil of wealth, these Anabaptist escapees in Moravia stood guard against avarice by renouncing all private property and accepting the Gemeinschaft, that is, communal living, as the only way of achieving salvation (Friedmann, Hutterite Brethren 89). As part of the initiative toward an apostolic order, each member of the congregation was given a specific responsibility that contributed to the benefit of the entire group.\(^{50}\)

Opponents of the Hutterian Brethren, most prominently Christoph Andreas Fischer, a Jesuit priest in the region of Lower Austria and Moravia, compared the Bruderhöfe (Hutterites’ communal settlements) with beehives and dovecotes. Although these comparisons were intended to be derogatory, Hutterites regarded them as appropriate

\(^{48}\) Since the beginning of the movement, members of the religious community shared responsibilities of caring for the physical and material needs of fellow Brethren. Modelled after the state of fellowship that existed within the early Christian church (Acts 4:32), Anabaptists established a system of mutual concern. Corresponding to the New Testament idea of koinonia (communion and fellowship), the Brotherhood encouraged active participation, sharing, solidarity, generosity, and fellowship (Yoder Neufeld 339).

\(^{49}\) The Brethren warned in a 1599 manuscript of the danger of wealth: “As the beetle lives in the dung, and the worm in the wood, so avarice (or greed) has its dwelling place in private property” (quoted from Friedmann after a manuscript published by Johann Loserth, “Der Communismus der mährischen Wiedertäufere” 240).

\(^{50}\) Each adult in the Hutterite commune had a task to perform, either in domestic labor, in agriculture, or as artisans (Roth, Stories 99).
metaphors for their well-ordered community life that assigned each member with a
specific task that supported the Brotherhood’s common good.\(^{51}\)

In addition to the brotherly sharing of property and goods, Friedmann identifies
two other major motives that are disclosed in the early Brethren’s epistles and
confessions of faith; namely, the “yielding to the will of God” and the “obedience to the
divine commandments,” both of which he traces back to the mystic concept of
*Gelassenheit* (Hutterite Brethren 86). Suffering was regarded as a consequence of this
form of genuine discipleship (Friedmann, Hutterite Brethren 89). However, this principle
of complete surrender to divine guidance was challenged by dissensions that led to a
schism within the Austerlitz circle in the early 1530s. Only with the help of Jakob Hutter,
who, according to Hostetler, possessed outstanding leadership skills, was the Moravian
fellowship able to regain unity and rebuild a strong *Gemeinschaft*, despite a new wave of
persecution that swept through the Hapsburg kingdom in 1535 (17-20). Hutter’s
congregation, the Hutterite Brethren, hid in forests and caves until 1536, when certain
nobles became more tolerant toward the religious minority and granted them permission
to reside on their estates. After Jakob Hutter’s arrest and martyr death in Innsbruck, Peter
Riedemann, the new *Vorsteher* (leader) of the community, formulated a doctrinal tract
that summarized the fundamental principles and practical applications of the Hutterian
faith.\(^{52}\) Particularly the ninety articles in the first section of the document support the

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\(^{51}\) The title page of Fischer’s 1607 polemical tract *Der Hutterischen Wiedertauffer Taubenkobel*, for
instance, shows a woodcut that illustrates a Hutterite community as a pigeon shed.

\(^{52}\) Riedemann’s confessional document *Rechenschafft unserer Religion, Leer und Glaubens Von den
Brüdern so man die Hutterischen nennt aussgangen* (1540) describes the unique elements of the Hutterite
faith that set the group apart from the outside world as well as other Anabaptist congregations, e.g. the
complete sharing of goods (102-21).
development of a collective identity that separated the Brotherhood from the secular sphere.

**D. Fundamental Principles of Anabaptist Faith**

As a result of the heterogeneous origin of Anabaptism and its fragmented dispersion, the movement lacked a uniform organizational structure. Realizing the need for theological clarification and the constitution of a shared set of principles, the network of Anabaptist conventicles from Switzerland and South Germany organized an assembly in Schleitheim in 1527 where the movement’s first confession of faith entitled *Brüderlich Vereinigung etzlicher Kinder Gottes sieben Artikel betreffend* was adopted by all attendees. The seven articles postulated in the Schleitheim Confession were normative for all *Täufer* communities and provided guidelines for any subsequent statements concerning the Anabaptist doctrine, articulated for instance in writings by the Dutch Anabaptist leader Menno Simons during the years of 1539 to 1542; the Hutterite confessional document of 1545; and the *Straßbourg Discipline*, a set of regulations (*Ordnung*) agreed on by representatives of Swiss Brethren congregations in 1568. As an essential clarification of the baseline of Anabaptist convictions, the Schleitheim Articles significantly shaped the movement’s identity.

The key issues of Anabaptist church life and conduct declared in the Schleitheim tract were the following: the administration of believer’s baptism, the ban of repeated

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53 In general, the Anabaptist movement refused to define orthodox beliefs through institutional order or doctrinal propositions; instead, the group insisted on an orthopraxis that faith is properly understood as it is embodied in the practices of daily life (Roth, Stories 219).

54 According to Hillerbrand, a similar agreement took place later that year at the Augsburg Martyrs’ Synod under the leadership of Hans Hut (Division 117).
sinners, the practice of Lord’s Supper, the separation of government and church, the leadership under pastors who teach and discipline the community, the rejection of violence, and the refusal to occupy governmental offices or to swear oaths (Yoder, Schleitheim 10-19). Although these principles were fragmentary, they had a significant impact on the Brethren’s relation to the outside world and its societal structure.

All articles in the Schleitheim Confession reflected the Anabaptist call for a life of discipleship. By placing their full loyalty to Christ, the believers refused to follow secular orders. The assembly asserted in the fourth article that a separation from the evil can only take place by rejecting all fellowship with the secular state and its abominations including the “diabolical weapons of violence—such as sword, armor, and the like” (Yoder, Schleitheim 12-13). The separation from worldly citizenship was further suggested by the refusal to take civic oaths, become magistrates, or defend the territory against enemies. Following the theology of the two kingdoms, articles one and two of the Schleitheim Confession proposed a preservation of the community’s moral purity by administering baptism exclusively to those who were fully committed to the apostolic church and shunning congregation members that had repeatedly sinned (Yoder, Schleitheim 10-11). The Lord’s Supper was likewise limited to those who were united in one body of Christ. Article three of the Schleitheim Confession prescribed that the breaking of the bread in remembrance of Christ’s broken body and shed blood ought not

55 Article Seven explains the Brotherhood’s rejection of the oath by referencing Christ’s Sermon on the Mount: “Christ, who teaches the perfection of the law, forbids His [followers] all swearing, whether true nor false; neither by heaven nor by earth, neither by Jerusalem nor by our head; … You see, thereby all swearing is forbidden. … He says: Your speech shall be yea, yea; and nay, nay”? (16-18).
56 “The rule of the government is according to the flesh, that of the Christians according to the Spirit” (Yoder, Schleitheim 15).
to be shared with “all who follow the devil and the world” (11). As Hillerbrand has noted, these measures introduced to separate the Brotherhood from the worldly kingdom in order to maintain the pure church encouraged authorities to view Anabaptists as potential insurrectionists (Division 117).

Another aspect of Anabaptist principles from the Schleitheim Confession particularly alarming to church authorities was the notion of immediacy between believers and God. In the opinion of the Brethren, the “relationship of the human being with God was not dependent on clerical or sacramental mediation” (Liechty 9). As a consequence, the Anabaptists regarded religious offices and institutions as “popish and repopish works and idolatry,” and denounced clericalism of both the Catholic and the Reformed Church (Yoder, Schleitheim 12). The radically anti-clerical attitude was most noticeable in the fifth article that addressed the “shepherds” of the fellowship. The head of the congregation ought to be directly chosen by the members of the church. His office shall be “to read and exhort and teach, warn, admonish, or ban in the congregation, and properly to preside among the sisters and brothers in prayer” (Yoder, Schleitheim 13).

Menno Simons further elaborated on the idea of lay preaching and the elimination of an educated intermediary between God and the community in his tract *Foundation of a Christian Faith*. In an anti-clerical approach, the Schleitheim Articles as well as Simons’ essays assigned the shepherd with the task of reading, rather than interpreting,

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57 Menno Simons criticized the Catholic church when calling the priests false teachers and blasphemers of God, “who persecute the godly, crucify all truth, and support and promote all false doctrine, profanation of God’s name, idolatry, and abomination” (169).
the Scriptures to his congregation. Packull’s understanding of the relation between the shepherd and the early Brethren circle suggests that all members are equal partners in a hermeneutic process that involves “ongoing congregational conversations based on the vernacular Scriptures” with the mission of hearing and obeying God’s Word (Hutterite Beginnings 16). In that regard, the early Anabaptists pronounced an anticlericalism that exceeded general criticism of religious institutional power prevailing in the German Empire during the sixteenth century.

E. Münster

The fundamental tenets of Anabaptist faith summarized in the early doctrinal tracts present a basic outline of the characteristics of the movement’s piety, without, however, becoming a binding pledge for all streams of believer’s baptism that emerged in early modern Europe. As a result of imprisonments and executions of Anabaptist leaders during the first decades of the sixteenth century, the movement was lacking in substantial guidance and leadership. Therefore, different beliefs could easily enter the Täufer communities and change the course of their religious principles and practices. Melchior Hoffman, who brought the Anabaptist faith to Northern Germany and the Netherlands in 1530, left an apocalyptic orientation and a somewhat indecisive stance concerning pacifism to the communities in the north. Deppermann has argued that Hoffman’s belief in his prophetic abilities initiated an independent call for adult baptism that places him outside the successio Anabaptistica (389). Contrary to the pacifist notions inherent in the

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58 He proposed the preacher to rightly “teach the Word of God without perverting glosses, without the admixture of leaven” (164).
stipulations of the Schleitheim Confession, Hoffman affirmed the Christians’ right to use force in their worldly function. Yet, his apocalyptic theology envisioned the use of the sword of the Spirit rather than worldly weapons when fighting enemies (Stayer, Sword 223).

Two groups with opposing directions grew out of the Melchorite movement: the non-resistant faction led by the Phillips brothers and later by Menno Simons, and the revolutionary Münster congregation under the leadership of the Dutch Jan Matthys and Jan Bockelson (also known as Jan van Lyden). Matthys turned Hoffman’s prophetic visions into an apocalyptic crusade, preparing for what he perceived as the Second Coming of Christ. Declaring Münster the “New Jerusalem,” he proclaimed himself a prophet sent by God to establish the kingdom with the use of the sword. Before his arrival in the Westphalian city, Anabaptists had already attained political control in the area and transformed the ecclesiastical life along the lines of believer’s baptism. The leadership of Matthys attracted even larger numbers of Anabaptists to the North German town and instituted a shift in its social fabric. For once, the religious minority became the dominant force in the society of a German city. Hillerbrand has pointed out that the Münsterites abandoned Anabaptist principles by assuming the identity of church and society (World of Reformation 66).

In Münster’s theocracy, all religious and secular powers were assigned to Matthys, the monarch of the Anabaptist kingdom, who passed his authority on to his successor Jan Bockelson after his death in April 1534. Jan’s apocalyptic revolution was primarily concerned with the destruction of the godless world by the application of
violence. Envisioning the restitution of the apostolic church, the self-proclaimed sovereign forced Münster residents to commit to believer’s baptism by accepting adult baptism. Inhabitants who refused to follow the rule were either executed or expelled with their belongings being confiscated. In that regard, the Münsterites parted from Melchior Hoffman’s concept of authority. In addition to using the “sword of justice” for internal discipline, Münster’s authority applied violence in the apocalyptic revolution itself (Stayer, Sword 255). They built a military to defend their chiliastic kingdom from attacks by Catholic and Protestant besiegers and arranged revolutionary plots that were to be carried out by followers in the Low Countries.

Within the city walls, the regime strictly enforced the practice of communism and polygamy. All citizens who would not surrender their possessions to the city and accept plural marriage were punished by the executioner’s sword. In a departure from the New Testament orientation of mainline Anabaptists, the Münsterites justified their practice of polygamy and the community of goods by references to the patriarchs in the Old Testament. A practical necessity determined Jan Bockelson’s introduction of communism and polygamy as the city found itself in a problematic economic situation caused by the siege (Hillerbrand, World of Reformation 66). These changes in the customary social order were particularly distressing to the outside world and influenced common perceptions of Anabaptism during the sixteenth century.

Suffering from the continuous siege and embargo, Münster experienced excruciating social conditions and degenerated into cannibalism in the second year of the
The Anabaptist rule finally came to an end as the city was taken in June 1535. The leaders were publicly tortured, and their bodies were exposed in iron cages hoisted to the top of the St. Lambert’s Church tower. This Münsterite debacle is considered one of the most tragic aberrations of mainline Anabaptism. Although the Westphalian revolt was merely an excrescence of the original movement and had no fundamental connection with the peaceful Brethren in Switzerland, Austria, and South Germany, authorities made no distinction between the Münster insurgents and the non-violent branches of believer’s baptism. In fact, the persecution of dissenting religious groups intensified after the capitulation of the city because officials feared another uprising that would pose a serious threat to the customary social order. The rebellion was immediately employed as a major point of criticism in polemics written by the established church. These anti-Münster agitations led to the misunderstanding that the tragedy in Westphalia was the source of the otherwise non-violent Anabaptist movement (Krahm 164). The remnants of Anabaptism in the Low Countries suffered an even greater exclusion from the native society than the radical group had before the Münster fiasco. The congregations involved were only able to reorganize as a group and redefine their Anabaptist identity through the support of the Dutch Brethren leader, Menno Simons. Moving in the direction of quietism, the movement returned to a conventicle structure in which it emphasized a peaceful and moral Christianity and withdrew from any worldly affairs and proselytization efforts.

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59 Heinrich Gresbeck, an eyewitness of the Münster revolt, reports of the agonizing economic situation shortly before the downfall of Münsterite Melchiorism in his “Bericht von der Wiedertaufe in Münster” published verbatim in Carl A. Cornelius Die Geschichtsquellen des Bistums Münster (188-94).
Chapter 2: Harmonia—The Ideal Society

A. Grimmelshausen: Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus (1668) and the Hungarian Hutterites

1. Fictionalization of Anabaptists in Early Modern Europe

Grimmelshausen’s baroque novel Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus is one of the first European literary works that integrates a critical consideration of Anabaptist characters and themes into the storyline based on an encounter with the peaceful Brethren. Prior to this German novel and apart from the Täufer’s own literary activities documenting the persecution and martyrdom of believers in the sixteenth century, references to the religious group can only be found in a small number of dramas and fictional accounts written at the turn of the century. The Dutch drama Het Moortje (1616) by Gerbrandt A. Bredero, for instance, paints a picture of the Dutch Anabaptists in unpleasant colors. Similarly, Coomhert fashions a negative image of the faith group in Aertzney der sielen (1570). The German humanist Nicodemus Frischlin also presents a stereotypical depiction of the separatist group in his comedy Phasma (1592). His portrayal of Täufer reflects common preconceptions about Anabaptism that were

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60 According to Jeltes, the Doopsgezinde in Dirck Vzn. Coornhert’s farcical dialogue Aertzney der Sielen is subjected to bitter mockery (150-151). In his satire, Coornhert fictionalizes the Dutch Anabaptist leader Menno Simons as well the pope, Luther, and Calvin.
conveyed by polemicists’ writings of the late sixteenth century. In the English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term “Anabaptist” appeared in numerous works, often referring to all separatist movements that threatened the customary social order. In the seventeenth century especially, the lines between fictional literature and polemic pamphlets almost disappeared, so that Anabaptist references in English literature generally served as rhetorical means to fight separatism and nonconformity. Most of the European literature produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time in which the Anabaptist movement emerged, dispersed, and was harshly persecuted, echoes the Anabaptist-phobic rhetoric of state and church authorities in satirical and disputatious styles. Mirroring society’s fear of the establishment of a radical counterculture, these writings depict all Brethren as Münsterites in order to evoke the readers’ contempt for the religious group.

Besides the polemical statements and allusions to their seditious practices, the Taufgesinnte were scarcely represented in European non-Anabaptist literature of the

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61 The Täufer in Frischlin’s comedy are characterized by polygamy, communism, and iconoclasm. They are associated with Thomas Müntzer and the peasant uprising. Richard Schade found similarities between the negative depiction of Anabaptists in Phasma and tracts concerning the Täufertum Johann Brenz, Martin Luther, and Jacob Andreae authored. He concluded that the condemnation of the Anabaptists (and other “Ketzer”) to purgatory exemplifies the religious crisis during the sixteenth-century reformation period (302-318).

62 The term was used to designate heretics and contemporary separatist groups such as Baptists, Independents, Quakers, and even Puritans.

63 Irvin Horst grouped Anabaptist references in English literary accounts under following three headings: “(1) allusions to seditious Anabaptism, particularly the Münster episode, (2) comment on topical Anabaptism, usually satirical in nature, (3) discussion of Anabaptist belief and practice in theological tracts and treaties.” (232). Authors of fiction and church polemics joined public officials in the effort to instrumentalize the Münster affair for the purpose of suppressing a radical counterculture. John Bale, for instance, links the Anabaptists with the Münster rebellion and consequently alludes to the English suppression of Anabaptist émigrés in his play King John (1538). In the picaresque novel The Unfortunate Traveller (1594), Thomas Nashe describes a group of German Anabaptists in the Münster tradition. References to Puritan leaders in the novel indicate the author’s motivation behind the choice of Anabaptist characterization, namely, to promote an anti-separatist stance.
seventeenth century. The more significant depiction became Grimmelshausen’s treatment of the Hutterite Brethren in Hungary. The author was able to point to the Christian conduct and ethical standards of the religious group at an age when they were primarily stigmatized as heretics and continued to suffer from harassment and persecution.\(^{64}\) The obvious discrepancy between the authorial discourse on the Anabaptist matter and the actual historical exclusion of these believers from the dominant society of Grimmelshausen’s time can only be explained by examining the illustration of the encounter with the peaceful Hutterite Brethren in the novel and analyzing its function.

2. The Notion of Utopia in *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus*

*Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* gives a seemingly autobiographical account of a young man’s life during the Thirty Years’ War.\(^{65}\) Regarded as the first adventure novel in the German language and one of the most significant novels of personal development, the narrative follows the hero, Simplicius (Melchior Sternfels von Fuchshaim), who experiences the events and brutality of the war. He first is separated from his foster parents during a raid by marauding soldiers, and then witnesses the wealth and intrigues at the Hanau court. He is also present at the hard-fought battle of Wittstock, and then suffers hunger at the Phillipsburg Garrison. In the tradition of the picaresque novel, Simplicius perceives the seventeenth-century European society from a viewpoint of the lower social class and satirically comments on the corruptness of this turbulent war time.

According to Breuer, his adventures in the Thirty Years’ War period do not solely

\(^{64}\) Although the death penalty ended in 1618, right before the Thirty Years’ War, persecutions in the form of imprisonment, enslavement, and fines continued. See Introduction Section B.

\(^{65}\) The autobiographical implications of the novel have been under discussion by several scholars, most prominently by Gustav Könnecke in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Lebensgeschichte Grimmelshausen.*
express personal observation and individual struggle; rather, the mostly violent encounters can be considered as exemplary depictions of collective experience during that time (80). Grimmelshausen visits central locations and events of the war. Ergang has argued that these descriptions of the war scenes were unlikely to have been obtained during Grimmelshausen’s time in the military service. Instead, they must have been either collected by hearsay, created by a vivid imagination, or taken from historical accounts (7). Regardless of the origins of his war stories, the narrator reveals a peace-seeking stance when he portrays the violence and war crimes “als Erscheinung der Verkehrtheit der Welt … und in die satirische Perspektive rückt” (Breuer 80). The narration does not produce heroic elevation or glorification of the war events. Rather, the story emphasizes how Simplicius suffered from his experiences in the Thirty Years’ War and morally regressed. An alternative to the destructive confrontations of the war is given in Simplicius’ Mummel Lake adventure to the center of the earth and his accompanying description of the pacifist Anabaptists.

The narrator’s opposition to war and violence indicates the deeper issue of peace of mind and the quest for salvation. Ermatinger has precisely defined the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Zeitgeist as the religious striving for salvation, with the constant question, “Was soll ich tun, daß ich selig werde?” (Grimmelshausen 15). During the time of confessional conflicts between the established Catholic Church, Luther’s Reformed Church, and various radical reformed groups, the matter of salvation was a significant issue that Grimmelshausen portrayed as being highly threatened by worldly temptations. War has taught the author as well as the novel’s hero that “die Seele des Menschen ein
zerbrechliches und schwankendes Rohr ist, jedem Windhauche sich neigend, jeder Versuchung erliegend” (Ermatinger, Grimmelshausen 47).

Book V of Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus, in particular, pursues the matter of a practical religion as part of Simplicius’ developmental process. In his search for a Christianity that is manifested in ethics and personal commitment rather than dogma, Simplicius explores new frontiers. Although the hero frequently changes locations throughout the novel, book V has the quality of an “ausgesprochenes Wander- und Reisebuch” (Battafarano 38). After various fortunes and adventures in the Thirty Years’ War, Simplicius joins Heartbrother on a pilgrimage to Einsiedeln. Not being seriously committed to this endeavor, he converts to Catholicism when the devil confronts him with his sinful past. Yet, he quickly falls back into his old immoral life, indicating that an inner and purely voluntary conversion had not taken place.

In the twelfth chapter of the fifth book, Simplicius ventures to the center of the earth and visits the King of Sylphs. The social system he encounters in the Mummel Lake stands in complete contrast to the contemporary society. In this utopian community, the Sylphs are unable to sin and live in absolute freedom, with the king being their guide rather than their master and judge. Ermatinger has argued that the Mummel Lake episode is the author’s attempt to narrate Simplicius’ philosophical study without breaking from the tradition of rich and vivid description throughout the book (Grimmelshausen 56). In that regard, the Mummel Lake episode appears to anticipate the Hungarian Brethren scene. The dialogue with the King of Sylphs communicates the structure of an exemplary community that exists beyond the borders of the dominant society. Such a communal
organization which the narrator first encounters in this fabulous society of Sylphs reappears later in the story when he describes his experience with the Hungarian Brethren who are depicted as a minority group at the periphery of the seventeenth-century European society.

In the novel, the concept of an ideal social order is transposed from the fictive world of supernatural beings to a geographically fixed territory–Hungary–that indeed had served as refuge for the historical Brotherhood since the 1530s. The multi-confessionalism that developed in the Hungarian Empire during the time of the Ottoman rule significantly influenced Germans’ image of Hungary during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the Empire struggled with geopolitical and denominational problems, Grimmelshausen used Hungary as the setting for his scene on religious tolerance. His decision could have been motivated by accounts of uprisings organized in seventeenth-century Upper Hungary that demanded equal rights among Christian groups. Grimmelshausen depicts the Anabaptists against the backdrop of these appeals for religious tolerance. According to Battafarano, the author selected the Ungarische Täufer to explicate the essence of Theologia, that is: “mehr englisch als menschlich zusammzuleben” (35). The Anabaptist Brethren embody the ideas of the utopian Sylph society in practical aspects. The Mummel Lake episode sets the scene for political, religious, and philosophical developments that find their application in the Anabaptist everyday life as it is depicted in the novel. Important elements of the Sylph commonwealth such as freedom, purity, and the absence of authority are reflected in the Brethren’s harmonious communal life, as the following analysis will demonstrate.
After his travel to Mummel Lake, Simplicius continues his studies and reads up on the elementary subjects of mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and alchemy. In the end, he realizes that theology is the only study that will help him in his search for a meaningful life practicing true Christianity. More importantly, he concludes that the only way to set the stage for a practical theology is to create the conditions for an optimum society such as the one embodied by the Anabaptists.

In his thoughts about an ideal Christian society, he recalls having seen Anabaptists in Hungary who led “ein solches Leben” (542). His reference to the Hutterite Brethren in Eastern Europe started a debate and sparked research on Grimmelshausen’s sources for the description of the Hutterites. During the 1940s, Schowalter ruled out the possibility of a personal experience with the Hungarian Brethren, as Grimmelshausen’s personal history did not indicate extended trips to the East. The historian therefore concluded that the author must have acquired his extensive knowledge about the Hutterian Brethren by reading travel accounts and first-hand reports about the religious group. Further speculations have circulated that Grimmelshausen’s depiction of the Täufer was inspired by Thomas More’s Utopia and Johann Valentin Andreae’s Christianopolis (Ermatinger, Grimmelshausen 67). Andreas Zieglschmid was the first to establish a connection between Grimmelshausen’s Anabaptists and Hutterian missionaries from Sabatisch who, after the approval of Carl Ludwig, Elector and Count Palantine, founded colonies in the area of Mannheim in 1654 (386). Zieglschmid has

66 “…daß kein besser Kunst sey/ als die Theologia, wann man vermittelst derselbigen Gott liebet und ihm dienet!” (Grimmelshausen 524)

67 Furthermore, he has stated that chapter 19 of the fifth book appears as “ein in sich geschlossenes und dazu rein beschreibendes Stück, daß die Annahme einer, vielleicht erinnerungsgemäßiger, Abschrift, begründet” (662).
pointed out that Grimmelshausen’s direct contact with these Hungarian Hutterites in Mannheim enabled him “ein solch lebendiges, bis in kleinere Einzelheiten genaues Bild von den ungarischen Vorfahren der … Hutterischen Brüder zu vermitteln” (387).

The question of direct contact or first-hand account has not been fully answered to this day. Yet, “die Betonung der Nicht-Fiktionalität des Erzählten im Roman” supports the assumption that the so-called Täufer chapter has in fact authentic qualities and is based on personal contact with the Brethren (or the report thereof) (Battafarano 35). Grimmelshausen’s vivid and detailed description of the Hungarian Bruderhof thus becomes highly significant for an image study of Anabaptists in German literature. Drawing his narrative from actual acquaintance, the Anabaptist depiction in Simplicissimus reflects an emphasis on certain aspects of the Brethren’s life that were especially noticeable to the observer. In the light of religious hatred and persecution prevailing in the seventeenth century, the author’s enthusiastic account of the Hutterites needs to be analyzed in terms of representative aspects chosen to be included in the text. An examination of these practical and religious features will reveal Grimmelshausen’s creation of a unique otherness contrasting the conditions of the war-scarred century.

3. Simplicissimus’ Contact with Anabaptism and the Matter of Heresy

The chapter “Etwas wenigs von den Ungarischen Wiedertäuffern/ und ihrer Art zu leben” is structured as a complete and complex unit within the narrative’s discourse on applied Christianity. The author emphasizes his interest in the practical aspects of the sectarian community by defining the group exclusively by “ihrer Art zu leben,” as indicated in the heading. His focus on the ethical rather than dogmatic elements of the
faith community becomes noticeable throughout the chapter which displays the separation of conduct and religion into two distinct divisions.

The narrator starts his account of the Anabaptists by recalling having seen a group of Täufer in Hungary: “…dann ich hatte hiebevor in Ungarn auff den Wiedertäuferischen Höfen ein solches Leben gesehen” (524). The narrating “I” alternates between the acting view and the reflecting view throughout the story and within the Anabaptist episode. Karl Otto has pointed out that this continual shift from an actively participating first person to a thoughtful observer is one of the essential characteristics of Grimmelshausen’s narrative (48). Simplicius recollects an encounter with the Hungarian Täufer from a temporal distance as a matured first person narrator. Simultaneously, he reawakens his memory of his active approach to the community and attentive observation of their daily habits, thereby initiating a conversion experience and inspiring his campaign to establish a community with a similar social fabric.

Taking the position of the viewer, the narrator identifies himself as a non-member of the religious minority. His observation from an outside perspective distances him personally from the group and lets him witness the phenomenon of practical theology. At the same time, the action of seeing allows him to reflect on the differences between the dominant culture and society to which he is accustomed and the principles and practices of this religious colony. His ability to perceive these dissimilarities and his appreciation for the peculiar elements of Anabaptist social life result from Simplicius’ distance from mainstream society. In Grimmelshausen’s picaresque novel, he assumes the role of the outsider that comments on the corrupt social order of seventeenth-century
Europe from a lower-class viewpoint. The narrator is enthralled by the Hutterite’s social interaction and ethical standards that stand in opposition to those of the dominant society which he as a *picaro* figure satirizes. As the “agent of perception,” he focuses his attention on specific points of the Brotherhood’s life that strike him as exceptional (Bal 18). His account of the particular aspects of Anabaptist social life, which derives from a comparison with the dominant culture, thus shapes the image of the Hungarian faith group in the narrative.

Manfred Beller has pointed out that the journey to foreign countries and contact with other cultures was a truly valuable experience for the traveller in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (105). In the case of Simplicius, the act of seeing and encountering the otherness embodied by the Hungarian Anabaptists turns out to be highly beneficial for his personal development and his return to religion. The contact with the Brethren initiate an honest and inner conversion:


The narrator is so positively impressed by the Hutterian Brethren that he considers joining their colony. He even mentions that he wanted to establish a society “auff Manier
der Wiedertäußer” (524). This ideal community would resemble the Anabaptist group in terms of living arrangements, work ethic, and devoted service to God.

It is necessary to note, however, that he abandons the intent because of the Brotherhood’s heretical affiliation, “ketzerischen Meinung ... verwickelt”.

Grimmelshausen’s employment of the term *Ketzer* has been understood by scholars as conformity with the ecumenical publicity of that time. Zieglschmid has claimed that the author wrote “*Ketzer* … wohl nur pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” and that this ostensible condemnation did not affect his enthusiasm toward the group’s manner of living (386). 68

Bender has further argued that Grimmelshausen did not regard the Hutterite Anabaptists as heretics because he avoided associating them with the Münster events although the (mis)perception of the movement’s origin in violent revolution in the Westphalian city was rather common during his time (149). 69

The term *Ketzer* refers to the Anabaptists’ place in society as determined by their role of outsiders. The label “heretic” excludes them from the institutional church as well as the secular state and pushes them into a position beyond the periphery of the dominant society. Grimmelshausen not only sets the boundary between the mainstream public and the sectarian fellowship by depicting the group’s exemplary social practice as unattainable and contrastive to the state of ethical deterioration prevailing in the seventeenth century; he also separates the Brotherhood from the dominant society by the

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68 Similarly, Trappen understood Grimmelshausen’s application of the prejudicial term as an expression of differentiating between the *Täufer*’s admirable conduct of life and their faulty doctrine (294).
69 If Grimmelshausen’s knowledge of the Hutterites was indeed based on direct contact with the group or the report thereof, it is only understandable that he does not include Münster in his description of the *Bruderhof* as the Hutterian Brethren did not link their origins to the violent movement in northern Germany.
external identification marker, *Ketzer*, a common term in early modern times, referring to any deviation from the orthodox belief and practice.\(^{70}\)

Critical remarks concerning the Anabaptists’ theological dogma already appear prior to the *Täufer* chapter. Identifying the faith group by their deviation from established belief and church practice becomes apparent in the story when the devil confronts Simplicius with his sins and misdemeanors and calls him of “Ketzerischer Art / … seine Eltern seyn mehr Wiedertäuufferisch als Calvinisch gewesen” (452). These accusations, which equate Anabaptism with heresy, deeply shock Simplicius and stir a desire in him to repent. His association with the sectarian group, which would invariably result in the loss of social status and a drift toward societal marginality, is quickly halted by his conversion to Catholicism. The devil’s mention of the two Reformed faith groups reflects the theologically informed context of his Anabaptist reference. His comparative construction “mehr Wiedertäuufferisch als Calvinisch” stresses the common perception of Anabaptism as heretical to a higher degree than other reformed church groups.

In the *Ungarische Wiedertäufer* chapter, the narrator assumes a different perspective when describing everyday life in the Hutterite community. Although the remark about the “widerwärtigen ketzerischen Meinung” reiterates the novel’s rejection of the sect’s theological doctrine, the favorable account of the *Bruderhof’s* communitarianism suggests an appreciation of their economic and ethical practices. In that regard, the narrator shifts from a portrayal of the Anabaptist identity as constituted

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\(^{70}\) The term *Ketzer*, derived from the Latin *cathari* (referencing to the sectarian movement of Catharism that developed in France and Italy during the eleventh century), entered the German language during the thirteenth century. Lambert has defined *Ketzer* (heretics) as groups or individuals who deviated from the established dogma and were therefore condemned by the papacy. The term *Ketzer* was also applied in a broader sense of heresy that included, for instance, witchcraft (xii).
by external institutions such as state officials and the Catholic Church to a depiction of
the Anabaptists informed by his personal experience which provides a greater insight
into their social and ethical principles essential to the formation of their group-internal
identity. Simplicius’ change of viewpoint from the position of the dominant society that
condemns the theological aspect of Anabaptist piety to the inner-sect perspective that is
concerned with the social and moral principles of the Brotherhood also takes place on a
spatial parameter. The narrator is confronted with anti-Anabaptist sentiments in the
Catholic environment of Einsiedeln. His attitude toward the radical faith group is
influenced by the harsh critique of polemicists from the established church who express
theological opposition to the Brethren. Only when Simplicius leaves the dominant
society and enters the marginalized community in Hungary, does the impact of external
identification diminish, eventually to be replaced by an Anabaptist-sensitive perception
drawn from his personal encounter with the Brotherhood.

4. Representations of Hutterian Communalism as an Ideal Social Structure

Observing the structure and conduct of this group of social outsiders, the narrator
emphasizes their unique and exemplary manner of living. His account of the Hutterite’s
communal life exceeds any seventeenth-century literary reference of Anabaptists in
respect to detail and tolerance toward the group’s social practices. Daniel Speer, for
instance, retells Simplicius’ anecdotes in Hungary in his novel *Ungarischer oder
Dacianischer Simplicissimus* (1683), reducing the *Täufer* chapter to a brief remark in
which he merely acknowledges the existence of the faith group. Embedded in a
paragraph that provides regional information about Transylvania, the narrator lists
following facts: “Sie reden Deutsch oder Hamler-Saechsisch/ Ungarisch und Wallachisch; es gibt auch hin und wieder Wieder-Taeuffer im Lande/ wie auch sehr viel Zigeuner…” (Speer 139). Here, Speer’s Simplicius associates Anabaptists with Gypsies and groups these two minorities into the category of social outsiders. Speer’s work presents the societal outcasts as a potential threat to the culture of the seventeenth-century Hungarian populace. While warning about the danger of intermarriage between Hungarians and Gypsies, he makes no further comments on the Taufgesinnte. Their religious principles and social practices are of no interest to the narrator.

In comparison to Speer’s uninformed or perhaps uninterested attitude toward Anabaptism, Grimmelshausen gives a positive portrayal of the Brethren’s social and economic manners and shows awareness of their communal customs:

…dann sie kamen mir in ihren Thun und Leben allerdings für wie Jospehus und andere mehr/ die Jüdische Esseer beschreiben; Sie hatten erstlich grosse Schätze und überflüssige Nahrung/die sie aber keines Wegs verschwendeten/ kein Fluch, Murmelung noch Ungedult würde bey ihnen gespürt / ja man hörete kein unnützes Wort. (525)

Simplicius captures the essence of the Anabaptist concept of Gelassenheit, when noting that no verbalization of impatience could be heard in the colony. The practice of Gelassenheit, peace, patience, and social harmony is integral to the Hutterite life and conduct, and it corresponds to the morally superior nature of the Sylphs described in the

71 Gelassenheit expresses the Anabaptist commitment to Christ. Karlstadt first promoted the term in his teaching of “letting-go of temporal things in the awareness that God will provide for His own” (Hillerbrand, Origin 165). This notion of true discipleship to Christ is reflected in the Brethren’s disregard of worldly matters.
Mummel Lake episode. The Sylphs’ characteristics of “gerecht/verständig/frey/keusch/hell/schön/klar/ …in ewiger Freude Gott loben” are personified by the Brethren and their ethical standards (Grimmelshausen 496). In the company of the Bruderhof residents, Simplicius discovers a morally ideal society that reminds him of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that lived in communes and practiced a voluntary poverty and a rejection of worldly pleasures.

Simplicius continues his account of the Hungarian Anabaptists as he reflects upon all stages of human development, starting with birth and the rearing of offspring:


The communal aspect of Hutterite life is particularly articulated in the group’s elimination of basic societal concepts such as private property and family unions. Women in childbed receive their separate space within the community and all infants are gathered in a nursery. The schoolmaster instructs all children and teaches them correct manners as well as spiritual well-being just as if they were his own progeny. The narrator’s description of early childhood care and education on the Bruderhof is reminiscent of his
own upbringing in the foster family that differed strikingly from the Hutterite
community, with regard to education, order, and religious grounding. Simplicius narrates
at the beginning of the novel that he grew up not knowing “Gott noch Menschen/ weder
Himmel noch Höll/ …weder Gutes noch Böses zu unterscheiden” (Grimmelshausen 20).
In comparison to the anti-social and non-Christian orientation in his foster family, the
Hutterites are depicted as a distinct community to “das Menschlich Geschlecht und das
Reich Gottes in aller Ehrbarkeit zu vermehren” (526).

Grimmelshausen’s positive opinion of the Brotherhood’s communal way of child
rearing stands in contrast to contemporary polemical writings that criticized the Hutterites’
childcare practices. Opponents of the faith group, particularly the Jesuit priest Christoph
Andreas Fischer, severely attacked the Täufer. His polemical writings Von der
Wiedertauffer verfluchten Ursprung (1603) and Vier und funffzig erhebliche Ursachen:
warumb die Widertauffer nicht sein im Land zu leyden (1607) target in particular the
beliefs and practices of the Hutterite Brethren, and therefore lend themselves to a
comparison with Grimmelshausen’s depiction of the communal branch of Anabaptism.
Juxtaposing the Anabaptist images presented in Fischer’s polemical works with
Grimmelshausen’s fictional account underlines the novelist’s exceptional stance on the
Täufer tum. Regarding the Hutterian early child care, Fischer noted in his 1603 pamphlet:

Es ist alles zu weit kommen, denn es müssen jetzt fast alle Frauen in Mährren zu
iren Hebammen, Seugammen und Kinderwärterinnen lauter widertaufferische
Weiber haben, als wenn sie allein in solche Sachen die allererfahrensten wären.

(101)
The denunciation of the skillful work of Hutterite nurses and midwives, professions that made the group well-known throughout the country, expresses Fischer’s attempt to draw the boundary between the dominant society and the social outcasts. He depicts the faith community as intruders who spread heretical beliefs and seek economic advantage over the surrounding population. In his anti-Anabaptist tract, he aims to exclude the radical reformers from the main society by suggesting an invasion of the sect and a consequent danger to the established church and society.  

Grimmelshausen, on the other hand, presents the Hutterian early childhood care and education as a group-internal process that contributes to the preservation of the Brotherhood’s distinctive social system. The caring custody provided to offspring within the boundaries of the community ensures an evasion of negative influences from the greater society. The communal approach to child rearing also addresses the Brethren’s social concept of gender division. The intensive infant care is delivered by female members of the community while the school instruction is assigned to one designated brother. Simplicius further comments on Hutterite division of labor:

Anderswo sahe ich das Weibliche Geschlecht sonst nichts thun als spinnen /…da war ein Wäscherin / die ander eine Bettmacherin / die dritte Vieh-Magd /… wuste ein jedwedere was sie thun solte; und gleichwie die Aempter unter dem

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72 In the 1607 polemic, Fischer criticizes the Hutterite child care system by asserting, “Wiedertäuffer handeln wieder die Natur … Denn sobald als die Muter das Kind entwehnet hat/so wird es von den rechten natürlichen Müttern genommen und gegeben den bestelten Schwestern. Hernach den unbekannten Schulmeistern und fremden jachzornigen Kindszicherin/ die dann ohne Lieb/ sittsamkeit und erbarmnuß/ bisweilen hefftig und unbarmherzig gnug dreinschlagen” (53). Fischer assumes a lack of love and affection resulting from the community’s absence of family structures. His negative description of the Brotherhood’s communal child rearing aims to discourage readers from joining the group.
Weiblichen Geschlecht ordentlich ausgetheilet waren / also wuste auch unter den Männern und Jünglinge jeder sein Geschäffte. (525)

The strict separation of sexes and distinct assignment of areas of responsibility are reminiscent of utopian ideas articulated by early modern philosophers and theologians. Simplicius is fascinated by the division of labor as it is practiced at the Bruderhof.

According to the system of occupational expertise, each member of the Hutterian colony has a well-defined work field depending on sex, age, personal skills, and the needs of the community. Even widows are incorporated into the workforce and contribute to the group’s social well-being by taking on tasks in the care sector. Zieglschmid has identified distinctive Hutterian traits in the portrayal of the “Arbeitsverteilung” as well as the code of conduct that allows him to conclude that the author must have known the Brethren from personal contact (354-355). Grimmelshausen’s depiction of the Hutterian Brotherhood is primarily centered on practical aspects of their community life. Focusing on the industry and order of the Ungarische Wiedertäufer, he creates an image of the Hutterites that reflects the group-internal social practices and structures.

He also expresses his enthusiasm for the health and long life of community members:

…wiewol sie wegen löbl. Diät und guter Ordnung selten erkranken / wie ich dann manchen feinen Mann in hohem gesundem und geruhigem Alter bey ihnen sahe / dergleichen anderswo wenig anzutreffen / sie hatten ihre gewisse Stunden zum Essen / ihr gewisse Stunden zum Schlaffen / aber kein einzige Minut zum
In sharp contrast to the protagonist’s life during the war, his hunger and malnutrition in the army, his poor condition in Paris where he was afflicted by illness, and his gambling habits in the imperial camps, the Anabaptists are depicted as healthy, hearty, and disciplined members of their religious community. In this excerpt, Grimmelshausen addresses another well-known aspect of Hutterian life, namely their good health and medical competence that was enviously criticized by opponents of the Brotherhood.73

Throughout the work, and particularly in Book V, the narrator searches for the perfect society that is physically, mentally, and morally sound. His encounter with the Sylphs in the center of the earth delineates the concept of such an ideal community. Neither humans nor angels, the creatures in the Mummel Lake form a distinct group that exists on the periphery of humankind and divinity. The Sylphs are characterized by “gesunden Vernunft/ … mit gesunden Leibern/ mit langem Leben/ mit der edlen Freiheit/ … keiner Sünd und dannenhero auch keiner Straff/ noch dem Zorn Gottes/ ja nicht einmal der geringsten Krankheit unterworffen/ … keine Wollust empfänden” (498), qualities and traits that are later personified by the marginalized group of Hungarian Hutterites whose rigid division of labor, excellent health, long life, and moral conduct result from regular habits inherent in the fundamental principles and social structures that constitute their community life.

73 In regard to the medical advances of the Hutterites, Fischer warned his readers about the group’s presence in the dominant society. In his first booklet against the faith community, he employed anti-Anabaptist rhetoric to counteract rapprochement tendencies when criticizing: “nicht allein der gemeine Mann sondern auch die Herren wenn sie irgents ein Arztney bedürffen lauffen zu ihnen [den Wiedertäufern], als wann sie diejenigen wären so die kunst allein gantz und gar hätten gefressen” (85).
Grimmelshausen designs a concept of an exemplary community that differs significantly from the historical reality of seventeenth-century society. Attributes such as rage, revenge, jealousy, hostility, and pride, which clearly define the baroque court life satirically criticized in the novel, are banned from the Sylph league as well as the Anabaptist colony. The vision of a community that lives in harmony and peace is conceptualized in the Mummel Lake episode and later takes shape in the manner of living of the actual Hutterite Bruderhof. The author specifically portrays those Anabaptist ethical standards and social structures that resemble the perfect society of the lake creatures to create a parallel between the communal order and the fictitious ideal society. Depicting the Hutterite colony as the epitome of social harmony, Grimmelshausen’s illustration of Anabaptism concentrates on social and economic qualities essential to the common good and welfare of any community, such as moral values, a healthy lifestyle, industry, and ethical conduct.

The Anabaptists’ communal structure, in its deviation from contemporary European social norms, creates the impression of an ideal society that is far removed from the reality of the Thirty Years’ War. I therefore agree with Harry Loewen’s argument that Grimmelshausen’s portrayal of the Hutterites, although inspired by the historical group in Mannheim, actually exceeds the Brethren’s reported reality. Loewen argues that the author was more concerned about “ein Ideal als um ein historisch-getreues Portrait der Hutterischen Brüder” (11). He suggests that Grimmelshausen was familiar with accusations against the Brotherhood as stated in the records of the
Mannheim’s city council. Yet, he decided to disregard any anti-Anabaptist allegations. Instead, he depicted the faith group as a community that combines Christian theory and social practice. Fashioning the picture of a utopian society, he leaves out “diejenigen Züge von seinen Täufern, die seinem Ideal nicht entsprachen, und er hat die Züge idealisiert, die ihm an ihrem Leben und ihrer Lehre gefielen” (Loewen 18).

The concept of a peaceful co-existence that contrasts the conditions prevailing in the war-ridden society of the narrator’s adventures in the Thirty Years’ War is realized in a number of encounters with unknown and marginalized communities. In Book V, the Taufgesinnte stand out from the group of utopian societies presented by the King of Sylph and Jupiter as a self-contained community that is based on a real and existing Christian minority. The novel also explores the concept of hermitage as a means to gain inner strength and seek a truly Christian life, for instance through the character of the Einsiedler, the forest hermit, and through Simplicius’ own eremite experience on the South Sea Island. Yet, this approach to achieve a practical Christianity by committing to a life in solitude as presented in the narrative simply lacks social engagement. Grimmelshausen portrays the Hutterite communalism as the only successful alternative to the peaceful and pious life of the hermit. The Hungarian Anabaptists present a manner of collective life that integrates all social, economic, and ethical aspects of practical Christianity.

74 In council records dating back July 1683, the Hutterite Brethren in Mannheim are accused of moral laxity: “in ihrem Gebäudehof soll es … unsittlich zugegangen sein” (quoted in Loewen 17).
75 Jupiter explicates his concept of establishing a peaceful Christian society in Book III Chapters 3-6. Through the help of the “Teutschen Helden” with a magical sword, he aims to eradicate all “verruchte Menschen … und die fromme[n] erhalten und erhöhen” (255).
In his summary of the Brotherhood’s ideal Christian life, the protagonist reiterates his fascination with the social structures and ethical standards of the minority. The group’s exemplary social practices stir a desire in him to establish a better society, one that is apt to overcome the moral and economic deterioration prevalent in his war-ravaged environment:


Simplicius is preoccupied with the group’s moral conduct and seeks to apply their high ethical standards and practical virtues to the mainstream Christian society. He considers recruiting the Hutterites to teach his “Glaubensgenossen ihre Manier zu leben”. His interest in the Hungarian Anabaptists aims to enrich the lives of fellow men with social competence and ethical standards, independent of their confessional ties. Battafarano has called Simplicius’ efforts to apply the Hutterite lifestyle a “Plädoyer für praktiziertes
Adopting the Hutterite manner of living and convincing fellow Christians to take up “solches ehrbares Christliches Thun” is not an easy endeavor. The influence of the dominant church becomes apparent when the narrator’s description of the Hutterite commune touches upon the religious matter of “seeliges” and “Christliches Leben”. In these cases, the term “Wiedertäufferische Ketzer” appears to be in concession to secular and church powers. In addition to a possible conflict with the authorities when implementing the minority’s social and ethical living, the remark “dem Schein nach,” emphasized by a round bracket inserted in the sentence, indicates the actual difficulties to be encountered when attempting to establish a society based on the Hutterite model of communal living. The reference to the “Schein” (appearance) underscores Grimmelshausen’s exaggeration of the historical minority. In his idealization of the colony’s social and ethical conduct, the author fashioned the image of a utopian society that is antithetical to that of the morally deteriorated Thirty Years’ War. The realization of Simplicius’ vision of Harmonia is not transferable to the actual society; as his Knan points out, it would be difficult to bring “solche Bursch zusammen” (527). Human nature is apt to prevent Simplicius’ plans for social change.

Grimmelshausen’s interest in the Hutterite Brethren focuses on social and economic aspects of their community life. The image he creates of the Täufer colony is presumably based on personal contact and gives an idealized picture of the religious minority according to the present-day state of knowledge regarding the early Anabaptist
movement. The encounter with the peaceful Brethren takes place during a time in European history that is marked by violence, disease, corruption, and religious intolerance. The exceedingly positive image of Anabaptists in this Simplician novel, especially their economic and ethical practices, makes them appear as a perfect community that contrasts the bleak reality of the seventeenth-century society. Considering the time of its publication, this surprisingly positive account of the Täufer promotes religious tolerance and a call for social change.

B. Jung-Stilling: Das Heimweh (1794) and the Swiss Mennonites

1. Jung-Stilling and the Mennonites

The peaceful Anabaptists were rarely represented in German literary fiction in the century following Simplicissimus. Since the portrayal of the Hutterite Brethren in Grimmelshausen’s picaresque novel, the pacifist branches of the radical reform movement were only depicted in a few travel journals of the eighteenth century. The Pietistic author Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling was the first to include Swiss-Mennonite characters in a German novel and to discuss early Anabaptist piety in devotional literature. His most prominent work, Das Heimweh (Longing for Home), bears a resemblance to Grimmelshausen’s Simplician novel with regard to the hero’s search for the ideal Christian

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society and the author’s favorable depiction of Anabaptism and his interest in the religious minority based on personal contact with the group (or close accounts thereof).

Jung-Stilling was familiar with Swiss-Mennonite life and religious principles. During his time as a professor of agriculture, technology, and economics at the Kaiserslautern Kameral Hohe Schule from 1777 until 1787, he lived and worked near Mennonite communities in the Palatinate, where he came into personal contact with many Brethren. Ernst Correll has quoted from one of Jung-Stilling’s lectures on the economy of local agriculture in which the author praised the Mennonite “Musterwirtschaft” for its highly efficient farming techniques, organization, and industry (122). While referring to all Mennonite farmers as “eine ganze Kolonie von fleißigen und vortrefflichen Landwirten,” Jung-Stilling points out the success and integrity of David Möllinger’s farm in particular and stresses that “seine häusliche Einrichtung und Lebensart ist wohl das höchste Ideal landwirtschaftlicher Glückseligkeit” (Correll 122). It can be assumed that the experience with Mennonite domesticity and manner of life he gained during these excursions affected the depiction of the faith community in his literary works.

The positive attitude toward Anabaptism reflected in his fictional texts does not only result from this personal acquaintance with Mennonites in the area of Kaiserslautern, but may also originate in Jung-Stilling’s own religious belief, which was of a distinctly Pietistic nature. Friedmann’s study on Anabaptism and Pietism elucidates the similarities

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77 David Möllinger was the grandson of a Mennonite immigrant from Switzerland. He received much recognition for his cultivation of clover that he planted to increase the fertility of farm soil (Neff, Möllinger 152). Jung-Stilling had a close friendship with Möllinger, visited his farm in Monsheim with his wife, and kept an extensive correspondence with him. Christian Neff has quoted one of Stilling’s letters to Möllinger, in which the author expresses his gratitude for their friendship: “Moellinger und Stilling, zween Brüder, die der Herr aus dem Staub erhob, sollen lauter Dank und Preis sein gegen ihren Schöpfer und Erhalter” (cited in Neff, Jung-Stilling 82).
and connections between the two Christian movements. Both faith groups claim to live strictly according to the Bible, oppose violence and war, and lay primary weight on inner experience and piety over theology and dogma (Mennonite Piety 11-12). Anabaptism, however, is fully committed to the spreading of the Gospel and thus relegates everything personal into the background, whereas Pietism is essentially “pure subjectivity” by promoting a relationship of the individual with Christ (Friedmann, Mennonite Piety 11).

The Pietistic focus on the believer’s personal experience with faith finds expression in an emotional Christianity and the striving for a pure inner perfection of holiness. As part of this emotional approach to faith, the Cross is considered a symbol of a subjective experience, and an internalization of Christ is achieved by prayer, songs, sacraments, and fellowship. Anabaptists, on the other hand, perceive the Cross as a sign of “practical opposition against the evil world” (Friedmann, Mennonite Piety 12). This resistance to secular oppression and immorality, an essential element of Anabaptist piety, manifested itself in the devoted practice of suffering and martyrdom during the early period of the movement.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, however, some Anabaptist groups stopped emphasizing segregation and suffering, possibly due to rekindled persecution that plagued congregations in South Germany and Switzerland. Friedmann has observed that a number of Anabaptist groups existed after 1600, but many of these Brethren started to keep their faith quiet or secret and focused on the personal experience of salvation rather than the active and outward display of their radical beliefs. This quietistic tendency took

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78 Friedmann has summarized the Pietistic purpose of belief as “edification, enjoying or ‘tasting’ of salvation which had already been achieved” (Mennonite Piety 12).
some Anabaptists a step closer to the Pietistic attitude (Mennonite Piety 11). In particular, Swiss Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations that initiated a loosening of the rigid application of social avoidance (Meidung) and shifted away from the notion of full discipleship to Christ by a “theology of martyrdom” eventually followed the Pietistic approach of avoiding conflict and opposition with the dominant society by being invested in an emotional Christianity that made peace with the outside world. Although differing doctrinal systems, the public was hardly able to distinguish between Swiss-Mennonites and Pietists in the early eighteenth century, as the outward appearance of the two faith groups gradually grew similar. The Swiss-Mennonite way of living, their increasingly personal and quiet approach to faith, and their move toward a non-confrontational relationship with the dominant society contributed to their acceptance by the Pietist movement. In that regard, Jung-Stilling’s tolerance for the Anabaptist faith, his appreciation of the Brethren’s simple and quiet manner of life, and his interest in the history of the movement can be understood as a natural consequence of his own Pietistic orientation.

Feeling a spiritual kinship to the Swiss-Mennonites, Jung-Stilling began studying the history and religious customs of this radical reform movement. Among the scholarly

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79 During the major Anabaptist schism in 1693-97, several Swiss Täufer groups separated from Jakob Ammann’s implementation of a revised church discipline that reiterated the strict practice of social exclusion. Instead, these Swiss-Mennonite groups, led by Hans Reist, introduced a set of reforms that, among other things, allowed the acquaintance of Brethren with non-believers. This new stance on contact with non-members potentially weakened the tight-knit structure of Mennonite church life (Nolt 33).

80 Responding to the public’s misconception of the uniformity between Anabaptists and Pietists, the Reformed Swiss minister Johannes Wolleb elucidates in his 1722 booklet, Gespräche zwischen einem Pietisten und Wiedertäußer, the differences between Anabaptism and Pietism as he noticed that “man insgemein keinen Unterscheid zwischen den sogenannten Pietisten und den Wiedertäußeren zu machen pflege/ und under den gemeinen Leuthen ein Pietist ein Wiedertäußer/und ein Wiedertäußer ein Pietist seyn muss” (3).
influences on his depiction of early Anabaptism in literary texts was the Dutch Mennonite preacher, Johannes Deknatel, who was the author of devotional books and the chief promoter of Pietism among Dutch and Palatinate Mennonites. Deknatel worked as a minister of the Amsterdam Lamist Mennonite Church in the early eighteenth century, when he first made the acquaintance of A.G. Spangenberg and later Count Zinzendorf. This encounter with representatives of the Moravian Church greatly influenced his experiential piety. As the “Pietist among the Mennonites,” he wrote on faith and Anabaptist history and was widely read by members of both Christian fellowships. His edition of Menno Simons’ writings known as *Der Kleine Menno* (1758) compiles a selection of essays and tracts that presented Menno’s work in the light of his new Pietistic orientation. Deknatel excluded Menno Simons’ martyr rhetoric and his call for opposition to worldly power. Instead, he “presented a great leader of a brotherhood which actualized a true Christian life… a pietistic Menno Simons was produced” (Friedmann 126). It was particularly Deknatel’s work that provided Jung-Stilling with valuable information on the Dutch Mennonite leader and his ideas. The biography of Menno Simons that was published in Jung-Stilling’s journal *Taschenbuch für die Freunde des Christentums* (1813), received great inspiration from Deknatel’s edition of Menno’s writings.

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81 Deknatel was a genuinely ecumenical Christian who had Pietistic notions, as his correspondence with Zinzendorf indicate, while at the same time, he was attached to his own Mennonite Brotherhood and even worked toward a union of the Hutterites with the Dutch Mennonites (Neff, Deknatel 399).

82 This term relates to Willem I. Leendertz article, “Johannes Deknatel, een piëtist onder de Doopsgezinden,” published in *Geloof en Vrijheid* in 1889.

83 Kurzer Auszug von Menno Simons Schriften, verfassend unterschiedliche merkwürdige Verhandlungen und wörtliche Auszüge aus seinen Werken (1758)

84 Jung-Stilling’s assertion that Menno Simons was equipped “mit einer höheren Kraft” (9) corresponds to Deknatel’s depiction of Menno as “ein Werkzeug von Gott” (Vorrede). The Pietist author directly quotes from Deknatel’s biography of Menno Simons when describing the leader’s courageous efforts in times of “beständigen Todesgefahren” (10). Deknatel’s notion of the “rechte Einfalt,” a simple and honest faith
In this periodical, Jung-Stilling collects “erbauliche Geschichten frommer Menschen” and associates them with the essence of edifying theology, namely humans’ inevitable need for salvation, the divine humanity of Christ, and his sacrificial death (Theologische Realenzyklopädie 469). The short narratives also serve as a basis for discussing central truths of faith and exploring theological principles of various Christian groups. In Menno Simons’ biography, he addresses chief characteristics of Mennonite piety and asks for more tolerance toward the religious minority:

Seine [Menno’s] Grundsätze, die noch in unseren Zeiten in allen Gemeinden der Mennoniten bekannt, gelehrt und ausgeübt werden, bezeugen, dass sie wahrhaft christlich und evangelisch sind … Es ist wahrlich einmal Zeit, daß man die veralteten papierenen Sektenwände, die so lange die Einigkeit des Geistes gehindert und der alles umfassenden Bruderliebe im Weg gestanden haben, wegräumt. Hätte man die Geheimnisse des Abendmahls und der freien Gnade kindlich und mit Ehrfurcht geglaubt, ohne sie erklären zu wollen, so wäre keine Trennung entstanden und dies würde auch ebenso wenig geschehen sein, wenn man bedenkt hätte, daß die Kindertaufe nicht in der Bibel befohlen, sondern von Menschen nach und nach eingeführt wurde… Dass die Mennoniten gewöhnlich keine studierten Prediger haben, hat dem Religionsunterricht … seit dreihundert Jahren keinen Schaden getan, denn sie sind durchgehends in den Glaubenswahrheiten ebenso gegründet als wir Protestanten. (Taschenbuch 13)

ascribed to Menno Simons and his followers, significantly influenced Jung-Stilling’s literary representation of the Mennonite community (Vorrede).

85 Starting with the 1806 edition, Jung-Stilling presents short biographies of “Glaubensgrößen unterschiedlicher konfessioneller Herkunft” that serve “ausnahmslos dem erbaulich-erwecklichen Grundanliegen” (Völkel 338).
Jung-Stilling speaks in some detail about Menno Simons’ fundamental tenets of Anabaptist faith, defends them against criticism, and praises their lasting contribution to Mennonite church life. In his portrayal of Menno and his theological principles, he comments on three aspects that the sixteenth-century Dutch leader has focused on throughout his writings and most importantly in his chief work, *Foundation of a Christian Faith*, in which he outlines the essence of Anabaptist faith. Although Deknatel’s collection of Menno’s writings did not contain this significant doctrinal statement of the Dutch leader, his selected paragraphs summarize Menno’s position toward baptism; the Lord’s Supper; discipline and order; church leaders; and the relationship between the Brotherhood and the established society that he explicated most prominently in the *Foundation*.

Jung-Stilling takes up the discussion on the Lord’s Supper by reminding the reader that the schism within the Christian church would not have occurred if all believers had maintained a pure, childlike devotion and awe, rather than engaging in a rational debate about transubstantiation. The author’s personal objection to neology, the rationalization of the Christian belief, marks his perception of the Anabaptist theological doctrine. While Simons declares the Lord’s Supper a spiritual act that is reminiscent of Christ’s sacrifices for his believers, an act that should only be practiced by true disciples to Christ, Jung-Stilling stresses the experiential and emotional approach to the Lord’s Supper and the issue of salvation. The Pietistic attitude and rhetoric applied in Jung-

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86 According to the Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Jung-Stilling abandoned the philosophy of enlightenment after the French Revolution and considered his program against neology the “Auftakt zum endzeitlichen großen letzten Kampf zwischen Licht und Finsterniß” (468). In his later years he fought a “Dreifrontenkrieg” against the rationality and atheistic tendencies of enlightenment, an extreme mysticism, and rigid orthodox dogmatism of the Protestant Church (Neue Deutsche Biographie 666).
Stilling’s discourse on the Lord’s Supper is not only based on the author’s affiliation with Pietism but originates in Deknatel’s depiction of Menno Simons’ ideas about the Eucharist.

Jung-Stilling also refers to the Mennonite practice of adult baptism and clearly takes sides with the religious minority when admitting that infant baptism was not ordered in the Bible but only introduced by men. Hence, he refutes Catholic claims about the baptism of children being a necessary article of faith. Furthermore, he comments on the Anabaptist custom of lay preaching. In *Foundation of a Christian Faith*, Menno Simons advocates church leaders who are chosen within the ranks of the Brethren community and who take the responsibility of guiding, teaching, and admonishing members of the congregation rather than preaching and officiating as the sole interpreters of the Bible. Jung-Stilling acknowledges that the Mennonite practice of lay preaching has been overwhelmingly successful, as he puts the Brethren’s religious grounding and their knowledge of the truths of faith on the same level as the ecclesiastical education of fellow Protestants.

Jung-Stilling portrays Menno Simons’ life and his fundamental principles of Anabaptist piety with much sympathy. His discussion of the central elements of Mennonite theology illustrates his interest in the religious minority and his acceptance of their distinct theological doctrine. With an attitude of fairness, he examines specific features of their religious theory that had formerly been the source of societal friction and recognizes the benefits of these customs. It is noticeable that he adjusts the portrayal of Anabaptist theology to his Pietistic views. All of Menno Simons’ works are
permeated by sharply polemical statements of the Brethren’s endurance of church and state persecution. Suffering and martyrdom were an integral part of early Anabaptist piety that does not appear in Jung-Stilling’s literary treatment of Mennonite history. Deknatel’s work, Der Kleine Menno, after which Jung-Stilling modelled his own depiction of the Anabaptist common code of faith, was written during a time when Mennonites shifted their focus from persecution and radical opposition to authorities, to an inner and quiet faith that avoided conflict with the established church and state. In addition to this new direction within the Mennonite group, Deknatel and Jung-Stilling’s perception of Anabaptist history is considerably influenced by their Pietistic beliefs that led both authors to stress the Anabaptist notion of brotherliness and true piety. Emphasizing the similarities between the two faith groups, Jung-Stilling’s depiction of Anabaptist theology expresses a spiritual kinship with the Täufergemeinde and promotes brotherly love and the unity of the spirit.

In contrast to the work of earlier historians, who based their description of the movement’s origin entirely on polemical writings and church chronicles of the sixteenth century that stigmatized the Brethren as seditious heretics, Deknatel and consequently Jung-Stilling present the Anabaptist history with much understanding and consideration of the Täufer’s own historical documents. This change of historical viewpoint was first introduced by Jung-Stilling’s friend and fellow Pietist, Gottfried Arnold in the late 1720s. In his most significant work, Unpartheiische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie (1729), Arnold proposes a more objective examination of the church chronicle,
particularly the history of sectarian groups.\textsuperscript{87} In his chapter on the \textit{Täufer}, he does not focus to a great degree on the official writings of the Reformation period, but rather draws from a multitude of original Anabaptist sources, including the \textit{Hutterite Chronicles} and the \textit{Martyr Mirror}, works of Menno Simons, and the Brethren’s doctrinal statements. Employing these sources, he gains a substantial factual knowledge about the reformist group. The subsequent depiction of Anabaptist history, customs, and doctrine helps to dispel false prejudice among the general public.

Arnold’s historiography significantly contributed to the eighteenth-century rehabilitation of \textit{Ketzer} groups, especially of medieval sectarian movements and Anabaptists. His extensive discussion of the \textit{Wiedertäufer Historie} and his appreciation for the group’s notion of a voluntary church exerted a tangible influence on the perception of Anabaptism by the Pietistic community. Friedmann has asserted that the \textit{Unpartheiische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie} played a mediating role between the Anabaptist and Pietistic fellowship insofar as it brought the Anabaptist history and its fundamental principles and customs into contact with the Pietistic movement of Arnold’s time (Mennonite Piety 20).

As a member of the Pietistic movement, Jung-Stilling was undoubtedly influenced by Arnold’s work on the separatist group. According to Horsch Bender, the

\textsuperscript{87} As the title of the book indicates, the author attempts to assume a fair-minded and \textit{unparteiische} attitude toward religious minorities, as he presents “die tugenden derer, die man sonst als feinde beschrieben” with an impartial evaluation (b2). Although he claims to make an effort for non-partisan historiography, his Pietistic background becomes predominant when considering the main objective of the book, namely the search for true representatives of inward Christianity. Seeberg has argued that Arnold’s technique of writing about the \textit{Ketzer}, that is quoting from their own statements and thereby letting the nonconformists plead for themselves without putting emphasis on the biased reports of the official churchmen, clearly indicates his sympathies with the Anabaptists and related groups (517).
historian’s defense of the *Täufer* confirmed Jung-Stilling’s own favorable attitude toward them (Jung-Stilling 92). His literary texts reflect kindness and tolerance toward the historical Anabaptist fellowship. In addition to the portrayal of Menno Simons and his ideas in *Taschenbuch für die Freunde des Christentums*, Jung-Stilling also refers to the Dutch church leader in his novel, *Theobald und die Schwärmer* (1784), in which he depicts Menno as the “Haupt der Wiedertäufer,” who “auch noch weit in die Zukunft hinein unvermerkt fortwirkt” (2). In *Heinrich Stillings Wanderschaft* (1778), the third part of his fictionalized autobiography, and in his most prominent novel, *Das Heimweh* (1794), he illustrates the essential character of this religious movement and depicts Anabaptist-phobic notions that persisted in the dominant society during the eighteenth century.

2. *Das Heimweh* and its Reception among Contemporary Mennonites

Similar to Simplicius’ adventurous search for an ideal society, Jung-Stilling’s most well-known novel, *Das Heimweh* (*Longing for Home*), tells the story of the hero’s journey to the kingdom of peace and of his efforts to establish a utopian community of true Christians. The voluminous narrative reports of a great oriental monarch who rules over the Christian empire covering all of Europe and Asia. A secret conspiracy in France (strongly suggestive of the French Enlightenment and its call for a separation of church and state) puts his reign in danger. Loyal followers of the emperor thus establish a secret organization that is reminiscent of European medieval chivalry to protect the king and his

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88 At the beginning of his novel, *Theobald und die Schwärmer* (1784), Jung-Stilling recognizes Arnold’s work on the *Ketzer Historie*, when stating that “Gottfried Arnold suchte im Reich der Schwämerey Wahrheit … seine Geschichte weist aus, welch ein unsäglich Nutzen er gestiftet habe” (5).
empire. Christian von Ostenheim, the protagonist of the novel and later referred to as Eugenius, experiences *Heimweh*, the yearning shared by all members of this association to reach the final kingdom of peace in the East. He was raised by highly religious parents who gave him careful instructions for the task that lies ahead of him. At a midnight gathering with the *grauen Felsenmänner*, he is appointed “zum Ritter des heiligen Creuzes” and receives the *Ordensname* Eugenius (24). He goes forth; rescues a lady in distress; withstands the temptations of Fräulein von Nischlin; endures imprisonment, starvation, and torture; and almost reaches the point of despair. On his way East to the place of refuge, he meets his future bride Urania, the daughter of the great monarch, in a Mennonite’s home. After his long pilgrimage to the Middle East and his wedding with Urania in Jerusalem, he arrives at Solyma, where he establishes an ideal theocracy with equality and a distinct set of moral laws.

The story of the protagonist’s journey to the East, his triumphs and sufferings on his predestined course of wanderings, and the founding of a theocratic utopia of true Christians is reminiscent of John Bunyan’s Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678). According to the addendum of *Heimweh*, Jung-Stilling read a translation of Bunyan’s narrative at an early age, appreciated its allegories, and began to write such a book himself at the age of eight (844). His resolution “ein Buniansbuch zu schreiben” was finally put into practice when he finished *Heimweh* about fifty years later.\(^8^9\) Although Jung-Stilling’s allegorical work on the pilgrim’s journey is much more extensive than Bunyan’s allegory and even requires

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\(^{8^9}\) In the epilogue of his novel, Jung-Stilling describes how his father reminded him that he had taken Bunyan’s ideas and “ihm nur ein anderes Mäntelchen umgehangen” (*Heimweh* 844).
the aid of *Der Schlüssel zum Heimweh* (the explanation key at the end of the novel) to fully comprehend the references in the nomenclatures, the similarities between the two works are numerous.

Comparable to Bunyan’s story, Jung-Stilling’s novel depicts the eastward pilgrimage of the hero, Christian, with his companions, and employs Jerusalem as a metaphor for the religiously motivated purpose of his journey. Ulrich Stadler has pointed out that both narratives apply the allegory of the narrow gate to symbolize correct moral conduct in a New Testament tradition (Matthew 7:13). Both fictional pilgrimage accounts thus exemplify “die Theorie des Weges der christlichen Heiligung,” and illustrate the relationship between the narrating/reading of the quest for salvation and the act itself (35).

As *Erbauungsliteratur* (devotional literature), Bunyan’s and Jung-Stilling’s literary texts aim to strengthen the readers’ devotion and provide guidance for a virtuous life. Not only the narrator, but also the reader “soll die Schritte des Helden nachvollziehen und seiner eigenen Erlösung entgegenarbeiten” (Stadler 35).

Certain Mennonite groups did not simply retrace the hero’s steps but also sought to implement Jung Stilling’s concept of a theocratic utopia and moved eastward during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Daniel Shubin has noted that *Das Heimweh* was very popular among Mennonite and Pietistic communities in both Germany and Russia. Some members of these fellowships considered Jung-Stilling’s writings to be prophetic and even made arrangements to migrate to the area of South Central Asia to find refuge from the anti-Christ as depicted in his narrative (100). It is remarkable that a non-Anabaptist author received such an avid audience among the Mennonite community. The group’s interest in
Jung-Stilling’s writings can be explained by the adjustments and interactions that developed between Pietism and Mennonitism starting in the second half of the eighteenth century as well as the author’s favorable depiction of Anabaptist individuals and his overall tolerant stance toward the religious minority. Inspired by his description of the imaginary Oriental theocracy near the Aral Sea, a few Mennonite migrants ventured to the East and adapted his ideas in a Mennonite setting.

Claas Epp Jr. is one of the Mennonites who became well-known for their attempt to adopt Jung-Stilling’s concept of an ideal Christian society. Epp internalized the novel’s image of the eastward mission and made a strong plea for emigration to the East. He was able to gather a group of Mennonites around him to settle in the promised place of refuge. Based on the Pietistic novel, which became a revelation to these enthusiastic Brethren, Epp felt that the era of tribulation had arrived and Christ’s coming was near.

3. Representations of Mennonite Discrimination

_Das Heimweh_, records Eugenius’ misery and success on his way from his village in Germany to the Oriental land of Solyma. Drawn by the longing to reach the spiritual safe haven in the East, the protagonist ventures out, embarking on his predestined journey to the kingdom of peace. The awakening of the _Heimweh_, his yearning for the Christian

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90 Walter Unger has pointed out that Epp had studied _Das Heimweh_ from his childhood on and decided to pursue his plans of seeking a refuge for his followers when the faith community lost their privilege of exemption from Russian military service in 1874 (205).

91 According to Unger, Epp believed that the Mennonites were “elected to please God, who had promised them an open door in order to prepare a place of refuge for other believers in the Christian church who were fleeing the tribulation” (206). Shubin has argued that the millennialistic implications to Jung-Stilling’s narrative derive from Johann Bengel’s eschatology. In 1740, the Pietistic theologian attempted to date the second advent of Christ and the initiation of the millennial kingdom to the year 1790 (100). Building on Bengel’s chiliastic theology, Jung-Stilling recalculated the coming of Christ to the year 1836 and conveyed an end-time view in his literary writings. The millennial connotations are most noticeable in _Das Heimweh_.

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empire, takes place at the outset of the narrative. Christian’s use of the term *Heimweh* and his understanding of its denotation indicate his spiritual maturity and readiness to serve in the emperor’s league. His comprehension of *Heimweh* is initiated by an episode he reports to his parents that concerns the pastor and local Mennonites:


The pastor’s response to the reprimand and his reference to *Heimweh* produce a physical and spiritual reaction in Christian, “wie ein Blitz fuhr mirs durch alle Glieder, und im Augenblick fühlte ich auch das Fieber des Heimweh’s” (5). His sudden longing for the kingdom of peace is generated by an act of religious intolerance which triggers the pastor’s comment about the woman’s *Heimweh*, a longing to be at a spiritual home in which confessional differences do not exist. In this instance, Christian reports to his parents how the pastor of the community is criticized for having buried an Anabaptist woman in the church’s graveyard. This matter illustrates society’s hostile attitude toward the religious minority.
Members of the Anabaptist fellowships were continuously perceived as heretics during the eighteenth century and excluded from the dominant society, even in death. In the opening scene of his devotional novel, Jung-Stilling addresses a matter of religious discrimination that he personally witnessed during his time at the Kaiserslautern Kameral Hohe Schule. Neff’s archival research refers to a case dating to 1780 in which the corpse of an unnamed Mennonite that had been previously buried in the church’s graveyard was exhumed and reburied outside the cemetery walls. According to Horsch Bender, a number of citizens, including Jung-Stilling, were irate at the sacrilege and protested against this act of intolerance on the part of the state church of that area. The depiction of a similar event in the novel reiterates the author’s condemnation of such ignorance and religious prejudice (Jung-Stilling 96).

In the narrative, the pastor faces prosecution by the consistory for having permitted the burial of a Mennonite woman in his churchyard. The Mennonite funeral on the Protestant church ground and the minister’s active involvement in the procession by “selber mit zur Leiche gegangen” demonstrate the attempt of bringing together the religious minority and the established church. However, his contact with the faith community is not welcomed by the church council. The pastor’s “Verfolgung” and “Verweiß” following his charitable action indicate the intolerant attitude inherent in the institutional church. By severely criticizing the minister’s affirmation of different branches of Christian faith, the consistory aims to maintain the boundary between the established

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92 This act of disintering the Mennonite grave was accompanied by a warning to the public “daß es so allen denen gehen werde, die nicht zu den 3 Religionen gehören” (Neff, Begräbnis der Mennoniten 65).
church and the Mennonite minority. Its objection to the burial illustrates the continuous stigmatization of Brethren as outcasts.

The council’s campaign to ostracize the fellowship from the Protestant congregation is viewed disapprovingly. The narrator distances himself from the anti-Anabaptist attitude of the church leaders by referring to the Brethren as *Mennoniten*, a term that expresses neutrality and is preferred by the Anabaptists themselves, as compared to *Ketzer* or *Schwärmer*, labels that were commonly assigned to religious dissidents during the eighteenth century. The pastor’s “gute Gattin” also indicates her opposition to society’s discriminatory treatment of the Mennonites. The intolerant stance toward the religious minority, revealed by the consistory’s “Verweiß” brings tears in her eyes. Her husband, however, is the most important proponent of religious tolerance in this episode. He conveys an ecumenical approach to Christianity when responding to the council’s reprimand with the words: “Seelig sind die das Heimweh haben, denn sie wollen nach Haus kommen”. Here, he suggests a universal kingdom of peace that is open to all true believers, independent of their religious affiliation.

4. Depictions of Mennonite Way of Life

The narrative illustrates the continuous discrimination against Mennonites in eighteenth-century Germany by making reference to the prohibition to bury members of the sect in communal cemeteries. Despite society’s persistent prejudice against the marginalized group of Brethren, the narrator assumes a Mennonite-sympathetic attitude that reflects the author’s personal experience and relationship with members of the faith.

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93 According to Driedger, the German Anabaptists preferred to call themselves *Mennoniten* during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1).
group in the Palatinate. Jung-Stilling deliberately selects the Mennonite incident as the moment in which the hero discovers his predestination to serve as the king’s true subject. He also pays tribute to the Mennonite way of life by arranging for Eugenius to meet Urania, the daughter of the great monarch and his bride-to-be, at a Swiss Mennonite’s home. Both instances in which Mennonites appear in the narrative are therefore significant turning points of the story and support the protagonist’s mission to erect a kingdom of true Christianity.

Urania lives temporarily in the foster care of an old Swiss Mennonite. According to the explanation key at the end of the novel, her name, Urania Sophia von Edang, translates into “Himmlische Wahrheit und Gnade” (965). Hence, the home of the Brethren becomes the shelter for the future queen of Solyma and the personification of divine truth and mercy. The author explains his decision to use the Mennonite setting as a hideout for the emperor’s daughter in the Schlüssel:

Die himmlische Wahrheit und der Pflegevater, der seligmachende Glaube, wohnen nicht im Geräusch der Welt, sie ziehen sich wegen der Nachstellungen des Geistes unserer Zeit in die Wüste zurück, wo sie im Stillen wirken; ihre Wohnung, ihre Kleidung und ihr ganzes Hauswesen ist den Aufgeklärten unserer Zeit altfränkisch und ganz aus der Mode gekommen; das Einfache, Stille und Ländliche ist dem Glauben und der Wahrheit zuträglich … Ich wählte darum das Bild einer schweizerisch-wiedertäuferischen Familie, weil es, wahrlich! Das passendste unter allen ist. (862)
In this passage, Jung-Stilling makes known his perception of the Mennonites. He praises their Christian foundation and character when referring to the old Brother as “der seligmachende Glaube” (beatifying faith) who functions as the keeper of the allegorical “himmlische Wahrheit”. He also speaks highly of the Mennonite way of life and the simplicity and quietness he encounters in their homes. In his opinion, the Anabaptist family is an ideal place to preserve the divine truth, personified by Urania, as the Mennonites live excluded from the chaos and turmoil of society. His assumption that the Anabaptists withdraw from society due to the “Nachstellungen des Geistes unserer Zeit” alludes to the author’s critical stance on the Enlightenment. He depicts the Mennonites as a faith group that flees the rationalization of the Christian religion that took place in Germany during the Age of Reason. In this Old Testament image, the Anabaptists flee to the “Wüste” (desert) in order to escape from the contemporary “Geist” (intellect) that threatens the true belief. Jung-Stilling identifies the simplicity and order of the Brethren’s household and attire as examples of their traditional values that counter the “Aufgeklärten” striving for modernity.\(^{94}\) It is “das Einfache, Stille und Ländliche,” the essence of the Mennonite manner of living during the eighteenth century that forms the author’s image of the religious minority. These fundamental aspects of Swiss-Mennonite life and piety are most suitable for the task of guarding the genuine “Glauben und Wahrheit”.

The emphasis on the Mennonite’s simple and peaceful way of life becomes particularly noticeable in *Das Heimweh* when Eugenius enters the home of the old

\(^{94}\) His association of Mennonitism with simplicity, peace, quiet, and rural living may have been motivated by his personal experience with members of the Täufer community in the Palatinate. His depiction of the old Mennonite’s home could have been influenced by his visit to David Möllinger’s estate and his study of Mennonite farms in the area of Kaiserslautern, as noted in his lectures and letters (see Neff, Möllinger 152).
Mennonite after having been guided by a peasant boy through “ein enges Thal, durch welches … der Weg langs einen klaren rauschenden Bach aufwärts führte” (46). The description of the journey to the Brother’s home is reminiscent of the narrow gate mentioned in the New Testament. In anticipation of the encounter with the Anabaptist and Urania, the voyage through the narrow valley and alongside the clear creek allegorizes purity and moral conduct. Eugenius and his servant, Hans, travel a long distance until they finally arrive at the remote residence of the old Mennonite. His home is located far away from the city and its dwellers. Set in beautiful nature, “zwischen waldigten Hügeln … eine Klippe am Fuß eines hohen Berges,” the idyllic scenery emphasizes the quiet and peaceful character of its inhabitants (46).

Upon entering the Mennonite home, Eugenius notices the quiet and peaceful atmosphere and quickly realizes that the Bauernhütte belongs to an Anabaptist family:

Ich trat in eine ziemlich räumliche, sehr reinliche, niedrige und mit kleinen, hochstehenden Fenstern versehene Bauernstube. Bey dem grosen vier eckigen Ofen saß ein ältlicher Mann mit einem langen castanienbraunen Bart, … Aber bey dem Woll-Spinnrad mitten in der Stube, saß ein Mädchen von griechischem Wuchs, sehr bäuerlich aber sehr reinlich und vorsichtig gekleidet … Es war eine Schweizerisch-Mennonitische Familie. (46)

Written in the narrative perspective of the first person, the protagonist describes his personal observation at the Mennonite’s home and his direct encounter with the family. The Ich-Form of this novel conveys a certain authenticity and closeness associated with
his experience at the old man’s home. Eugenius’ entrance and his gaze at the Bauernstube express his active approach to the Brethren and his acceptance of their simple and quiet lifestyle. He becomes the focalizing agent, whose perception of the Anabaptist family, his act of seeing, equals an understanding and appreciation of their essential nature.

These principal attributes of their Anabaptist character, as Eugenius perceives them, involve cleanliness, modesty, and diligence. After observing the clean and orderly setting of the house, he notices the old Mennonite and Urania whom he assumes to be the daughter of the elderly gentleman. The family’s grooming and clothing habits reveal their Mennonite affiliation to the perceiver. He comments on the old man’s long beard, which had become a common feature of Anabaptist men by the eighteenth century. He also makes reference to the clean and humble attire of the girl by the spinning wheel. The emphasis on cleanliness and modesty in his description of the characters’ outward appearance could perhaps derive from the author’s observation of contemporary Mennonites.

Jung-Stilling had already integrated his personal observations about the Mennonites’ clean and modest appearance and lifestyle in his fictional autobiography. In Heinrich Stillings Wanderschaft (1778), the narrator encounters a very similar situation

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95 Bal has explained that the difference between a character-bound narrator and an external narrator lies in the narrative rhetoric of “truth”. The character-bound narrator “proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself” (21).

96 Bal defines the focalizing agent as “a specific agent of perception, the holder of the ‘point of view’” (18). In her discussion of the focalizor, the act of perceiving becomes highly important. “Conversion is defined as seeing … seeing primarily equals insight” (19).
when led by a child to the home of tailor Isaak, a Swiss-Mennonite emigrant: “Das Kind lief vor Stilling her, und führte ihn in einen abgelegenen Winkel an ein kleines Häuschen … er trat da hinein, und kam in die Stube. Hier stand eine …artige und reinliche Frau” (222). The narrator later refers to Isaak’s wife as “sittsam und freundlich” and he “fühlte, daß er bei frommen Leuten war” (223). In both stories, Jung-Stilling portrays the Mennonite family with much sympathy for its quiet and simple manner of life. At these first encounters, he depicts outward characteristics that anticipate inner qualities. The Mennonites’ humble, quiet, and sincere appearance corresponds to their simple, somewhat austere piety that the narrator describes later on in the novels. In Wanderschaft, Jung-Stilling refers to Isaak and his fellow Brethren as people who “nichts Enthusiastisches hatten, sondern bloß Liebe gegen Gott und Menschen auszuüben, im Leben und Wandel aber ihrem Haupte Christo nachzuahmen suchten” (225). The author has recognized the essence of Mennonite piety and pictures it accordingly. Being accustomed to the

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97 Neff has identified Johann Jakob Becker, a Swiss Mennonite immigrant, in the character of Isaak (Jung-Stilling 80).

98 The term Enthusiasten (enthusiasts), rooted in the Greek word for divine possession (Ἑνθουσιασµός – “the God inside”) was originally employed by Plato as an expression that referred to inspiration in either a religious or an artistic sense (La Vopa 1). In the early modern era, the term received a negative connotation. Its pejorative use began in religious discourse, referencing any sectarian group that departed from the dominant church; “Enthusiasten heißen, die ohne die Predigt Gottes Worts auf himmlische Erleuchtung des Geistes warten,” naming those believers who overemphasize the notion of immediate guidance by God and the Holy Spirit, often manifested by excessive emotionalism, “Ekstase” (Thieme 588). The word Enthusiast as a derogatory term was employed by theologians (alluding to false inspirations) until the early nineteenth century (Tucker viii). Even more common in the Reformation era and often used in the same context as religious enthusiasm was the term Schwärmer (Thieme has identified Schwärmer as a subcategory to Enthusiast—both terms expressing “Irrgläubigkeit” in early modern time, 588). Luther stigmatized many of his religious opponents, for instance the Anabaptists, as Schwärmer. Deriving from the verb schwärmen (swarm), this term evokes the image of bees swarming around the hive in a seemingly disordered manner - a metaphor for the erratic movement of self-appointed field preachers travelling the country, rampaging through churches, and smashing statues. La Vopa has noted that the term Schwärmer evokes all sorts of implications regarding deviance and conformity as well as selfhood and collectivity (88). In the eighteenth century, proponents of the enlightenment often presented the Schwärmer as “Religionsschwärmer und Fanatiker,” Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptists serving as prominent examples (Engel 475).
emotional Pietism of his own Christian fellowship, the plain and earnest devotion of Mennonitism becomes particularly noticeable to him and hence worthy of mention.

While Heinrich Stilling focuses mostly on the aspects that distinguish Anabaptism from Pietism during his initial encounter with members of the Brotherhood, he points at the similarities between these two faith groups after interacting with Brethren. Heinrich is elated to find out that he and master Isaak are both “ein Freund vom Christentum, und von wahrer Gottseligkeit” (Wanderschaft 223). Upon discovering that these Mennonites are “fromme Leute,” he begins to cry and exclaims “ich bin zu Haus!” (223). The two men are united by true faith. The author depicts the concept of the brotherly union that exists between all true Christians and that he personally experienced in his friendship with the Mennonite David Möllinger.99

The homelike atmosphere that suffuses the house of tailor Isaak in Wanderschaft is also noticeable in Das Heimweh when the Mennonite approaches Eugenius. The young traveler senses a spiritual connection to the old man and follows his advice to feel “als wenn du zu Hauß wärest” (47). These feelings of comfort and well-being are evoked by the true Christian faith shared by the two men. The brotherly union between narrator and Mennonite already suggested in Stilling’s biography is further developed in Heimweh. In the Mennonite’s welcome address, the protagonist quickly recognizes the kind of rhetoric employed by the loyal followers of the emperor. Thus, he identifies the pious man as a member of the secret organization to protect the kingdom of peace and exclaims: “du führst meines Vaters Sprache, du bist wohl auch unser einer?” (47).

99 As quoted earlier, Jung-Stilling addressed Möllinger as a friend and brother in his correspondence with the Mennonite farmer (Neff, Jung-Stilling 82).
In contrast to the stigmatization and ostracism of Anabaptist groups by the eighteenth-century society, Jung-Stilling’s fictional text portrays the minority as supportive members of the great Christian mission. The author depicts the old Mennonite as the protagonist’s brother in faith and assigns him an important role. His spatial and social distance to the dominant society enables him to serve the important task of providing shelter and protection for Urania, the kingdom’s future queen. Jung-Stilling does not ignore the discrimination against Brethren that occurred during his time. Instead, he illustrates how the marginalization of Anabaptists by the established society, presented for instance by the churchyard episode, and consequently the old man’s position as a societal outsider allows him to function as the protector of the divine truth.

Not only does his status as an outcast generated by the “Nachstellungen” of the dominant society and his avoidance of “Geräusch der Welt” enable him to serve as Urania’s guardian, but he also qualifies for this task due to his wisdom and insight in the Christian faith. The Mennonite is depicted as a knowledgeable and religiously educated man who has the authority to speak a blessing for the young couple: “Seyd ewig geseegnet, ihr Kinder des Höchsten! die Wahrheit sey denn auch jetzt wieder des Glaubens Ehegenossin!—Ewig kann dieser Bund nicht getrennt werden” (50). With much foresight, he announces the union of Urania and Eugenius as representatives of divine truth and faith. He foresees that one day the couple, as well as the two elements, belief and truth, will establish an everlasting covenant. Referring to the idea of a theocratic utopia in which faith and truth are united, the Mennonite addresses the
principal mission of the secret organization and thus affirms his membership in the emperor’s league. As a true subject to the king, he provides Eugenius with an important lesson on faith that will help him to remain focused on his journey to the kingdom of peace. Before the protagonist leaves the Mennonite’s home, the old man informs him about the purpose of the voyage and the prerequisites for a successful mission:

Ein großer Zweck erfordert einen großen Muth; der große Muth entsteht durch eine große Glaubenskraft; die große Glaubenskraft wird erzeugt durch hohe Prüfungen, und wenn es damit aufs höchste gekommen ist, da empfängt man die Herzensbeschneidung zum Siegel der Gerechtigkeit des Glaubens. (53)

The author deliberately assigns the character of the Mennonite the task of delivering this significant lesson on the essence of faith. The Täufer is delineated as a wise man who supports the hero on his quest for the Christian empire. Jung-Stilling pictures the Mennonite as an important aide for the realization of the ideal society of true Christians. Living a simple and quiet life excluded from society’s rational approach to faith, he exemplifies the devoted Christian who unites with the forces that protect the true belief. Jung-Stilling perceives Mennonitism from a Pietistic and anti-neological perspective that enables him to appreciate the group’s distinct manner of life and piety. Apart from his personal experience with members of the Mennonite community, the devotional character of his work that focuses on a unifying Christian belief rather than confessional differences allows him to characterize the Anabaptist minority as an exceptional faith group that represents the concept of true discipleship to Christ.
C. Conclusion

Pacifist Anabaptist groups received little attention in fictional literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Radical manifestations of the reform movement, particularly the violent aberration in Münster, have become more commonly known and fictionalized as the spectacular elements lend themselves more easily to literary treatment. All the more important, then, become the few exceptions in German literature that are concerned with the non-violent branches of Anabaptism. Both Grimmelshausen’s and Jung-Stilling’s narratives were written at a time when the majority of Brethren were still present in Europe and marginalized by the dominant society. Unlike polemical literature of that period, which aims to instruct readers on how to avoid succumbing to Anabaptist teaching and life, these fictional texts express a simple admiration for the group’s piety and manner of life.

The authors’ interest in the religious minority developed from personal contacts with Brethren or the account thereof. A basic tolerance became the natural consequence of their experience with the religious communities. Their exposure to the Anabaptist culture generates a positive attitude toward practical as well as religious aspects of the group. Fully aware of the continuous discrimination of Täuflinge and and the division between society and the marginalized group, Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling develop a positive image of the minority within the framework of the utopian concept. Only against the backdrop of utopian societies are the authors able to express an appreciation of the group’s exemplary manner of life.
Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus and Das Heimweh depict the Anabaptists as a harmonious faith group. The Täufer image in these two works is characterized by moral conduct, ethical standards, industry, order, and a simple yet dedicated piety. Each narrative grasps a different aspect of Anabaptism. Grimmelshausen’s novel focuses predominantly on the ethics and social structure of the religious community whereas Jung-Stilling is concerned with the quiet and humble life as well as the true Christian faith. Neither of these fictional works examines the theology and religious doctrine of the radical reformers. Yet, their favorable portrayal of Anabaptist values and customs contributes to theological debates of the day and advocates religious tolerance. For Jung-Stilling, in particular, the peaceful Anabaptist movement with its long history of persecution and ostracism serves as an example in the discussion of religious intolerance. Even non-German fictional literature, for instance Voltaire’s Candide, ou l’Optimisme (1759), employs the Anabaptist theme in support of religious tolerance. In the French novella, Jacques l’anabaptiste is illustrated as a generous and kind character who contrasts with the Catholic clergy who is portrayed as wealthy, corruptive, and violent agents of the dominant church.¹⁰⁰

In their fictional accounts of the marginalized group of Brethren, Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling avoid mentioning the events in Münster, despite the fact that the Anabaptist kingdom in Westphalia was generally perceived to be the origin of the reform

¹⁰⁰ Jacques is described as “honnête Anabaptiste” (25) and “charitable & … le bon homme,” (32) who epitomizes the grace of charity by saving the life of a sailor who in return does not rescue him from drowning. As an advocate for freedom of religion, Voltaire sympathizes with the Anabaptist in his satirical narrative. He characterizes Jacques as an ideal follower of Christ’s teachings of practical love. Candide’s journey to the legendary kingdom of El Dorado is reminiscent of Grimmelshausen’s Mummel Lake episode. In the utopian empire, Candide encounters primitive Christianity with lay priesthood and a simple faith, comparable to the principles and customs of Anabaptism (151-52).
movement until the nineteenth century. Both authors focus on contemporary rather than historical aspects of Anabaptist life and piety, and thus do not discuss the origin of believer’s baptism. It appears that Grimmelshausen does not even consider the link between the Hutterites and the violent Anabaptist uprising in Northern Germany. While there is a possibility that the author was simply not aware of the events in sixteenth-century Münster, it is more likely that he disregards the connection between the violent and the peaceful Brethren because he wants to maintain a positive image of the Hungarian Brethren. Although he refers to them as Ketzer in a pro forma manner, he avoids depicting them as heretics that threaten the social order of the state. Jung-Stilling’s description of the faith group also excludes the Münster rebellion. Educated by Arnold’s historical writings, which refute an association of the peaceful Mennonites with the 1530’s Münsterites, the Pietistic author portrays the Brethren as an exclusively non-violent fellowship.

Pacifism and martyrdom, two distinguishing characteristics of Anabaptism, receive little attention in the literary works of Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling. Neither narrative depicts overt acts of Anabaptist non-violence; rather, both refer to the Brethren’s inner attitude of non-resistance. Simplicius, for instance, observes at the Hungarian commune that Hutterites refrain from retaliation by their peaceful notion of “kein Zorn, keine Rachgier”. Eugenius’ description of the Mennonite also focuses on his inner disposition of peacefulness, quietness, and simplicity rather than outward actions demonstrating the group’s non-violent stance.

Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling recognize the Brethren’s non-resistant attitude without fully comprehending its implications. The Anabaptists’ pacifist position demands
a complete endurance of torture and pain. Yet, a sense of nostalgia and the focus on the Brethren’s simple life and idyllic nature seem to replace the picture of war, brutality, and suffering, particularly in Jung-Stilling’s novel. The matter of persecution and martyrdom, essential to the Täufer’s notion of imitating Christ, is not addressed at all in either work. *Simplicissimus* and *Das Heimweh* exclude the Anabaptist theology with respect to the believers’ uncompromising obedience to the demands of the New Testament. Although both fictional texts express an appreciation for the Anabaptists’ way of life according to the Christian faith and ethics, they do not reflect on the Brethren’s emphasis on remaining true to their faith in times of harassment and persecution. These aspects of the minority’s Christocentric belief are omitted since they do not correspond to the authors’ own understanding of theology influenced by the dominant church and the Pietistic movement. The recognition of Anabaptist martyrdom requires a full understanding of the early movement’s experience and a group internal perspective which was not yet taken by historians and fictional authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Simplicissimus* and *Das Heimweh* differ with regard to the time in which these novels were written, their sub-genres, and the Anabaptist branches represented in these works. The choice between Hutterites and Mennonites is obviously determined by the authors’ individual experience with these subgroups. Jung-Stilling came in personal contact with Mennonites in the Palatinate whereas Grimmelshausen had encountered the Hutterian Brethren during the time of the Thirty Years’ War. The representation of these differing peaceful Anabaptist subgroups is also influenced by the time periods in which the authors developed an interest for the religious minority. Grimmelshausen’s reference
to the Hutterites takes place at a time in which the Brethren were severely attacked and stigmatized as heretics, while Jung-Stilling’s productive writing period comes after the time of the harsh persecution and execution of Anabaptists.

As a result of the anti-Anabaptist sentiments prevailing during the seventeenth century, Grimmelshausen focuses on the social and economic aspects rather than the theological doctrine of Hutterianism. By emphasizing the social structure and ethical standards of the group, he is able to avoid conflict with the ecclesiastical and secular regime of the time. The depiction of the harmonious Hutterite commune intensifies the author’s criticism of the moral and economic decline of seventeenth-century society.

Roughly a century later, Jung-Stilling could express his appreciation for Anabaptist life and piety without fearing punishment by the state or church because aspects of the Brethren’s practice had become more acceptable due to its closeness to the Pietistic tradition. His portrayal of contemporary Mennonitism connects the Anabaptist lifestyle to its distinct piety. Supporting the novel’s aim to promote devoutness and a virtuous life, Jung-Stilling recognizes and respects the Mennonite way of living according to the Christian faith and ethics.

His depiction of eighteenth-century Mennonitism in southern Germany reflects some of the changes the descendants of the early movement experienced in regard to their religious practice and their rapport with the dominant society. The old Mennonite’s quiet and withdrawn manner demonstrates the Brethren’s shift toward a quietistic attitude and an inner experience of piety. The Mennonite is neither defined by the New Testament based concept of suffering nor by notions of radical discipleship. Instead, his lifestyle
indicates the Swiss-Mennonite adjustment to Pietism. Although the novel reports of a case of Täufer discrimination in form of an exhumation of a Mennonite woman, the fellowship is mostly tolerated in the eighteenth century. The Anabaptist belief is accepted, yet members of the group remain on the periphery of society, as illustrated by the old man’s remote home. Due to the tolerant attitude toward Mennonitism in eighteenth-century Germany, the author is able to depict the old man as a member of the society of the “homesick” and thus approves the Mennonite religious orientation and piety.

Despite the differences in literary period, programmatic aim, and Anabaptist subgroup selected for portrayal, the two examples of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century narratives employing Anabaptist figures and images stress the exemplary character of the Brethren. The respective Anabaptist fellowships are perceived as harmonious communities by the first person-narrators. The closeness to the Brotherhood provoked by the narrative perspective of the Ich-Form intensifies the positive experience with Täufer. Each novel is concerned with the ideal society, whether forming a utopian community to counteract the ethical decay caused by the Thirty Years’ War or establishing a Christian theocracy in response to the Enlightenment’s critical approach to faith. In this context, the Anabaptists are depicted as a minority that exemplifies the ideal state of a social, moral, and religious community. The admiring accounts of the group’s simple life, moral conduct, and true faith construct an image of the Anabaptist community as the ideal social order.
Chapter 3: Nonconformity–The Ambivalent Community

A. Stern: *Die Wiedertäufer* (1866) in the German Lowlands

1. Nineteenth-Century Historical Research on Münster Anabaptism

In the nineteenth century, the Anabaptist exodus to America resulted in a disbanding of Täufer communities in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Only a small number of Brethren remained in Europe, where compliance policies threatened the traditional order and values of the group. The decline of Anabaptists initiated a change in the public perception of the early faith group. As descendants of the sixteenth-century radical reformers left Europe, the general conception of the minority was mostly influenced by the historians’ treatment of the group’s early development, especially their interest the so-called *Wiedertäuferreich* in Münster. Accounts of the early fellowship were mostly embedded in historiographies pertaining to specific regions. Historians often consulted sixteenth-century church annals and polemic statements by Täufer opponents rather than examining confessional writings by Brethren leaders. As a result, these historical accounts frequently present a biased picture of the Anabaptists that confuses the genuine fellowship with the events in Münster.

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101 According to Nolt, the wave of Anabaptist emigration crested in the 1820s-50s (115). Entire congregations left Europe to avoid pressures of religious and political conformity (157).
Historiography in Germany developed particularly with regard to nation and state during the Napoleonic Wars that evoked feelings of national unity and resistance to the French conquest. This awakening of historical interest also took place in fictional writings of the nineteenth century. The Münster revolt appears as a recurrent theme in numerous historical novels of that time. The Münsterites’ bizarre social practices, aberrant beliefs, and violent rule lend themselves easily to fictional treatment. Literary depictions of the town’s invasion by radical reformers are reminiscent of the situation in Germany during the French occupation, and further allude to nineteenth-century political ideas, social problems, and the loss of traditional values.

Adolf Stern was invested in the Münster rebellion as part of his interest in the history of the German Lowlands. Unlike earlier narratives on the Münster theme that reiterated polemicists’ biased presentations of the movement’s Münsterite roots, Stern’s historical novella, *Die Wiedertäufer* treats the issue of Anabaptism with a new historical understanding of the *Täufer*’s origin and development as a radical fellowship. His recognition as a novelist rests upon his historical narratives that strive for objectivity and simplicity of plot (Sturm iv). As a professor of literature and art history at the Königlich-Sächsischen Polytechnikum in Dresden, Stern was concerned with an objective approach to the historical matter and consulted contemporary historical writings

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102 Lukács has explained that the call for national independence generated an awakening of national history, “with memories of the past, of past greatness, of moments of national dishonour” (25).
103 Stern’s historical novel, *Die letzten Humanisten* (1919), for instance, is set on the Island of Rügen during the religious wars in the late sixteenth century.
104 *Die Wiedertäufer* first appeared in Stern’s collection *Historische Novellen* in 1866. The Anabaptist novella is the author’s only fictional writing that was later published by the Reclam Universalbibliothek. Bertels thus concludes that the novella was the most well-known and representative literary text of Stern’s œuvre.
105 Adolf Stern will serve as the representative example of a small group of German authors in the third quarter of the nineteenth century who developed an interest in the Anabaptist history.
on mainline Anabaptism and the Münster episode that presented a less prejudiced account of the events in northern Germany. At this time, however, unbiased historiography on the Anabaptist movement was still in the nascent stages of development.\footnote{Adolf Stern’s younger brother, the historian Alfred Stern, was also invested in the matter of Anabaptism. As a professor of history at the University of Bern, he conducted research on Hubmeier’s authorship of the Peasants’ Twelve Articles.}

Carl Adolf Cornelius’ historical account on the Münsterites, \textit{Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs} (1860), is assumed to have influenced Stern’s unconventional and unbiased view of Anabaptist history at a time when historical research on the reform movement was just beginning (Horsch Bender, Anabaptist Novelettes 176-77).\footnote{Horsch Bender speculates that Stern may have also used Max Goebel’s historical account of the Westphalian Anabaptists (\textit{Geschichte des christlichen Lebens in der rheinischwestfälischen Kirche}, 1849), as it contains a remarkably objective description of the Täufer (Anabaptist Novelettes 177).} According to Cornelius’ statement to his publisher, he formed the idea of writing about the Münster revolt, which he considered the “einzig wirkliche und vollständige Revolution auf deutschem Boden,” when Germany experienced the beginnings of a revolution in the spring of 1849 (Neff, Cornelius 372). The Bavarian historiographer broke with the traditional, prejudiced, state-church discussion of the Anabaptist issue. He discovered a lack of thoroughness and an excessive focus on secondary accounts in the existing works on the Münster \textit{Täufer}. In his own scholarly work, he pursued Gresbeck’s eyewitness account of the events in Westphalia and examined chief writings of the Münsterites as well as a large number of primary documents of that time. As a result of these critical efforts, his historical presentation of the Münster kingdom deviates from previous writings and exposes the bias of his predecessors’ accounts.
Inspired by Cornelius’ attempt to uncover the motives for the Münster uprising and to fathom the nature of the *Täufertum*, Stern offers a new perspective on the fellowship that addresses the prejudiced perception of society in regard to the Brotherhood and attempts to dissolve these hostile attitudes by a sympathetic portrayal of Anabaptist community life. His narrative work imitates the thematic structure of Cornelius’ historiography. It uncovers the causes for the stereotypical conception of Anabaptism by narrating the story from the perspective of an insider. With his literary depiction of refugees from Münster who have returned to the original Anabaptist faith and practice, Stern is the first of the nineteenth-century authors to make a distinction between the mainline Anabaptists and the Münsterites (283). In his narrative, he recognizes the principal differences between the peaceful Brethren and their violent counterparts in Westphalia. The novella addresses the aftermath of the Münster episode and discusses ways of dealing with guilt and atonement.

### 2. Plot Summary and Narrative Style

The story is set in the year 1575, forty years after the fall of the Anabaptist kingdom in Münster. A troop of armed horsemen led by the Hamburg councilman Nikolaus Lorentzen rides through the marshes of the lower Ems on its mission to track down Anabaptists who have secretly re-established themselves in the moors. Nikolaus pursues this endeavor relentlessly and with a high degree of hostility and anger, whereas his nephew, Friedrich, despises the task and longs for freedom and independence from his uncle. While taking a break in the valley of the Ems, Friedrich encounters a young

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108 I will provide a short plot summary for this novella as well as all subsequent narratives since they are not part of a German fiction canon that is widely read and well-known to the scholarly community.
Anabaptist woman named Hilla. Although he captures her, he later permits her to escape without investigating her community’s hideout in the buckwheat fields. Nikolaus and his men take shelter on the property of an elderly, blind heathland farmer who sends out word to the Anabaptists to warn them about the Täuferjäger. In the meantime, Hilla and a young man from her community are caught and imprisoned, awaiting their execution the following day. When Nikolaus and his men venture out to search for more Täufer at night, Friedrich flees the party, returns to the farm, and releases the two Anabaptist prisoners for Hilla’s sake. He takes her to the Anabaptist settlement in the fens to warn Berndt, the elder of the community, about the approaching danger. The councilman is enraged by his nephew’s initiative and continues his search for the settlement, although the marshes are dangerous territory in which several of his horsemen disappear in the bog. Upon arriving at the old Anabaptist’s dwelling, Nikolaus takes his anger out on Friedrich and Hilla. His outburst, however, is interrupted by Berndt, who informs him that Hilla is the councilman’s granddaughter. In his youth, Nikolaus joined the Anabaptist kingdom in Münster and took part in the excess and violence of the apocalyptically insane reign. When the city was defeated by Catholic troops, he fled Münster, leaving behind his wife and child. He kept his participation in the Anabaptist kingdom a secret and became a Täuferjäger to mollify his guilty conscience. Confronted by his Münster past, the councilman gives Friedrich and Hilla his blessing for a new and better life and faces the loss of his social status as a consequence of his involvement in the Münster affair.
Stern’s novella is characterized by a linear plot and unadorned style. A dynamic storyline, rather than a psychologically-motivated character depiction, constitutes the simple and objective style of the narrative. In that regard, Bartels refers to Stern as the “reinste Epiker unter den Novelisten” who is determined to portray the “Totalität des Lebens in seinen Novellen …, so daß das epische Element rein hervortrete und nicht durch Stimmungs- und psychologische Kleinmalerei überwuchert werde” (19-20). His novella is characterized by constant motion and by “Situationskraft,” the situation developed in the story (Bartels 81). The plot depends entirely on the building of tension and its eventual resolution. This tension is created by the constellation of contrastive figures. Nikolaus and Berndt as well as Friedrich and Hilla embody polarized concepts. The configuration of hunter and hunted reflects the hostile relationship between the established society and the marginalized group. For fear of a recrudescent Münster, the councilman and his nephew search the territory to eradicate any hidden Anabaptist colonies. As townsmen, they represent the urban yet violent element that intrudes on the harmonious rural scenery of the Ems valley. Despite their suggested alliance in the anti-Anabaptist crusade, the relationship between Nikolaus and his nephew is marked by tension that finds expression in Friedrich’s approach to Hilla and their shared hopes for freedom and a future free from familial bonds. The resolution of tension comes about by identifying links between the Anabaptists and their persecutor. Berndt’s act of uncovering the councilman’s involvement in Münster initiates Nikolaus’ process of coming to terms with his past and ushers in a new phase of Anabaptist relations.
3. Münster Anabaptism as a Continuous Threat to the Society

Adolf Stern’s historical novella depicts the impact of the Münster events on Anabaptist generations that immediately followed the violent rule in the Westphalian city. The author fictionalizes the conflict between a small group of *Täufer* who survived the defeat of the perceived “New Jerusalem” and the established society that is afraid of a possible re-emergence of an Anabaptist claim to power. With a “historical empathy,” Stern illustrates society’s fear of an uprising and consequently the harassment and persecution of Anabaptists during the second half of the sixteenth century as well as the Brethren’s harmonious and caring community life in the hideout (Bartels 85). This interplay of antipathy and sympathy toward the marginalized group addresses society’s prejudiced perception of the *Täufer* along with group-internal identification processes that work together to generate the Anabaptist identity presented in the narrative.

At the beginning of the novella, the Anabaptist refugees are introduced by a number of unflattering stereotypes pertaining to the Münster revolt. These anti-Anabaptist sentiments are voiced by Nikolaus and his fellow horsemen and reflect society’s preconceived notions concerning the *Täufer* and its fear of seditious acts that pose a serious threat to the established order in the Lowlands. The fellowship is referred to as “Bande von Wiedertäufern,” “Schwarmgeister,” “Antichristen,” and “Irrlehrer” (Stern 197-200). These terms express criticism of the Anabaptist religious doctrine and their early practice of evangelism. *Schwarmgeister* (zealotry or the spirit of shallow enthusiasm), a term first coined by Luther, was a common label for any sectarian groups in the time of the reformation, and was particularly employed by Anabaptist opponents in
the established church. The term “Irrlehrer” alludes to the sixteenth-century Anabaptists and their distinct mode of evangelism. Employing the derogatory terms Schwarmeister and Irrlehrer, the novella references the constant alert of the dominant society about a possible spread of the radical reformers, particularly after the events in Münster.

This recurring threat to society is further evoked by the story’s gloomy and ominous atmosphere. Bartels has pointed out that, in Stern’s narratives, “Natur und Menschenschicksal werden in unauflosliche Verbindung gebracht; nicht bloß Land und Leute, auch Licht und Luft müssen mitwirken, die Atmosphäre herzustellen” (45). In Die Wiedertäufer, the natural surroundings, particularly the meteorological conditions, announce an approaching danger: “Das weiße Gewölk am Horizont war dichter geworden, die Luft schwüler, ein heißer Windhauch fuhr über die ungemähten Felder dahin und raschelte auf den gemähten zwischen den Garben” (209). As the sky darkens in the horizon and the wind starts blowing, the troop moves toward the marshland. The humid air signals a strange and depressing atmosphere and the sudden warm breeze that causes a rustling of the sheaves calls for a heightened alertness. While the group of comrades approaches the Anabaptist territory, the meteorological perturbation intensifies; “das Wetter aber, das vorhin von fern gedroht, hing jetzt gleichsam über ihren Häuptern” (212). Severe danger looms above their heads and unloads itself in the form of “Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke, die über ihnen stand, und raschfolgender Donner” (212). The

109 Luther referred to any aberrations of the reform movement as Schwärmerei (Schröder 1478). In the confessional disputes of the 1520s, the term was frequently used as a “Kampfvokabel,” labelling any “Abweichung von der wahren Religion, Häresie, unkontrollierbarer Eigensinn einerseits, Gruppenbildung, Sektierertum, Zusammenrottung andererseits” (Schröder 1478).
breaking of the thunderstorm reflects the anxiety and tension within the squadron and anticipates the danger and misery associated with the radical believers.

The author’s portrayal of the councilman reveals the fear of a second bloody Anabaptist revolution. Nikolaus stigmatizes the Brethren as “Missetäter” (198) and compares the Brotherhood to a poisonous excrescence: “Aus den Provinzen schleicht sich das Gift der Wiedertäufer in unsere Städte, und zu jedem Teufelskreis, das auf eurem oder unserm Grund und Boden aufwuchert, ist der Same von dort herüber geweht” (200). His conception of Anabaptism is influenced by an effort to disassociate himself from the Münster group. He perceives the Anabaptist spread as a catastrophe with severe consequences for the established society and therefore calls to eradicate any Täufertum in his administrative district. The metaphor of the excrescence reflects the Anabaptist-phobic position of the sixteenth-century society that called for ostracism and extermination of any Anabaptist fellowships.

The term Wiedertäufer evokes memories of the violent Anabaptist kingdom among the locals in the Ems valley. The blind heathland farmer, for instance, recalls the tragedy in the Westphalian city when he is interrogated about local Anabaptist colonies:

Wiedertäufer? Meint Ihr solche, die vor vierzig Jahren den Stuhl des Bischofs von Münster umgestützt, die Türme vom Dom geworfen und ganz Münster mit Blut und Gräueln gefüllt haben? Meint Ihr die, welche zehn Jungfrauen zu Weibern nahmen und im Elend verderben ließen, was sie in Schmach gestürzt? Meint Ihr die blutigen Schwärmer und Propheten, oder wen sonst? (217)
The old man constructs an image of the Täufer that reflects a Münster-informed perception of the Brotherhood. He associates the Brethren with dramatic and sensational aspects of the Anabaptist kingdom. His mental picture addresses the brutality, polygamy, and ruthless abolishment of the established church that was later reported by town chroniclers and church annalists. As a staunch Catholic, he stresses the iconoclastic acts committed by the violent reign. He also comments on the Anabaptists’ scandalous treatment of women. His description of the unfaithful prophets who left their wives behind in misery and despair is a reference to Nikolaus’ secret Münster past. The blind man has long recognized the councilman’s voice as belonging to one of the Anabaptist leaders who sought refuge at his farm soon after the city’s conquest. When the farmer sends out word to warn the hidden Anabaptist colony about the danger, he reveals his knowledge of Nikolaus’ involvement in the Münster uprising. He states that in view of the community’s forty years of hardship and peaceful living, society has lost its right to persecute them, particularly the councilman and his men “hatten nie ein Recht!” (226).

In his conversation with the group of armed horsemen, the heathland farmer revives biased stories of the Anabaptist kingdom in Münster. Nikolaus, plagued by his guilty conscience, avoids any reminiscence of the atrocities he committed during his time in the Westphalian city and thus quickly dismisses the old man’s depiction of Münsterite Anabaptism as old horror stories about “Matthiesen und Jan von Lyden, von Knipperdolling und Krechtling, [die] gut beim Torffüeuer, um spinnenden Dirnen die Haut frösteln zu machen” (218). In order to distract from his personal involvement in the events that took place forty years ago, he names the most prominent leaders of the
Anabaptist rule who have become well-known due to their apocalyptically insane reign and brutal executions. To further divert attention from the Anabaptist rebellion in which he participated, Nikolaus voices his concerns about a new generation of Täufer: “Nein, deine blutigen Propheten suchen wir nicht. Sie modern längst auf den Richtstätten, aber ihr Wahn hat Söhne und Enkel angesteckt, und wir wollen sie ihr Wesen nicht treiben lassen, bis es zum zweiten Mal kommt, wie in Münster” (218). His words stoke fears about a recurrent Münster and employs horror tales of the bloody theocracy as a means to gain support for his mission to exterminate Anabaptism in his administrative district.

The image of the Anabaptists as conveyed at the beginning of the novella is tainted by the Münster revolt, the only violent incident in the history of the otherwise peaceful Brethren. The dramatic events in the Westphalian city are utilized by church and state authorities as a central point of criticism. Serving as representations of the state and established church, the councilman and the farmer present a depiction of the reformist group that reflects the common misconception of Münster being the sole origin of the Anabaptist movement. A closer observation reveals, however, that both characters employ the negative imaging of Münsterites to justify personal wrongdoings in the past. Nikolaus, for instance, explains the bitterness with which he pursues the task of hunting Anabaptists down by referring to the Münsterites’ seditious acts. Applying much persistence and ruthlessness in his task as a persecutor, he attempts to create a self-image that starkly contrasts that of the Täufer and thus disguises his former Münsterite identity. The blind farmer, on the other hand, reminds of the brutality and moral deterioration in Münster to excuse his hostile attitude and the heartless conduct with which he has
formerly turned the fleeing Täufer away at his door. His attitude toward the persecuted fellowship has, however, changed over the past forty years. He regrets his hateful conduct toward the religious refugees as he realizes that the group abandoned its radical tenets and has led a humble and peaceful life well into the third generation. His perspective shifts from a critical to a sympathetic view. As an outsider, he now acknowledges the colony’s years of atonement and makes an effort to warn them against the approaching danger:

Du mußt den Leuten dort sagen, daß Reiter im Land streifen, daß ihre Missetat noch nicht vergessen ist unter den Menschen, und daß sie Zuflucht suchen mögen … Sie haben mit Kindern und Kindeskindern seit vierzig Jahren fern von den Menschen im Moor gelebt, ich glaube, die Menschen haben ihr Recht an sie verloren. (226)

Although the general public has not yet forgotten the sins and crimes of the Münster revolt, the heathland farmer begins to differentiate between the violent actions committed by Täufer in the past and the contemporary pacifist conduct of his current Anabaptist neighbors. At the end, he remorsefully adds, “sagt denen draußen im Moor, daß mich der Fluch reue, mit dem ich einst von meiner Schwelle getrieben” (275). Over the course of the years, he has started to perceive them as victims and feels shame and sorrow for the cold-heartedness with which he first approached the fleeing group.

Even the councilman and some of his companions address the Anabaptist suffering during harsh persecutions in the sixteenth century. In order to divert the procession of armed horsemen from the familiar territory of his Täufer past, Nikolaus
argues: “Wißt Ihr nicht, welches Gericht vor vierzig Jahren die Taufgesinnten in Münster getroffen hat? Glaubt Ihr im Ernst, daß dort noch ein Wiedertäufer haust? … wo sie vor Menschengedenken mit Feuer und Schwert ausgerottet sind!” (198). One of the horsemen recalls witnessing the brutal execution of Täufer: “Als ein Bube von acht Jahren sah ich zehn Wiedertäufer an einem Tage radbrechen, und der heilige Lambert weiß, wie viel ihrer sonst gerichtet wurden” (198). Both Nikolaus and his comrade give a vivid description of the torture and death of Anabaptists as they refer to the gruesome execution methods, such as decapitation by sword, killing on the breaking wheel, and burning at the stake. Although the councilman acknowledges the long history of Täufer persecution, and his fellow horseman describes the traumatizing experience of viewing the execution of Brethren at the age of eight, their depictions of Anabaptist oppression do not indicate any sympathetic feelings toward the religious minority. Instead, they portray the agonizing capital punishment of Täufer to point out the severity of Münsterites’ crimes that warranted such harsh persecutions, and thus justify the relentlessness with which they pursue their task of hunting Anabaptists.

The councilman’s nephew, Friedrich, is the only character who expresses reservations about the expedition and perceives the Anabaptists as victims of harassment and persecution. Feeling as if he were his uncle’s prisoner, he yearns to break free from familial ties and societal conventions. He confesses to a fellow horseman: “mich verlangt nicht nach daheim, mich ekelt das ganze Wesen, in dem ich bin wie ein Gefangener” (210). This sense of imprisonment enables him to feel empathy with the persecuted group. He desires to resign from Nikolaus’ squadron:
Friedrich calls his uncle’s mission to rid the area of Anabaptist influence a cruel and distasteful task. He compares the councilman’s initiative “die letzten Ausläufer der Taufgesinnten auszurotten” with the hunting of wild and ferocious animals, and rejects any involvement in the bloody quest (Hermsen 147). His unwillingness to participate in this endeavour, motivated by personal resentment against his uncle’s demand of strict obedience and his overall concern about the loss of humanity, foreshadows the emergence of a new tolerance. His rejection of the Anabaptist hunt relates to the themes of remorse, atonement, and forgiveness central to the story development.

At first, however, Friedrich’s criticism of the councilman’s mission to ferret out Täufer in hidden settlements does not imply a sympathetic stance toward Anabaptism. Questioned by a companion as to whether or not he sides with the religious refugees, he responds: “Zu den Täufern? Rasest du, Walter, oder was fällt dir bei? Wollte Gott, daß nie einer von ihnen Hamburg heimlich betreten hätte! Ich weiß nichts von ihrem Irrglauben”(211). As member of the generation succeeding the Münster revolt, Friedrich’s knowledge about the minority is solely based on biased accounts passed on by contemporaries of the Westphalian radicals. It is therefore understandable that he thinks negatively of the group and wishes they had never set foot in Hamburg.
Indoctrinated by his uncle’s prejudiced comments and hostile attitude toward the Täufer, the young man associates Anabaptism with the madness and brutality that took place in Münster.

The influence of the councilman’s anti-Anabaptist stance, which mirrors society’s overall negative perception of the Brethren, becomes particularly noticeable in Friedrich’s encounter with Hilla. Despite his affection for the young woman, he has to shudder when being reminded of her Anabaptist heritage: “Der Jungherr stand bestürzt—beim Worte ‘der Vater’ erfaßte ihn der Gedanke, daß die Fremde der verhaßten Schwärmersekte angehören möge. Sein Antlitz verfinsterte sich” (235). Society’s stereotypical conception of Anabaptism stigmatizing Brethren as outcasts is deeply ingrained in Friedrich’s mind. Even after committing to a life with Hilla, he is shocked about her Münster lineage:

—eine drohende Wolke zog über seine Stirn—zu hart und herb ward er in dieser Minute daran gemahnt, aus welcher Mitte Hilla entstammt sei. So jäh überkam ihn der alte Ingrimm, der Abscheu, daß er die Wiedertäuferin beinahe von sich gestoßen hätte, daß ihm einen Augenblick lang zumute war, als müsse er ohne sie und vor ihr fliehen. (274)

He struggles to overcome the rage and prejudice that society has fuelled in the preceding decades.

4. Representation of Post-Münster Anabaptism

In the novella, the dominant society has constructed an image of Anabaptists that is characterized by the fear of a second bloody revolution and thus illustrates the
Brotherhood as a group of violent and brute creatures that infest the cities with Münsterite heresy and precipitate the loss of traditional values. In binary opposition to society’s portrayal of the *Täufer*, the narrative introduces the Anabaptist character Hilla, who is depicted as a peaceful, humble, and quiet woman who is afflicted by her heritage and the sin of her violent forefathers. Her appearance recalls a hunted animal living in seclusion and fearing contact with people from the city due to the guilt caused by family association and history.

During Friedrich’s first encounter with the Anabaptist woman, he notices her timid nature: “Sie ließ einen kurzen Aufschrei hören, sprang von der Stelle, auf der sie ruhte, hinweg und wandte sich zur Flucht” (204). She is reminiscent of a frightened animal that is ambushed by an intruder and immediately takes flight. Stern repeatedly compares the young woman with a startled creature that hides in the forest. During the second meeting with Hilla, Friedrich observes that her manner has “etwas von der eines flüchtigen Tieres” (238). She is well aware of her unfortunate situation as a member of a persecuted minority and admires Friedrich’s freedom of movement: “Du kannst frei auf allen Wegen gehen und lernst nicht den Tieren in der Heide ab, wie du dich verbergen magst” (237). As an Anabaptist in hideout, she has adopted the animal-like behavior of moving cautiously in the moors and fleeing from the sight of men.

Her social and spatial separation from the dominant society contributes to her image as an outsider. The young Anabaptist woman is clearly depicted as the “other” in Stern’s novella. Her physical appearance and conduct differ significantly from those of the other characters. Friedrich refers to her as “die Fremde” (233) and is both fascinated
and disturbed by her otherness. As the only female figure in the narrative, she functions as a natural antipode to the male-dominated, violent society. Her feminine and peaceful features form a contrast to the harsh and intrusive conduct of the squadron. “Das angstvolle scheue Gesicht” and her fragile appearance trigger Friedrich’s compassion to protect her from potential harm (206).

Simultaneously, she is depicted as a mysterious and exotic character with an unfamiliar look and demeanor. Her physical appearance is described as: “eine Fülle blauschwarzen Haares …von großer Schönheit …[mit] dunkeln Augen” (204), contrasting with the typical look associated with the population in northern Germany, exemplified by Friedrich with his blonde hair and fair complexion. When he first encounters Hilla, her eyes “schlossen sich halb, als sie nach ihm hinsah” (204). Her partially concealed gaze lends an air of foreignness and mystery. During the second meeting by the linden tree, the young man discovers: “Ihre Sprache, ihr Ton klangen anders, als die des Landvolks umher, fremdartig, wie ihre Erscheinung” (234). The distinctness of her appearance and voice further supports the image of the “other”. Hilla differs from the local population and is thus perceived as strange and mysterious.

The reason for the group’s seclusion from the dominant society is twofold. On the one hand, the former Münsterite commune chooses exile as a way of atonement. Marked by inherent and inherited guilt, the group seeks repentance through harsh living conditions. On the other hand, the commune also maintains a necessary self-exclusion from the native community as a means of survival. It has established a settlement in the remote area of the marshland, outside the radar of Anabaptist hunters. Hilla illustrates
the difficulties and frustrations that are caused by the social as well as spatial ostracism of Täufer. She feels confined in the isolation of the pitiful huts hidden among the buckwheat fields and fir trees, yearning for a normal life and the liberty to move around freely. Her frequent walks to the linden tree marking the borderline between wilderness and civilization express the spatial distance between the Brotherhood and the outside world, and perhaps her desire to pass through it. Standing on the periphery of society, her gaze focuses on “jene Welt, aus der sie gebannt war” (238). Fellow Anabaptists point to the territorial boundary when reminding her, “Wir gehen nicht bis in die Welt, Hilla, wir bleiben im Moor!” (249). The marshland separates the religious minority from the established society and serves as a safe living space. Yet, Hilla feels like an “Ausgestoßene, Gehetzte, Gebannte,” who bears the burden of inherited guilt (245). She realizes that the outside world will not abandon its prejudiced perception of the Anabaptists. Rather, it will continue to ostracize her people by calling them “Täufer … und alles Volk umher wird [sie] scheuen” (245).

The young woman embodies a new direction within the Anabaptist movement that is significantly shaped by the experience of repentance. Forty years after the escape from Münster, the second generation of Täufer in Stern’s novella aspires to the peaceful Anabaptist position. Hilla exemplifies a violence-rejecting attitude. Upon seeing Friedrich equipped with armament, she asserts: “Wer Gewalt hat, braucht Gewalt; du trägst ein Schwert!” (234). According to the group’s principle of non-resistance, Hilla willingly faces execution after admitting to her Täufer belief. “Sie beugte sich auf das Moos hernieder, ihren Nacken gleichsam darbietend,” and asks her presumed persecutor
to kill her right on the spot (235). She does not hesitate to sacrifice her life for her faith. When Friedrich swears that he would not harm her, however, she responds: “Schwöre nicht!” (235). In accordance with early Anabaptist rejection of taking oath, stated for instance in the Schleitheim Articles, she dismisses his pledge by simply saying “aber ich will dir glauben” (235).

Hilla’s personification of genuine Anabaptist tenets focuses on the ethical rather than the theological aspects of faith. The Brotherhood’s distinct position toward adult baptism and the Lord’s Supper is not depicted in the narrative. In his attempt to provide a sympathetic Anabaptist representation contrasting the Münster-informed image of Brethren fabricated by the outside world, Stern excludes theological principles of the Täufer. A portrayal of these doctrinal aspects would only encourage the group’s marginalization as a religious sect and remind readers of theological disputes in the sixteenth century.

5. Repentance and Atonement after Münster

The novella’s Anabaptist congregation is led by an elder, Berndt Rothmann. With the character of Rothmann, Stern fictionalizes an important personage of the Münster uprising. According to Hermsen, Stern was influenced by Karl August von Hase’s historical writing, Neue Propheten (1851), in which the church historian supports

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110 The historical (Bernhard or Berndt) Rothmann was appointed pastor of the Church of St. Lambert. In 1531, he was censured by the Catholic bishop for aligning with the Lutheran Church. He represented the trade guild in protests against exploitation by the Bishop’s party. When he joined forces with the Wassenberg preachers in 1533, he adopted a more separatist conception of church structure and eventually converted to Matthijs’ radical program for which he worked as a propagandist. Horsch Bender argues that Stern has wrongly depicted Rothmann’s initiative for a peaceful life as a return to original Anabaptist tenets because the former pastor had not been a member of the Brotherhood prior to the days of the Münster kingdom and therefore was not familiar with the genuine Anabaptist doctrine and conduct (Anabaptist Novelettes 177).
the legend of Rothmann’s escape from Münster after the fall of the city. As a “historischer Nachempfnder,” Stern sketches Rothmann’s life after his flight from the “New Jerusalem”. Although Berndt Rothmann is a historical figure, his imagined later life and fictional incarnation are fabricated and thus subject to projection. In order to illustrate Berndt’s conversion from Münsterite fanaticism to the original Anabaptist faith, the narrator portrays him as a peaceful and truly caring elder of the commune in the marsh.

Rothmann’s appearance is marked by the hardship and anxiety of a life that is determined by constant fear of persecution. The aged man, “dessen Anlitz Furche an Furche zeigte,” is deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of his community (240). As a visual reminder of his sins and crime committed during the Anabaptist kingdom in Westphalia “hinge ein wunderlicher Schmuck: eine schwergoldene Kette, daran eine rohgeprägte Münze, auf der ein scharfes Auge die Jahreszahl 1534 erkennen konnte” (240-241). The heavy weight of the Kette (necklace or chain) is reminiscent of the heavy burden of Berndt’s Münsterite past. He and his people are chained to a life of privation and sorrow. As the only member of the commune who knows the meaning of liberty, he understands Hilla’s longing for freedom. He is saddened by the desperate situation and “der Ausdruck seines Gesichts war noch schmerzlicher, als der des ihren [Hillas]” (242). His facial expression reflects the pain he feels for the young generation that inherited the shame and guilt of past ancestral deeds.

111 Hase asserts: “Ein Gerücht hat sich erhalten, er (Rothmann) sei entkommen und habe noch lange Jahre still auf einem Edelhofe in Friesland gelebt.Urkundlich ist, daß auf Antrag des Staatsrats zu Münster 1537 in einigen Handelsstädten auf ihn gefahndet wurde” (cited in Hermsen 146).

112 Bartels, 85. Stern’s biographer also emphasizes the author’s “historische Auffassungs-und Darstellungskraft,” which he employs in his historical novellas (21).
After having taken part in the brutal Münsterite reign, Rothmann condemns any form of violence and becomes an advocate of pacifism. Upon the imminent danger of the approaching troop of *Täuferjäger* from Hamburg, he asks his community to let go of any murderous thoughts: “Lastet nicht Mord auf eure Seelen, haltet euch rein von den Sünden der Väter!” (244). He calls for peace and reminds his fellow Brethren of their ancestors’ sins. In order to spare the lives of his community members, he wants to sacrifice himself and suggests:

*Sag’ ihm [Nikolaus], die Zangen, mit denen Johann von Leyden und Knipperdolling zerrissen wurden, könnten noch einmal glühend gemacht werden für den, … dessen Wort Tausend und Abertausend ins Elend gestürzt hat, für Bernhard Rothmann! Er [Nikolaus] würde … euch kein Haar krümmen. (244)*

His plan to avert a violent confrontation between his commune and the prosecutor by this act of self-crucifixion calls to mind accounts of Brethren’s martyrdom collected in the Anabaptist literature of lamentation. Simultaneously, it reflects his feelings of guilt for the atrocities committed in Münster.

Berndt’s guilty conscience led him and his community to a life of privation and fear. During the forty years in isolation from the world, a “neues Geschlecht … — Männer und Frauen, deren Sinn und Wandel so rein und friedlich ist” has developed among the Anabaptist community (290-291). The elder asserts: “Wie die Jahre verrannen und der Wahn von uns wich, der uns in Münster erfüllt, wie ich erkannte, was ich gefrevelt und welche Blutschuld auf meiner Seele lastet, da nahm ich unser Leben im Moor, die Öde und Entbehrung willig dahin” (290). Confessing his iniquity and
initiating a change toward a peaceful living, Berndt feels that he has fulfilled his duty in life and fully atoned for his part in the Münster violence. At the end of the narrative, he faces Nikolaus, a fellow Münsterite, who spent his past forty years in denial and kept his involvement in the Münster affair a secret. He never confronted his guilt and thus became a bitter persecutor filled with hatred and fear. Here, the author presents the polarized concept of hatred and brotherly love. The two characters illustrate different approaches to coming to terms with the Münsterite past and the consequences thereof. “Der eine muß ruhelos weiterirren, der andere hat sich durch harte Not zu der ursprünglichen Lehre seiner Glaubensgenossen zurückgefunden” (Hermsen 149).

The commune’s progress toward original Anabaptist values determines the revised image of the Täufer. “Die tollen Schwarmgeister von Münster sind längst ruhige und demütige Menschen geworden” (Hermsen 146). Berndt and his followers have parted from Münsterite fanaticism and devoted their lives to a peaceful solitude and isolation from worldly affairs. After the religious minority is first introduced by a number of unfavorable stereotypes referring to its violent aberrations in Münster, it later emerges as a caring and amiable group.

The depiction of the Täufer as a peaceful yet endangered minority undermines anti-Anabaptist presuppositions at the beginning of the narrative. The dual image of the Brotherhood drawn in the novella delineates differing perceptions of the faith community. This change from antipathy to sympathy marks tendencies in historical research as well as common conceptions about Anabaptism. Stern investigates the image of the Täufer fabricated by the dominant society and the established church in reaction to
the events in Münster. He illustrates an Anabaptist-phobic picture based on biased historiographies and polemical writings. Juxtaposed to that, he gives a sympathetic portrayal of the Anabaptist refugees drawn from more recent research on the history of the faith group. His historical novella could thus be understood as an attempt to humanize a persecuted and misunderstood group. And in that regard, it becomes a tale about prejudice against “otherness” and perceived guilt that could also be seen as a literary reaction to the steadily growing xenophobia and anti-Semitism in late nineteenth-century Germany.

B. Keller: *Ursula* (1877) and Early Swiss Anabaptism

1. Plot Summary

Gottfried Keller explores the history of the Swiss Reformation and its conflict with a sect of radical religious dissenters in his historical novella *Ursula*. The narrative first appeared in the *Züricher Novellen* (1877), at a time when Keller had retired from his position as the Cantonal Secretary of Zürich. Unlike the stories in *The People of Seldwyla*, in which the author created a fictive Swiss town, in the *Züricher Novellen* he restricts his writings to an existing geographical setting, true historical figures, and events drawn from the national heritage. The five stories of the Zürich collection depict significant historical episodes from the medieval time until Switzerland’s independence.

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113 According to Lindsay, this office rewarded the heavy demands on the *Staatsschreiber* with a very good income and provided a financial security for Keller, which may have encouraged him to write a collection of novellas addressing the historical heroes and events of his hometown as an acknowledgment of his gratitude (67).
efforts in the nineteenth century. *Ursula* details religious and social conditions in the period of the Swiss Reformation led by Ulrich Zwingli.

The story is set in early sixteenth-century Zürich. Upon Hansli Gyr’s return from the Italian Wars in 1523, where he had fought as a mercenary soldier, he is informed by a fellow countryman about the social and religious changes in the city that had been brought about by Zwingli’s church reforms. The soldier also discovers that his home community in the township of Grüningen has been infiltrated by the very bizarre doctrines and strange convictions of the Anabaptists. Even Ursula, his childhood love, and her family have converted to the *Täufer* sect and now exhibit a very peculiar conduct. The young woman is determined to become his wife without the blessing of the institutional church. Taking her home, he finds her father, Enoch Schnurrenberger, and his grotesque-looking Anabaptist friends involved in an irrational conversation about chiliastic beliefs, a pantheistic God, and their dissatisfaction with Zürich authorities and the religious leadership of Zwingli. After an exchange with Zwingli at a Zürich tavern, Hansli becomes an enthusiastic proponent of the reformer and his progressive ideas. The City Council makes all efforts to bring the Anabaptist movement under control and eventually arrests members of the group, including Ursula and her parents. Hoping to win her back from her father’s religious fanaticism, Hansli liberates her and the other inmates from the prison tower, only to find her in a deranged state as she mistakes him for the archangel Gabriel. Giving up on her love, he joins the Reformed troops in the Second Kappel War where Zwingli dies on the battlefield as he defends the Reformed Swiss Alliance. Bewildered by the insane behaviour of the Anabaptist community,
Ursula regains her senses and is able to reunite with Hansli after she saves his life on the battlefield.

The romance of the two protagonists is set in a rich historical context. The story gives a vivid picture of Zwingli’s reformation efforts and the armed conflict between Protestant and Catholic parties in early sixteenth-century Switzerland. Embedded in the religious conflicts of that time, the rise of Anabaptism is depicted in an exceedingly one-sided and unfavorable way. As the story sides with Zwingli as Switzerland’s national hero, the Täufer community takes on the role of the radical opposition that, with its new and seemingly fanatical teachings, creates a threat to the implementation of Zwingli’s reforms and the establishment of a new state church. The Brethren are presented as the unsound element in the development of a national spirit and culture. Fostering irrationality and moral decay, they are depicted as obstacles to the formation of a unified Swiss identity.

2. Keller and the Swiss Kulturkampf

Keller’s interest in the history of early modern Switzerland is two-fold. In the collection of Zürich novellas, he traces several distinct and genuine characters of the town’s history. With Ursula, he set a literary monument for Zwingli’s outstanding statesmanship during the time of the Reformation. The author also utilized the historical events of the sixteenth century to mask social and religious issues during the time of the Kulturkampf in Switzerland. During the 1840s, Keller participated in Zürich’s liberal movement that supported the modern idea of a Rechtsstaat and called for a reform of the federal constitution. The chief inspiration of this liberal fraction was “the idea of the
Swiss nation” (Bonjour, Offler, and Potter 257). Using the U.S. Constitution as a model, the Liberals put forward certain demands, such as the freedom of worship, of the press, and of association that ought to be adopted by all cantons. In the midst of their successful campaign, they encountered the opposition of the extreme form of Catholicism, namely the militant order of the Jesuits (Bonjour, Offler, and Potter 260). During the *Kulturkampf*, the Swiss Liberals struggled to enforce the supremacy of the state over the church. According to Bonjour, Offler, and Potter, Pope Pius IX’s declaration of the papal infallibility was perceived as an “attack on the spirit of the times … [and] an offence to the Radical trust in modern civilization” (296).

An example of the dispute between state and church over the issue of dogma versus science was given by the Strauß affair, which took place in Zürich in the third decade of the nineteenth century. The German liberal theologian David Friedrich Strauß, a pioneer in the historical investigation of Jesus, was forced out of his position as chair of theology at the University of Zürich even before he began his duties because his appointment caused a storm of controversy. According to Ermatinger, Keller, a radically liberal thinker in terms of religion, wrote the novella *Ursula* in reaction to Strauß’ dismissal from office (136). With his historical narrative, he protested against the religious narrow-mindedness that he considered a danger to modern civilization.

The novella’s description of the development of a national consciousness in early modern times parallels the rise of an official national identity in the nineteenth century. As Benedict Anderson has asserted, profound changes in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, most notably the invention of the printing press and the
distribution of publications in the vernacular, initiated a process by which Europe replaced the imagined sacred community with a national one (12-41). In the nineteenth century, Switzerland implemented the national concept by consolidating all cantons to an actual Swiss nation united by a federal constitution. Keller transplants the contemporary situation of the Swiss’ national efforts, disturbed by extreme Catholic groups, to the sixteenth century where he identifies a similar interference with the national idea by radical religious fellowships. In that regard, his novella links the present with the past by a subjective selection of historical material and a fictionalization of the religious movement that is informed by contemporary notions. Lukács has explained this method of selecting and interpreting historical facts by referring to the philosophy of historical solipsism in which history is only perceived through the lens of the present subject; that is, “history is a chaos, in itself is of no concern … but to which everyone may attribute a ‘meaning’ which suits him, according to his needs” (180). Lukács defines the approach to historical narratives in bourgeois realism as a subjective management of “dead facts.” These “dead facts” provide a disguise for the treatment of contemporary issues.

3. Keller’s Historical and Philosophical Sources

Gottfried Keller’s historical source for the novella Ursula is, however, by no means purely objective, dry information about historical events and figures of early modern Zürich. According to Ermatinger, the author drew most of his information about early Swiss Anabaptism from Melchior Schuler’s historical account Thaten und Sitten

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114 “Dead facts and, in connection with them, subjective arbitrariness in their treatment” (236).
Schuler’s biased and judgemental attitude toward the Täufer, acquired through Kessler’s Sabbata, is already exhibited in the first page of his account. There, he mistakes the Swiss Anabaptist movement for Müntzerism and calls Grebel and Manz “ruhm-und habsüchtig” (66). He depicts the Brethren as “Verführer,” who aspire to a “völlige Umkehr aller kirchlichen und bürgerlichen Ordnung” (64). A similar prejudiced description of the Anabaptist sect is given by Johann Hottinger, a Swiss historian who portrays the Anabaptists as historical antagonists of Zwingli. Meumann has pointed out parallels between Hottinger’s historical work and Keller’s novella (14). In Hottinger’s historical biography of the Swiss Reformer, Huldreich Zwingli und seine Zeit (1842), he draws information about the faith group mostly from Schuler’s account and thus imitates the judgemental and disdainful attitude toward the Brotherhood. Much like Schuler, he traces the origins of the movement to Müntzer and suggests a certain danger for the secular and ecclesiastical order posed by the “Schwärmers Wahn” (285).

When reading Schuler’s and Hottinger’s descriptions of the Täufer, it becomes quite understandable that Keller chose the rise of Anabaptism as the historical setting upon which he projected the religious discourse with which he was concerned at that time. As mentioned by Ermatinger, the Swiss writer had already tinkered with the idea

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115 Keller has employed Schuler’s historiography of Switzerland as a source in a number of novellas, e.g. in Dietegen (published in Leute von Seldwyla, 1874) he bases some of the characters on court records mentioned in the first and third volume. Schuler’s description of the Swiss Anabaptists is mostly found in the chapters “Die Wiedertäufer in Zürich”, “St. Gallen,” and “Appenzell” (Volume 2).
116 Johann Kessler’s Reformation diary, Sabbata, in which the theologian gives a one-sided survey of the Anabaptist events in Zürich, serves as the basis for Schuler’s description of the religious minority.
117 Similar to early modern polemical writings and biased nineteenth-century historical accounts, Hottinger employs “Schwärmer” as a derogatory term labeling members of the Anabaptist movement as fanatics, thereby alluding to a deviant nature (La Vopa 88).
of employing the Anabaptist theme and had written “Wiedertäufer” and “Kindernarren” in his personal notes during his time in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century (559). There he had come in contact with Feuerbach’s philosophy of religion, which had completely remolded his religious thinking. Feuerbach’s essential ideas of Christianity uncover God as a manifestation of man’s inner self, meaning that humans project the ideal state of being with high moral insights and correct judgment onto a concept outside of themselves and then strive to reconnect to this conceptual creation (12-32). In light of Keller’s adaptation of Feuerbach’s interpretation of the religious phenomena, the portrayal of the Täufer in the novella as fanatic, irrational, and immoral beings can be understood as an expression of a more general concern with religious narrowness and extremism.

Due to the novella’s focus on faith, it has mostly been mentioned in connection with Keller’s stance on religion. In Adolf Muschg’s biography of Keller, Ursula is mentioned exclusively in the context of Keller’s literary treatment of religion and enlightened humanism.119 The novella has not received much attention outside the religious discourse. Laufhütte argues that the narrative’s fragmentary character and its unsuccessful integration of “Geschichte und Dichtung” have evoked a negative response and even a lack of interest from readers (11-13). Beutelschmidt and Widmer even claim

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118 Feuerbach claims that “God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man … religion is designated as the self-consciousness of man” (32).

that *Ursula* is Keller’s least known literary work (15). With respect to the Anabaptist discourse, however, Horsch Bender has referred to the novella as one the most influential sources of *Täufer* depiction that has deeply etched nineteenth-century popular conceptions of the early modern faith group (Keller 136).

4. Religious Fanaticism and Moral Transgression of Early Swiss Anabaptism

While Stern’s novella sketches a sympathetic picture of the post-Münster Anabaptists, Keller’s short narrative denigrates the Swiss Brethren as strange and uncouth. Stern employs negative stereotypes about the *Täufertum* to stress the group’s development from violent Münsterites to peaceful Anabaptists, whereas Keller draws a stereotypical image of the Brethren to illustrate the danger of zealotry. In his novella, Anabaptism is depicted as an epidemic that slowly infiltrates the native territory of the protagonist. The dispersion of the radical belief is not only feared by the people of Zürich but has, in fact, already started in some parts of the Swiss state. The opening sentences metaphorically articulate the religious situation in Switzerland during the Reformation and anticipate the conflict that will unfold in the narrative.

120 Despite being less well-known than other Keller narratives, *Ursula* was made into a TV drama by the East German DEFA in cooperation with the Swiss television broadcasting in 1978. According to Beutelschmidt and Widmer, the director Egon Günther created a film that presents a critical view on contemporary issues disguised by the sixteenth-century setting. In his adaption of the novella, he focuses on “Ausgeliefertsein unterpreviligierter Menschen, von ihrer Verwirrung angesichts ideologisch und machtvolle Vorherrschaft kämpfender Gruppen, von der Angst vor Krieg und der Bedeutung der Menschenrechte—einschließlich Religionsfreiheit” (12). Therefore, the representation of the *Täufer* in the film differs from the novella in regard to the group’s attempt “sich gesellschaftlichen Machtverhältnissen zu entziehen und eigene soziale Regeln festzulegen” (Beutelschmidt and Widmer 28). The TV production of Ursula was censored after the premiere due to its implied criticism of the contemporary political system and the depiction of promiscuity with which the filmmaker wanted to express the idea of “menschliche Freiheit” (Beutelschmidt and Widmer 23).
Wenn die Religionen sich wenden, so ist es, wie wenn die Berge sich auftun; zwischen den großen Zauberschlangen, Golddrachen und Krystallgeistern des menschlichen Gemütes, die ans Licht steigen, fahren alle häßlichen Tazzelwürmer und das Heer der Ratten und Mäuse hervor. (303)

The disposition of the antithetical elements of the “Ober-und Unterwelt” presents the foundation of the collision that will occur between the differing concepts of theology emerging during the reform-minded sixteenth century (Laufhütte 20). The two religious directions are categorized by mythological and natural metaphors that depict Zwingli and his kind as shiny, legendary creatures while the radical believers are pictured as odious and undesirable insects inhabiting the dark corners of society. The light-dark contrast is continuously employed in the narrative and further illustrates the division between the two groups. On a macroscopic level, Keller addresses the conflict that lies between these two opposed factions. The opening scene continues:

So war es zur ersten Reformationszeit auch in den nordöstlichen Teilen der Schweiz und sonderlich in der Gegend des Züricher Oberlandes, als ein dort angesessener Mann, der Hansli Gyr genannt, aus dem Krieg heimkehrte. (303)

Here, the author sets the geographic and historical framework for his narrative and transitions to a microscopic level as he introduces Hansli, the protagonist of the story. Throughout the novella, the narrator repeatedly switches between the microscopic level, the love story of Hans and Ursula, and the macroscopic level, the social conditions and events during the Swiss Reformation period.
Hansli is characterized as a typical Swiss figure, as his name (the diminutive of the common name “Hans”) conveys “vertrauliche Beliebtheit und der Ruf der Zuverlässigkeit” (304). His physical appearance—he is described as a tall, strong, and athletic soldier—reflects strength, power, and rationality. According to Andermatt, Hans’ last name, Gyr, is middle-high/Swiss German for Geier, a bird of prey, which further contributes to the image of a strong and determined young man (377). The term “Geier,” vulture, also alludes to a dark side in Hansli’s character. Overcoming a lapse of virtue, as indicated in the scene with the beautiful Italian (Catholic) girl while serving in Zürich’s military troop near Lake Como, he gradually grows into a figure of heroic proportions.

In addition to the bird of prey reference, Hansli’s last name also provokes a comparison with another winged figure, that of the archangel Gabriel, with whom Ursula confuses Hansli. Andermatt detects in the name and character of the protagonist a “schlimm-heilig” ambivalence, which, however, implies a sense of ordinariness and balance (377). Hansli exemplifies the common Swiss person; he is a “Versinnlichung des Volksgeistes,” who, with his alliance to Zwingli, also personifies the Reformation and the Swiss national spirit (Keller 349).

In contrast to Hansli’s strong character and firm belief in the established church, the Anabaptists are first introduced to the story by the rather biased account of a fellow countryman, who warns the returning soldier of the “wiedertäuferischen Treiben” (307). “Geh nur heim auf deinen Berg, der wimmelt, wie ein Hund voll Flöh’, von Schwärmern” (307). The metaphor of the flea-infested dog reiterates the picture of Anabaptism as society’s vermin drawn in the introduction of the novella. In binary opposition to Hansli’s
qualities as an honest, strong, and faithful citizen, the old man speaks of the Täufer as “Schwärmer und Propheten, die in den Wäldern predigen, tanzen und Unzucht treiben, und die Weiber sind toller, denn die Männer!” (307). Keller copies the derogatory term Schwärmer from anti-Anabaptist writings by Reformed Church historians. He employs the term to insinuate a certain degree of fanaticism inherent in the Swiss Brotherhood. The account of the Zürich Anabaptists is restricted to a few stereotypical features that strongly remind one of early modern descriptions of witches’ sabbath. This reference may be used to justify the persecution of Anabaptists later in the story. It also encourages a social marginalization of the Täufer as their seemingly bizarre practices and their flight to the forest exclude them from society. According to Oyer, the Anabaptist practice of meeting secretly, sometimes at night, was viewed with much criticism by the dominant society and generated the anti-Anabaptist canard about secrecy being primarily for the purpose of sexual license (98). Keller utilizes this rumor about the Anabaptists’ sexual transgressions during nocturnal gatherings in secluded places to create an image of the Täufer that implies irrationality and moral decline. The old man’s remark about sexual indecency, particularly of females, alarms Hansli and makes him concerned about an intrusion of the heretic belief into his home community. Tension builds up as the young man hastily moves closer to Grüningen and becomes fully aware of the looming threat. The religious sect is thus portrayed as a dangerous intruder to the familiar sphere.
Once he arrives in Grüningen, much to his consternation he finds evidence suggesting a spread of Anabaptist doctrine into his community. Ursula’s choice of clothing and her refusal of a religious marriage ceremony indicate to him that the sect has even reached his loved ones. In her father’s house, Hansli faces the strange figures of the local Anabaptist congregation. This encounter marks the confrontation between the dominant Swiss identity and that of the other, marginalized group. His strength and sanity are contrasted with the weakness and irrational conduct of the self-proclaimed prophets. The image of Anabaptism Keller constructs in his novella consists of a number of unfavorable stereotypes gleaned from Schuler and further developed in his fictional work. In the novella, Anabaptism is represented by a group of strange specimens of humanity. Their odd physiognomic attributes and ludicrous mannerisms put the Täufer in binary opposition to the hero.

Enoch, whose name relates well to the apocalyptic spirit of the “Winkelseher,” attempts to impress and intimidate Hansli with a piercing stare (312). He and his fellow Brethren:

frönten der schlechten Gewohnheit solchen Anblinzelns, welches immer entweder einen Schelmen oder einen eingebildeten Narren verrät, ehrlichen und

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121 It should be mentioned, however, that Keller’s novella reveals a major anachronism: Hansli encounters Wiedertäufer in his community upon his return in 1523; yet, the Anabaptist movement does not develop in Switzerland before Grebel’s and Manz’ baptism in January 1525.

122 Horsch Bender has pointed out that Ursula’s insistence on a marriage without the benefit of clergy contradicts early Anabaptists’ idea of marriage and reflects misinformation about the group’s customs. In fact, the Brethren were known for introducing “the marriage ceremony before the consummation of the marriage instead of afterwards, as had been the custom” (Keller 147).

123 Laufhütte has pointed out that “der Urvater Henoch (1 Mos. 5:18) wird schon bei den Kirchenvätern mit der Apokalypse in Zusammenhang gebracht, was den Namen für einen Anführer der Wiedertäufer zweifellos besonders geeignet macht” (41).
anständigen Menschen aber unverständlich und widerwärtig ist und ihnen das Gefühl erweckt, als wenn sie von Ungeziefer bekrochen würden. (313)

Once again, the narrator associates the *Taufgesinnte* with vermin. The *Ungeziefer* metaphor sketches an image of the Anabaptist that is exaggerated to the point of the grotesque. Eyes and gaze serve as one set of leitmotifs in the story, and distinguish between the sane and stable condition of Hansli, who is described to look at the group with “ruhigen Augen,” and the maniacal state of the *Täufer* (312). Presumed inner qualities of the Anabaptists are reflected in the outward appearance of the prophets. One of the fellow Brethren is described as: “mit kreischender Stimme …ein länglicher dünner Mann, welcher der kalte Wirtz von Großau hieß, weil er immer feuchte kalte Hände hatte. Er war mit einem engen grauen Rock wie mit einem Sacke bekleidet” (315). Another disciple of the clairvoyant group is characterized by “einer Unterlippe [über die ein] ihm feindlicher Priester gesagt [hatte], sie sehe aus, wie des Teufels Ruhebänklein, von welchem der gefallene Engel die haarigen Beine herunterbaumeln und sich schaukeln lasse” (316).

Attributed with a shrill voice, clammy hands, a sack-like garment, and a lower lip that is reminiscent of the devil dangling his feet while sitting on a bench, the Anabaptists in Keller’s story are imbued with characteristics that highlight their strange and irrational nature. Their facial features are a subhuman caricature that contrasts starkly with the healthy appearance of Hans. The depiction of the physically aberrant features of the Schnurrenberger group produces an aversion that compels the reader to side with Hans

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124 Correll has noted that Anabaptists’ simple clothing was described by Kessler in *Sabbata* and later repeated by Keller in his novella (51).
125 Enoch’s last name, Schnurrenberger, relates to the German word “Schnurre,” a fib or a funny tale, thus ridiculing the Anabaptist character. According to the description given by the narrator, Schnurrenberger
and Zwingli. Jennings has pointed out that their grotesque appearance identifies them as unrespectable people and figures from the “underworld” (14).

In order to establish semantic axes between the fanatic Täufer and the respectable character of Hansli, the author caricatures the Anabaptists’ appearance, behavior, and action. The Bible discussion at the Schnurrenberger residence displays the group’s ridiculous manners and illogical views on religion. As soon as Hansli enters the conversation, the “Winkelpropheten” start criticizing his military uniform “mit Ungeduld und Streitsucht” (314). The pacifistic notion, one of the most fundamental principles of Anabaptism, becomes the source of Enoch’s verbal attacks on Hans. The Anabaptist humiliates the soldier and proclaims the oncoming millennium.

This emphasis on the chiliastic theology appears to be exaggerated and mocks the true conviction of early Swiss Anabaptists. Wirtz explains his understanding of the Bible by applying vivid metaphors such as: “Was ist die Schrift? … eine leere Haut, ein Balg, wenn ich nicht den heiligen Geist hineinblase” (315). This example as well as the pantheistic and animistic discourse expounded by Schneck, another participant of Enoch’s religious debate, who recognizes God in the form of all natural substances, are an inversion of the Christian doctrines of the historical Swiss Brethren. The absurd and sacrilegious comments voiced by Ursula’s father and his followers support a distorted picture of Anabaptist piety that provokes the readers’ aversion to the faith group. The Brethren’s discourse concerning belief ends with “ein kleines Weltfreudelein” (320);

relates to a geographic site, “Berg des Snurro, des Schnurrant, Possenreißers…. Wenn nun Vater Enoch auch schwerlich von jenen alten Schnurringen abstammte, so war er doch in seiner Art ein grimmiger Possenreißer” (312).

The term “semantic axis” is taken from Bal’s narrative theory, referring to a pair of opposite characteristics or contrary meanings (127).
that is, the group gathered in Enoch’s house indulges in wine drinking and card playing until the early morning hours.\(^ {127}\) The deck of cards, “deren Bilder von greulichem Getier: Affen, Katzen und Dämonen, teils unanständiger Art, zusammengesetzt waren,” once more alludes to the nature of the portrayed Anabaptist community as demonic and relates to the “underworld” creatures at the beginning of the narrative (320).

The fabrication of an overall negative image of Anabaptism for the purposes of criticizing religious fanaticism is further developed by additional incidents where the Schnurrenberger group exhibits low moral and ethical conduct. Enoch is depicted as a greedy and selfish man who tries to purchase Hansli’s estate for a very low sale price, claiming that the concept of property will cease to be in the upcoming millennium. Laufhütte has attributed Schnurrenberger’s materialistic millennialism to his greedy character. Instead of a genuine conviction, “Enoch ist von seiner aufs Ökonomische, auf Erwerb und Besitz gerichtete Schläuheit zu seinem Fanatismus für das neue Jerusalem geführt worden” (45). The ironic comment given by the authorial voice concerning Enoch’s selfish attempt to buy Hansli’s property at a cheap price, “[seine] Augen mehr von irdischen Dingen als vom Reich Gottes zu funkeln schienen” (24), exemplifies the narrator’s task of critically assessing and evaluating characters and events.\(^ {128}\) He thus paints the Anabaptists as a threat to solidarity and ethical norms by presenting negative connotations to the group’s belief and conduct.

\(^ {127}\) According to Horsch Bender, such worldly pleasures and intemperance in drinking are completely inconsistent with the historical Swiss Anabaptists (Keller 147).

\(^ {128}\) Beutelschmidt and Widmer have asserted that “die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers durch einen auktorialen Erzähler stark gelenkt [wird]. Keller überlässt die Interpretation der Geschichte nicht dem Zufall, sondern bewertet meist in der Formulierung einer als gültig zu betrachtenden Regel, die Ereignisse” (21).
The chiliastic belief stressed by Enoch also serves as an excuse for Wirtz to approach Ursula lustfully and attempt to lure her into immediate matrimony. The young woman, however, is able to fight against such intimacy and damages the prophet’s robe with a hayfork so that “er in schäbigen und beschmutzten Unterkleidern dastand” (336). Ursula’s uncovering of the dirty undergarments can be understood as an episode of “defrocking,” an exemplary exposure of the sect’s tainted essence and carnal mind versus the pure and divine appearance it is apt to maintain.

In addition to irrational beliefs and moral laxity, the Anabaptists of Keller’s story are represented as cowards who frantically scatter into the forest upon seeing the town authority walking through their neighborhood. Enoch fuels the terror and chaos by raising the cry: “Fort, fort! Der Landvogt von Grüningen ist auf dem Weg mit Spieß und Schwert! Wir sind verraten” (336). Here, the novella presents an overall negative picture of the Brethren characterized by lust, greed, and cowardice. Reichert has grouped the Anabaptist character traits into three main categories, “materieller Eigennutz und Egoismus, moralische Unsauberkeit und Lüsternheit, Überheblichkeit und Unbescheidenheit” (176), all of which oppose the inner qualities of courage, moral integrity, modesty, and a national concern with which Zwingli and Hans are depicted as representatives of the national Swiss identity. The Anabaptist weaknesses, excesses, and fanatical conduct, illustrated throughout the novella, accentuate the reformer’s sanity and strength.
5. Adaptation of Historical Sources

As part of Keller’s cultural assessment of Switzerland, he articulates the perceived Swiss identity in terms of contrast to the Anabaptist abnormalities. The Brethren appear as the opposite of what is familiar and genuinely Swiss. The Anabaptists’ unusual behaviour is further depicted in the *Ketzerturm* episode. Imprisoned in the dungeons to be starved into submission, the Brethren started:

"einen unheimlichen Lärm mit Singen und Schreien, das zuweilen in ein weithin schallendes Geheul von furchtbaren Verwünschungen und Ausrufungen ausartete, von Angst und Not, Blitz und Donner, Jammer, Tod und Teufel, Untergang und Zerknisten [crushing], worauf zuweilen wieder ein Siegesgesang ertönte." (346)

The group’s reprehensible conduct of making hideous noise, screaming, and cursing suggests a deranged state of mind. The narrator legitimizes the harsh persecution of the Zürich Anabaptists on a judicial and moral level. Referring to the historical disputation between the Zwinglians and Anabaptist leaders as well as the reformer’s failed attempt to reintegrate the radical fraction, he concludes that “Wiedertäuferei … für überwiesen und besiegt erklärt und verurteilt [wurde], d.h. bei fernerem Beharren verfolgt, verbannt oder an Freiheit und Leben bestraft” (344-345). From this broad view on the historical

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129 The imprisonment of the Grüningen Anabaptist is also documented in Schuler’s historiography: “Am längsten trieben die Wiedertäufer in de Herrschaft Grüningen ihr Unwesen. Da sie sich durch die Strafen nicht warnen ließen, ward ihnen nun Leib- und Lebensstrafe angedroht. Dennoch liefen Viele ihren Predigten in Holz und Feld nach. Georg Berger, Landvogt von Grüningen, ließ sie an einem Sonntag bei einer solchen Waldversammlung von Bewaffneten umgeben und 15 gefangen setzen” (71-72). Keller’s description of the prisoners’ condition in the *Turm*, “auf Stroh liegend bei geringster Nahrung ersterben sollten, jeder so lang er nicht abschwur” (345), has a striking resemblance to Hottinger’s quotation of the Anabaptis’ sentence: “man soll ihnen nichts anderes als Wasser und Brot geben und sie im Stroh liegen und also im Turm ersterben lassen” (305).
events the narrator, who serves as the author’s mouthpiece, then proceeds to focus on the members of the Schnurrenberger group whom he labels as “Verbrecher und Verurteilte,” and justifies their imprisonment with the remark that they “auch zu gutem Teil in Unehren dahinzogen” (345). The Anabaptists’ lunatic conduct in the Ketzerturm, which the narrator describes with attributes such as “unheimlich” and “furchtbar”, reinforces the demonization of the Brotherhood and further supports the narrator’s justification of the Brethren’s captivity. 

Enoch’s simulation of “dying” presents yet another facet of the group’s religious madness. As an expression of the character’s sensationalism, the narrator describes how the self-styled prophet imitates:

… sterben und wieder auferstehen, so oft er wollte, obgleich ihm diese Künste bei zunehmendem Alter beschwerlich wurden, insbesondere das Sterben, wo er sich gewaltsam auf den Boden werfen und in Zuckungen verfallen mußte. (345)

This example illustrates Keller’s creative transformation of Schuler’s material. Horsch Bender has clarified that the author, against historical facts, transplants activities from the “‘lunatic fringe’ of the crushed and dying Anabaptist movement” reported from Appenzell to the story in Grüningen (Keller 145). Thus, Keller historically and geographically rearranges facts in an effort to create the image of an utterly illogical and highly manipulative sect.

130 In the account of the Appenzell Anabaptists, Schuler reports: “… (sie) trieben allerlei Tollheiten. Eine derselben war ihr sogenanntes ‘Sterben’. Sie legten sich wie thod auf die Erde, seufzten, zitterten … zerrissen das Gesicht in scheußliche Geberden. Kamen sie dann wieder zu sich selbst, so sprachen sie von Offenbarungen …” (117). Clasen has explained that this strange ecstatic experience of dying, practiced by certain aberrant groups of the original movement, refers to St. Paul’s words: “I die daily” in I Corinthians 15:31. As the act of dying became so frequent in the town of St. Gall, the practice was formally prohibited (123-124).
The epitome of religious fanaticism, however, is presented in the episode where Schnurrenberger and his co-religionists strive to be children, in accordance with a literal interpretation of Matthew 18:4, which reads “Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” In this bizarre scene of degradation, the aged members of the Anabaptist group dress up as toddlers, babble like babies, and play with toys:

So saß er [Enoch] denn schon am Vormittage … mit dem Anhange, der ihm geblieben und ihm heimlich nachzog, auf seinem abgelegenen Hofe und spielte kleines Kindlein. Mit nackten Beinen hockte er in einem roten alten Weiberrock, der ein Kinderröcklein vorstellen sollte, auf dem Stubenboden und baute ein kleines Fuhrwerklein von Brettchen, das er mit Spreuer belud und dazu mit Kinderlauten stöhnte: Lo lo lo, da da da! (360-361)

Keller exaggerates the material he found in Schuler’s account of ex-Anabaptists in the area of St. Gall and Appenzell (after the original movement had been crushed). The idiotic childishness of Enoch and his followers illustrates the group’s loss of momentum. The Brotherhood has lost some of its seditious quality but remains ludicrous. Even Ursula turns away from her parents in bewilderment. The manic behavior of her father pushes her

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131 The “Kindernarren” scene, linked to Keller’s initial idea of the novella, is illustrated by the artist, Rene Beeh, in plate four of his collection of lithographs dedicated to the author’s 100th birthday (1914). The picture, entitled “Ursula,” captures a moment of grotesque worship. Four adults raise their hands in prayer. They perform ecstatic movements while their facial expressions and gazes remain indifferent. An old woman, dressed in simple clothes and no shoes, is holding a doll behind her back, visible to the observer.

132 Schuler’s depiction of the Anabaptists’ childlike behavior, “Da fingen sie, besonders die Weiber, an Kinderspiele zu treiben; gaben einander Äpfel, zogen Tannzapfen an einem Faden auf dem Boden herum u.dgl.” (113) is summarized by Hottinger: “sie tändelten mit Puppen, zogen Tannzapfen, an einen Faden gebunden, auf dem Boden umher, weinten kindisch und ließen mit Äpfeln sich trösten” (305). Keller imitates Schuler’s and Hottinger’s disdainful tone when fictionalizing the Anabaptists’ return to childhood: “Weiber zogen Tannzapfen an langem Faden in der Stube herum … die alte Schnurrenbergerin stand in der Küche vor dem Herde, unter dem Arme eine von Lumpen gemachte Puppe haltend” (361).
whole family into the position of social alienation and causes much distress for the young woman.

6. Swiss National Unity vs. Anabaptist Sectarianism

An image that depicts the Anabaptists as anti-social and psychologically damaged is underscored in Keller’s novella by Ursula’s emotional and mental development. The eponymous heroine is characterized as a victim of her father’s ridiculous delusions. In the patriarchal society as given in the story, both she and her mother are obligated to give absolute loyalty to Enoch and his millennial world views. His control over his wife and daughter, “die er elendiglich mitschleppte” to dangerous sectarian activities, poses a threat to their physical and mental well-being (345). As the leader of the Anabaptist group in Grüningen, Enoch has a very dominant behavior and “immer seinen Willen durchgesetzt” in religious and familial matters so that it is impossible for Ursula to escape from his religious and patronizing authority (325):

sie beugte sich unter dem Banne des Wahnes und des stechenden Blickes ihres Vaters, den sie zu gleicher Zeit fürchtete, wie ein Schwert, und verehrte, wie einen untrüglichen Heiligen; denn wo sollten solche Geister Anhang finden, wenn nicht zuerst bei den Ihrigen, denen sie die Sache unaufhörlich vorsagen. (326)

Fearing her father’s dominance on the one hand and yet being captivated by his religious illusions on the other hand, she is portrayed as “Opfer eines systemimmanenten psychologischen Zwanges” (Laufhütte 54). Her contamination with the epidemic of fanaticism is reflected in her physical appearance and expression: “wie sie nun… die
Augen zu ihm aufschlug, … sah er darin … die Flamme des Irrlichts … und er merkte, dass sie von der Wahnkrankeit befallen war” (311).

The only way for Ursula to withdraw from Enoch’s illogical faith is to fall into mental sickness. Hans ascribes her schizophrenic-like state to the religiously extremist beliefs and practices of her parents when he asks them “was habt ihr mit eurer Tochter Ursula angefangen?” (342). Only by the protagonist’s intervention is she able to be saved from the fate of the manic group. As her personal saviour, Hans not only frees her from prison where she would have suffered a slow death by starvation, but the very thought of him also helps her to recover from her mental confusion. As she overcomes her inability to act and flees the grotesque scene at her parents’ house, she finds herself in “reinere Luft” and “beleuchtet(es)” territory as she moves closer to the Reformed troops that are preparing to go to war (364). According to Bal’s examination of narrative strategies, the heroine’s “moods and states correspond, almost point by point, with the brightness or darkness of the environment in which the character evolves” (40). The change of light and air indicates a turn in Ursula’s state of mind.

The sensory perceptions also enhance the contrast between the ideal Swiss state—that is, a free and Reformed community under the admirable leadership of Zwingli—and the state of religious delusion led by unscrupulous men of the Schnurrenberger group. The light - dark antithesis reaches its climax when Ursula sees the Swiss Reformer for the first time:

(Da) war Ulrich Zwingli selbst, und sein sympathischer Anblick erhellte die Seele des unverwandt schauenden Weibes. … und an seiner linken Seite hing das
Schwert … die Lippen beteten leise vor sich hin, aber so sichtbar aufrichtig aus tiefstem Herzen herauf, daß von dieser Erscheinung ein lichter Strahl von Gesundheit und lindem Troste in ihre gequälte Brust hinüberzog… (364-365)

Zwingli, who is equipped with a sword and prays as he moves to the battlefield, represents the ideal unity of state and church. He moves alongside Hans, epitomizing the sane, wise, and courageous national character of Switzerland that stands in contrast to the “underworld” creatures of Anabaptism. The description of this historical reformer is colored by the author’s patriotic attitude and his admiration for the Swiss hero. According to Keller’s biographer, Muschg, “der große Staatsdichter Keller habe dem großen Staatsmann Zwingli ein Kränzchen gewunden” (cited in Beutelschmidt and Widmer 21).

Corresponding to Lukács’ concept of a historical narrative, Zwingli, as a “world-historical individual,” only appears as a secondary character in the novella. Ursula and Hansli, the leading figures of the narrative, embody the historical movement as representatives of the Swiss people. The struggle of the dominant faith and national solidarity over the aberrant culture of Anabaptism is best observed within the community of average fellow countrymen. At the same time, the characters of Enoch and Hans exemplify distinct archetypes, enabling Keller to sketch precisely the confrontation of two religiously and ethically differing ideas. The fictional figure of Enoch Schnurrenberger allows the author to combine several of the Anabaptist stereotypes that were passed on by Kessler and Schuler into one character. Employing the historical accounts, Keller makes

133 Lukács’ concept of a historical narrative prescribes that the “world-historical figure must be so fashioned that he appears in such and only such situations of his own inner necessity … (he) must be a minor figure” (127).
the case against sectarianism by depicting Enoch as the source of superstition, immorality, and fanaticism.

The image of Anabaptism that is presented in the novella undergoes changes. Although the Täufer group is continuously portrayed as the irregular element in Swiss society, it develops varying degrees of excesses. It is first introduced as a dangerous sect with a chiliastic ideology and a deterioration of moral and ethical values. The movement is considered a plague that infects Swiss communities. After the prophets and their families experience the harsh punishment in the Ketzerturm of Grüningen, they turn into somewhat benign and pitiful lunatics who no longer pose a serious threat to society, since they live in poverty and in constant fear of being discovered and prosecuted. Following literal interpretations of a biblical verse, their conduct becomes utterly idiotic yet harmless. Their ridiculous endeavor to imitate childhood is a mere caricature of the fervent fanaticism that once ruled the group. Their foolish actions are in sharp contrast to the honorable and dedicated efforts of Hans and Zwingli on the battlefield, where they defend the independence of their native country. Toward the end of the story, after Hansli and Ursula are married according to the laws of the land, the Anabaptists are significantly subdued. They are represented as a stage in the development of Switzerland’s identity that needed to be overcome. Reading Keller’s negative portrayal of early Anabaptism as a criticism of nineteenth-century religious fanaticism, his depiction of the movement’s repression at the end of the novella can be understood as an expression of his hope for a

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134 Laufhütte has pointed out that the account of the child-like behavior of the faith group “ist ganz auf Kontrastierung bedacht” and that the once dangerous movement has become “Relikte einer vollkommen überwundenen Epoche” (105).
defeat of the Catholic opposition to the enforcement of a modern Swiss Rechtsstaat by the contemporary liberal party.

With the death of Enoch, the “Winkelseher” stop preaching the millennium and become more integrated into Swiss society. The constellation of opposing principles and characters—that of the virtuous soldier and advocate of the Zwingli-Reformation confronting the immoral and irrational leaders of the radical Anabaptist movement—eventually breaks down:

Gegen zweihundert Jahre lang hausten seine (Hans’) Nachkommen auf dem gut bestellten Hofe, welcher der Gyrenhof genannt wurde. Den Winkelpropheten aber schenkte das brave Ehepaar jedesmal ein Glas Wein oder guten Apfelmost ein, sooft einer derselben mit irgendeiner neuen Lustbarkeit auf den Hof kam. Denn immer trieben sie etwas Schnurriges, obgleich sie nicht mehr predigten. Ihre Art spukt indes ab und zu immer noch um jeden Berg herum. (371)

The story clearly turns its main focus to the hero’s effort to restore both traditional values and a sound doctrine in his home country that is then to prosper for a long time. Yet, the Anabaptist community does not completely dissolve. Enoch continues to exist, though only in the derivation of his name Schnurrenberger, which refers to a farceur. Although the “Winkelpropheten” remain and continue haunting the area, the relationship between the dominant community, represented by Hans, and the group of outcasts has become less conflict-ridden and more complaisant. The danger of religious sectarianism no longer exists; instead an acceptance of the Täufer marginal presence in society has gradually developed.
C. Hausrath: *Klytia* (1883) and Anabaptism in the Palatinate

1. Anabaptism in the Sixteenth-Century Palatinate

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Palatinate had been religiously divided. In accordance with the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, agreed in the Peace of Augsburg (1555), the population of the Palatinate changed its faith five times during the sixteenth century. The ecclesiastical changes initiated by various electors of the Kurpfalz enabled the Anabaptists to enter the area and develop a network of congregations. At the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in the 1520s, the Protestant clergymen of the Palatinate were not entirely unsympathetic to the radical reformers. Nikolaus Thomae, pastor in Bergzabern, for instance, cooperated with the Anabaptists, although many of his ideas concerning church dogma and practice differed from those of the faith group (Teufel 317). In 1528, with the Imperial Mandate against Anabaptism, the situation of the Brethren in the Palatinate changed drastically. Elector Ludwig V adopted the Emperor’s mandate and demanded capital punishment for all Anabaptists in the area. Only after 1544, when the Lutheran Elector Friedrich II took office, did the executions of Brethren come to an end and the movement spread continuously in the region. Under the Calvinist Friedrich III, in particular, Anabaptists settled the Rhineland-Palatinate. The Elector was known for his tolerant stance toward all reformed denominations that were united in their opposition

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135 Güß has noted that the “heikle konfessionelle Situation” caused by the change from Catholicism to the Reformed faith served as a “guter Nährboden” for Täufer communities (61). The Anabaptist congregations were initiated by Swiss Brethren who came to the Palatinate as refugees and wandering preachers. As a consequence of the influence by *Schweizer Brüder*, the Schleitheim Confession functioned as the chief “Lehrgut der Pfälzer Täufer,” and will therefore serve as the main reference in the analysis of Täufer piety portrayed in Hausrath’s novel (Güß 3).
against the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{136} During his reign, he promoted a conversion of Anabaptists. In conversations with members of the sect, for instance at the Frankenthal disputation in 1571, he attempted to win the group to his faith.

\textbf{2. Plot Summary}

This period of religious change in the sixteenth-century Palatinate is fictionalized in Adolf Hausrath’s historical novel \textit{Klytia}. Under the pseudonym George Taylor,\textsuperscript{137} the Protestant theologian portrays this tumultuous era of German history. In his novel, Paolo, a member of the conspiring Jesuit order, is sent out to the capital of the Palatinate Electorate that had recently changed confessions from Protestantism to Calvinism. Paolo attempts to convert the community while being disguised as a teacher of the Heidelberg (Calvinist) Catechism. In secret meetings with Pigavetta, the mastermind of the covert Catholic operation, the young Italian receives instructions that he follows with a strict obedience. Lydia, the daughter of Thomas Erast,\textsuperscript{138} 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, aiming to intensify the faith experience of his students, Paolo kisses Lydia and consequently loses his position as a teacher. Working as a spy for Pigavetta, Paolo causes the imprisonment of some townspeople, including friends of Lydia’s father. As a consequence of Paolo’s actions, Lydia’s father is falsely accused of

\textsuperscript{136} “Eine Einigung der Protestanten aller Abarten gegen das Papsttum war sein Programm von Anfang an” (Güß 61).

\textsuperscript{137} According to Kappstein, Hausrath assumed the pen name George Taylor in 1880 when he published his first historical fiction, \textit{Antinous}. He kept the pseudonym for all of his historical narratives (8 volumes), including his second novel, \textit{Klytia} (111-112).

\textsuperscript{138} Hausrath fictionalizes an important figure of Heidelberg’s history. Erast had served as Friedrich III’s \textit{Leibarzt} (personal physician to the Elector) and councillor until 1564. He was considered “der einflußreichste Mann im pfälzischen Kirchenrat” (Güß 72).
sedition and Lydia faces imprisonment in the Hexenturm after having been discovered in the forest at night accompanied by an assumed witch. Lured into the forest by a fake letter, she had been chased by a band of terrifying men and later 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 the young woman and her father are released from prison because the Elector discovers Pigavetta’s secret plans and intrigues, 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.

3. The Author's Approach to Historical Writing

As a professor of New Testament exegesis and church history at the University of Heidelberg, Hausrath studied intensively the ecclesiastical chronicles of the Electoral Palatinate. With his interest in historical fiction, he joins the group of late nineteenth-century authors who, all of them full-fledged professors (among them Adolf Stern and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl), dealt with the challenge of presenting historical facts in a poetic form. As a prominent form of historical fiction in the late nineteenth century, the so-called Professorenromane offer great insight in the contemporary research and theory of history and reveal current issues that predominated during this time period. Theodor Kappstein has noted in his biography of Hausrath, that the author was more of a historian and a scholar of folklore studies than a poet in all of his historical novels and novellas (111). According to Herbert Scheffler, some of these academic novelists were characterized more by their enthusiasm than by their talent. The interest 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).\footnote{Scheffler explains the rise of historical belles-lettres in the second half of the nineteenth century with the universal desire for culture. The triumph of popularized learning encouraged an interest in the historical novel during this time (277).} Aside from their poor literary quality, the *Professorenromane*, although claiming to be non-political, often allude to “tiefergreifende gesellschaftliche Wandlungen und den politisch-weltanschaulichen Auseinandersetzungen der Zeit” (Eggert 343).

Adolf Hausrath was highly invested in regional and church history.\footnote{He studied the local history of Heidelberg intensively. While working with chronicles and annals of the Electorate’s capital, he discovered the sixteenth-century material on the religious disputes. Kappstein has noted that the author “seiner Heimat das Denkmal errichtet hat” with the fictionalization of the city’s records in his novel, *Klytia* (116).} During his time as professor in Heidelberg, he founded the *Montagsgesellschaft*, a historical association consisting of fellow colleagues from the university. According to his biographer, Karl Bauer, the Montagsgesellschaft provided a weekly opportunity to discuss “neue historische und humanistische Arbeiten und Forschungen” (184). Hausrath was particularly concerned with the matter of historical objectivity. He discussed the thesis “Es gibt keine objektive Geschichte” at the entrance examinations for his study of church history at the University of Heidelberg (Kappstein 22). Influenced by teachings of Droysen and Treitschke, he argued against the *Rankesche Objektivität*. Instead, he perceived history as a dynamic process determined by the historian’s empathy and intuition.\footnote{During Hausrath’s study of church history, Droysen encouraged the “angehenden Historiker zu Psychologen [zu] werden, die mit Intuition und Einfühlungsvermögen sich die Geschichte beseelten, die Vergangenheit persönlich durchlebten und die handelnden Personen sich innerlich nahebrachten” (Bauer 163). Corresponding to Droysen’s philosophy of history, the author later states that “Geschichte bietet uns nicht die Tatsachen, sondern Urteile von Menschen über die Tatsachen, Urteile, die von Geschlecht zu} Heinrich von Treitschke, the chair of the history department at Heidelberg,
had a significant impact on Hausrath’s concept of the insightful historian who seeks coherence, employs empathy, and contributes to a national spirit. Treitschke was known for linking past with current events and integrating political views in historical debates.142 Hausrath’s notion of historiography as an act of interpreting unprocessed records and transforming historical data into stories is in accordance with the nineteenth-century poetic structure of historical works identified by Hayden White.143 Hausrath employs the concept of the intuitive historian in his historiographies and historical narratives alike.144 In his fictional texts, he is able to fully develop different modes of emplotment and integrates ideological components.

In Klytia, for instance, he fashions the material he found in Heidelberg’s sixteenth-century chronicles into the structure of a romance, as the sequence of events reveals.145 In this narrative, he reflects on the present situation as he portrays the early modern history of the Palatinate. His depiction of the past indicates the value system under which he operates. Imbued with Hausrath’s ideological conception of state and church,146 the narrative illustrates the confessional disputes in the sixteenth century and draws from this

142 Hausrath has summarized Treitschke’s conception of the historian’s tasks: “alle großen Historiker waren auch große Patrioten; der Geschichtsschreiber muß mit den Tiefen der menschlichen Natur vertraut sein und um die Zusammenhänge genial zu erahnen, eine Antwort haben auf die großen Lebensrätsel und er muß ein Dichter sein, machtvoll gestaltend” (Kappstein 31).
143 White notes that invention plays a part in the historian’s operations of explaining the past by uncovering the story that lies buried in historical records (6-7).
144 Most of his historiographical works are concerned with biographies of church leaders and scholars, for instance Martin Luther and Konrad von Marburg. These writings are characterized by a high degree of empathy and psychological understanding.
145 White provides following definition of the archetypal theme of Romance according to Northrop Frye’s categorization of modes of emplotment: “The Romance is fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero’s transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it … It is a drama of the triumph of good over evil … of light over darkness” (8-9).
146 White defines the term “ideology” as “a set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it (either to change the world or to maintain it in its current state)” (22).
study of past events for the understanding of the religious conflict during the nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf*.

4. Nineteenth-Century German *Kulturkampf*

As a proponent of Protestantism as the dominant culture of the German Empire, Hausrath supported Prussian’s *Kulturkampf* policy regarding secularity and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. During his time as professor at the University of Heidelberg in the 1860s and 1870s, the city’s political and ecclesiastical life was in turmoil. The region experienced the aftermath of the *Agendenstreit* and the *Konkordatspolitik* 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* 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 *Deutscher Protestantenverein* in which he served as the chief secretary.

Hausrath’s anti-Catholic and anti-clerical orientation becomes particularly noticeable in his criticism of obligatory religious instruction, which he considered an act of ultramontanism. He rejected the plan of subjecting “Volkserziehung und Lehrerstand” to the church, arguing that faith should be addressed by parents and pastors, rather than taught in public institutions (Kappstein 83). He also 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 “ultramontaner Wahlpolitik,
Konfessionshetze und friedlose Aufwiegelung” 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 Calvinism by Elector Friedrich III in the early 1560s.

In his historical novel, Hausrath crafts a picture of the sixteenth-century confessional disputes that is colored with propaganda against the Catholic Church. His stereotypical depiction of the so-called “Welsch” 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 reflects the nineteenth-century paranoia about the revival of Catholicism in Germany. Apart from the anti-Catholic notion inherent in the narrative, 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. A discussion of the Lord’s Supper, a highly debated issue during the sixteenth-century religious disputes, exemplifies the different interpretations of faith:

Wie ich noch drinnen in der Stadt wohnte, da hatte jeder Pfarrer eine andere Lehre vom heiligen Sacrament, und meine acht Kinder hatten jedes die seines

147 “Welsch,” commonly referring to Romance languages, is employed in Hausrath’s text as a derogatory term for foreign, especially Catholic Italians and French.
148 Hausrath depicts the faction of so-called Disziplinisten, a group of influential theologians from Italy and France who “in den Dienst der pälsischen Kirche gezogen worden waren” (Güß 72).
Pfarrers. Mein Heinz mußte lernen, der Leib des Herrn sei im Brot; das sei nicht genug, schalt die kleine Christine, er sei mit in und unter dem Brot. Der Pfarrer Neuser aber sagte dem Christoph, er sei da unter der Figur und man bekomme ihn beim Essen. Der Pfarrer Greiner aber lehrte den Hansel: “circa circum um und um” nicht im Brot aber so drum rum. (45)

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 both as a good spirit and as a dissenter who is in alliance with heresy and witchcraft.

5. Literary Representation of Anabaptist Tenets of Faith

In Hausrath’s historical novel, the central confrontation takes place between the Catholic order and the town’s Reformed population rather than the Anabaptists and the dominant society. Werner, the Anabaptist, is depicted as an outsider to the town’s religious disputes. He 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. He notes, “nun friedlich war es nicht … Da hättet ihr erleben sollen, wie die Heidelberger sich in die Haare kamen” (46). Werner and his family left the urban center to escape religious quarrels and 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.

Unlike earlier narratives treating sixteenth-century Anabaptism without referring
to the group’s distinct theological principles, Hausrath employs Täufer doctrines that
oppose practices of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{149} 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. Hausrath utilization of the historical novel as a means of propagating
anti-clericalism and spreading a Catholic paranoia becomes particularly obvious in
Werner’s talk with Felix, when the Anabaptist shares his opinion regarding the
sacraments. He addresses three fundamental principles of Anabaptist theology. First, he
criticizes the administration of the Lord’s Supper by Catholic and Reformed churches
alike. He gives an account of the different practices of the Breaking the Bread, starting
with the Reformed who:

\begin{quote}
setzen sich in die Bänke und ließen Kelch und Brot herumgehn wie im
Wirtshaus. In de Sakristei legte sich der Diakon immer mit je Zwölfen zum
Abendmahl, damit es ganz sei wie in Jerusalem, und ein Mal brachte der
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{149} 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 \textit{Klytia} (480).
After describing the varying ways of commemorating Christ’s broken body, the Täufer concludes that “Brot und Wein thun’s nicht. Der Geist muß von innen kommen” (46-47).

Here, Werner refers to the Anabaptist conception of the Lord’s Supper as a spiritual act. The Täufer then comments on the Catholic practice of infant baptism and confirmation and critically remarks:

Ich tauft die Kinder, die noch nicht wissen, was gut und böse, oder was ja und nein ist und sagt dann, sie hätten dem Bösen abgesagt. So fangt ihre eure Sache mit Lügen an. … Ihr fürt sie, wenn sie zwölf oder dreizehn Jahre alt sind, nicht weil der Geist sie bestätigt, sondern weil es Zeit und Gewohnheit so mit sich bringt. (47)

Werner 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. He concludes that juveniles should 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 adolescents to affirm their belief and membership by habit rather than genuine faith. With his condemnation of the Catholic baptismal and confirmation practice, the Täufer addresses the essential aspect of Anabaptism, namely voluntary

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150 According to 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. …All those who lie in evil have no part in the good. 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, Schleitheim 11).
faith. By stressing the Catholics’ uninformed commitment to the church community, he promotes a believer’s baptism that is conducted as a symbol of inner and voluntary conversion to the New Testament-oriented faith.

In connection to his observation about the children’s lack of knowledge and piety, he criticizes Sunday school for teaching children “das Heilige zu plappern wie die Heiden und zur Narrethei zu machen. Rederei, bei der das Kind nichts denkt” (47). He particularly finds fault with the pastors who support a dogmatic and passive approach toward the biblical teachings. In his conversation with Felix, he asserts:

Der Pfarrer predigt, nicht, weil der Geist ihn treibt, sondern weil er dafür bezahlt wird. Wie der Gaukler sagt er am Sonntag her, was er am Tag zuvor zu Hause gelernt hat… Ja, sie wissen’s gar nicht mehr, daß es Lüge ist, wenn sie die Arme ausbreiten und den Herrn im Himmel anrufen mit verzückten Gebärdern und sagen’s doch alles, wie sie’s gestern gelernt haben. (47-48)

Werner’s account of the clergymen’s preaching for money rather than by an inner calling and his concern about their theatrical performance during church service resembles typical anti-clerical argument, illustrating the author’s use of the Anabaptist character as a mouth-piece for his own religio-political views. Hausrath’s personal resentment of the Catholic clerical tradition is cloaked by the Brotherhood’s deep-seated distrust toward the Catholic priesthood, resulting in the group’s practice of lay preaching as recorded in the Schleitheim Confession.151

151 Article 5 prescribes that the leader of the community ought to “preside among the sisters and brothers in prayer,” rather than assuming the higher position of an intermediary between God and the congregation (Yoder 13).
Werner implicitly addresses three chief tenets of Anabaptist faith as he complains about the ecclesiastical situation in the city. His arguments for separating from the established society and settling in the remote area of the Kreuzgrund are presented in form of push- rather than pull-factors. He protests against the Catholic administration of the Lord’s Supper, the baptism of infants, and the clergy’s dogmatic instruction and interest in prosperity— issues that pertain to the Täufer doctrine—without explicitly advocating the Anabaptist practice of the sacraments and lay preaching. 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. In the novel, Anabaptism is thus characterized by a negative attitude toward the dogma of the institutional church rather than a direct application of the movement’s theological principles. Hausrath left out a discussion of the Brethren’s distinct religious and ethical views since he was invested in promoting an anti-clerical rather than pro-Anabaptist stance. His portrayal of the Brotherhood focuses exclusively on its historical opposition to the established church for reasons of supporting his own confessional standpoint in contemporary theological debates.

6. Saint or Sinner: Münster Heritage, Witchcraft, and the Spirit of Charity

Despite his exclusion from the Heidelberg society, Werner maintains a loose connection with the community. His relationship to the urban society is ambivalent.

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152 In the 1570s, as Elector Friedrich III maintained a policy of religious tolerance, Anabaptists experienced far less persecution in the Palatinate than in other areas of German-speaking Europe. Therefore, Hausrath is
During infrequent visits to town, he either functions as Paolo’s 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 narrative, and he simply takes the role of an apparition. He is depicted as a “religiössittliche Persönlichkeit, die sich wohltuend von den in Lehrstreitigkeiten befangenen Theologen der Umwelt abhebt” (664). 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, the Anabaptist follows the religious disputes with a certain distance and amusement. He is perceived by others as “der seltsam spaßende Bauer” (49). In his conversation with Werner, Felix notices the old man’s detachment from the town’s ecclesiastical debates. 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 traute dieser Resignation des wetterharten Greises doch nicht so ganz, denn im Ausdruck seiner Augen lag etwas Verschlagenes und seine ganze Erscheinung sah gar nicht nach stumpfsinniger Ergebenheit aus” (44). Werner’s whimsical smile indicates his distance from the religious disputes fought by the city’s theologians. Through Felix’s observation of the old man’s facial expression, the narrative fashions a picture of the Anabaptist as a suspicious and obscure figure.

The Täufer’s ambivalent appearance reflects his dual personality. Representing the radical movement as a whole, he is described in terms of the polarized concepts of
Münsterite immorality and Anabaptist ethical conduct. The *schlimm-heilig* contrast inherent in his *Täufer* identity becomes particularly visible when he rescues Lydia from the ditch in which she had fallen and injured her foot. After her ordeal in the forest where she ran for her life as she was chased by a band of drunken “Unholde” who wanted to physically abuse her, she falls into the “Heidenloch” located in the “unheimlichen Orte” of a ruined monastery (197-198). This hole or dungeon that detained heathens in the past and is now filled with “Töchter der Finsterniß,” animals that seek the darkness of the underground cell, symbolizes Lydia’s moral and social downfall (214). When awakening in the gloomy hole and feeling the sharp pain of her broken ankle, she realizes: “Gott strafte mich für meine Sünde” (214). In this moment of despair and misery, the Anabaptist comes as a savior into the scene. He frees her from the purgatory-like pit and takes her back to the “Oberwelt” (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 “die süße Last warm auf seinem Rücken” and noticing “die weißen Hände,” recalling the girl’s innocent nature:

wurd dem alten Graukopf schwül zu Muth. Es war ihm, während er auf die weißen Hände niederschaute, als ob eine böse Stimme neben ihm spreche: “Solche Hände hat deine Martha nie gehabt. … Haben nicht Hetzer und Rottmann und andere Propheten gelehrt, daß wo ein Bruder fühle, daß er seine rechte geistliche Eheschwester noch nicht gefunden, der solle sich scheiden von der alten Schlange und eine neue Ehe eingehen?” (215)
The novel depicts Werner’s struggle with tempting thoughts that come to his mind while transporting the young woman. Hausrath constructs this ‘alter ego’ for the purpose of revealing the Anabaptist’s 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 legitimized polygamy during the Anabaptist kingdom in Westphalia. 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 “Judasbrüder” and remains steadfast to the beliefs of “die seinen Brüder” (215). Yet, the evil side of his personality further attempts to lure him into taking advantage of the girl’s unfortunate situation:


The alter ego presents a line of arguments that includes references to the Hebrew patriarchs of the Old Testament (a reference that had also been employed by the Münsterites during their reign) and historical facts about the aftermath of the Anabaptist kingdom. The list of biblical figures and the remark about the historical development in Westphalia once again reflect the author’s scholarship in history and theology. In the end, Werner commands “schweig, Satanus,” as he is frustrated by this moment of carnal desire (216). In a conversation with Lydia, he admits to his
weakness and tells her: “Wir sind alle nur Fleisch und Blut … Unsere Seele wird
straucheln, solange sie auf zwei Beinen wandelt” (216).

The Anabaptist Werner is depicted as a character with two opposing
personalities; he embodies both the savior and the sinner. The mentioning of the
Münster legacy encourages the image of the questionable character. Werner is
portrayed in his continuous struggle with the sinful nature inherited from the
Münsterites. Reiterating the common misconception of Münster as the birthplace of
Anabaptism, Hausrath counterbalances Werner’s heroic act of saving Lydia. The
author depicts the Täufer as an ambivalent figure to avoid an idealization of the faith
group since his historical narrative serves the purpose of supporting his own religio-
confessional position rather than contributing to a rehabilitation of the religious
minority in literature.

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—he is a “rothaarige[r] Sprößling”—and his ability
to imitate animals and even the devil acoustically (201). He performs this
preternatural activity in precarious situations, for instance when his father talks with
the perceived witch about Lydia’s disappearance:

Im Busche hinter ihr ward es lebendig. Ein Hahn krähte, dann hörte man
Schweine grunzen und ein teuflisches Wiehern. … [Sie] wendete ihren Blick
rückwärts, wo sie im Busche einen Mann mit feurigem Rachen zu sehen meinte.

(209)
Due to his devilish performances, the boy is known to the townspeople as “der Teufelsbube” (284). The author does not get tired of pointing out his diabolical disposition. He refers to him as “kleiner Teufel,” (217) “der die höllischen Stimmen nachahmte,” (281) by which he wanted “den Teufel zu spielen” (210). The boy’s actions reiterate the evil nature suggested by his devilish appearance. 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 Hexenturm. Keeping his father company at all times, the boy creates a link between Anabaptism and demonic forces.

The Anabaptist’s alleged alliance with demonic forces is also expressed by his association with the old woman who performs cabalistic rituals in the forest. In his observation that Werner “mit der Hexe Umgang hält,” Paolo fuses the Täufertum and witchcraft, thereby reflecting traditional opinions and anxieties about a sectarian conspiracy in 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). Paolo’s statement: “Hexe und Ketzer hausen zusammen, das ist die alte Ordnung,” refers to the intertwined...
history of heresy and witchcraft (281). Yet, this affiliation of Anabaptism with witchcraft is dismissed in the novel when Werner provides logical explanations for all strange occurrences of which the witch is accused. The *Täufer* appears as a rational figure when declaring sorcery as a fictitious creation and warning his son about the danger of preternatural beliefs (211). His voice of reason reflects the author’s support of rational secularism in the time of the late nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf*.

The *Täufer* is particularly vulnerable to accusations of a diabolical conspiracy and sedition due to his exclusion from the urban community. His withdrawal from the Heidelberg society causes fear of a secretive heretic plotting, as canards suggest, “die Hexe habe die Pest verbreitet und da sie in ihrem Hause nicht sicher war, hat der alte Sectirer, der Müller Werner, sie verborgen” (279). As a result of the perceived sectarian conspiracy, the Anabaptist and the witch are said to face similar punishment. The authority’s means of “Ketzerei und Zauberei auszurotten” are identical (284). The witch reminds Werner, “sie verbrennen euch so gut wie mich, wenn ich sage, was ich von euch weiß” (209). Hausrath fictionalized the shared fate of the witch and the Anabaptist to highlight the irrationality of the Catholic Church. Although the burning of *Täufer* and *Hexen* was not uncommon in South Germany during the 1570s, there is no historical evidence for such trials to have taken place in the area of the Palatinate. In fact, Jürgen Michael Schmidt has pointed out that the

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154 In the early fifteenth century, people suspected Waldensians and witches as linked together in a “grand, diabolical plot to undermine true belief and spread fear, discord, and atheism” (Waite 4).
155 None of the archives holding the Palatinate’s sixteenth-century documents (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Landesarchiv Speyer, Bayrisches Hauptsaatsarchiv, 159
Kurpfalz had hardly participated in any witch hunts since the medieval period: “keine einzige Hexenhinrichtung unter der Herrschaft der pfälzischen Kurfürsten [ist] nachweisbar” (208). Hausrath’s unhistorical reference to the collective execution of Anabaptist and shamanic sect members alludes to the Catholic Church’s irrational and cruel persecution of outsiders and thus contributes to the novel’s critique of Catholicism.

Contrasting the image of the Anabaptist as 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. His thoughtful actions underscore the narrative’s attempt to show the ridiculousness of the Catholic judgments. In the midst of the religious quarrels and persecutions of dissidents, the Anabaptist’s home is illustrated as “ein Bild des Friedens.” At the time of the plague, he functions as a gute Seele who supports “das hungernde Thal” 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 Hexenturm, Werner appeals to Paolo’s conscience. The young man expresses doubts about the Anabaptist’s motivation for approaching him and

Stadtarchiv Heidelberg, and the archive of the Heidelberg University) have any records of Hexen- or (Wieder)täufer trials in the area of Heidelberg during the reign of Friedrich III. Additionally, the Täuferakten Baden und Pfalz (1971) make no mention of legal cases against Anabaptists and witches during the second half of the sixteenth century. As Midelfort has noted, the Calvinist Palatinate seemed to have been relatively free of witch panics. Although witch hunts were on the rise in sixteenth-century South Germany, Friedrich III put an absolute ban on witch hunting in the Palatinate from 1559 until 1576 (57).
providing him with admonition and advice: “War ihm sein Schutzengel im Gewande des Ketzers erschienen oder war diesem Sohne des Teufels Gewalt gegeben, in seinem Herzen zu lesen und das Innerste herauszuwinden?” (353) His speculation about the old man’s true nature points to the way his eyes are opening up to a more clear-sighted way of viewing the world.

In the end, the image of the Schutzengel 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 “ihn um Haus und Hof gebracht” and caused him to live in hiding from city officials (361). The Anabaptist’s altruistic attitude and his thoughts on a living Christian faith greatly impact Paolo’s character development. Quoting the words of the Täufer, the young Italian proclaims an inner conversion to a more progressive Christianity:

“Der Geist”, so rief er mir einst zu, “wird nicht äußerlich im Dogma und nicht im Cultus, sondern nur im Leben. Nur da erscheint er also, daß man ihn sieht und spürt und hört. Was recht gehandelt sei, wissen wir sicherer, als was recht gelehrt sei. Darum ist das der rechte Glaube, daß ihr den Willen Gottes thut, nicht daß ihr Lehrsätze ersinnt über die unsichtbaren Dinge, die nicht des Menschen sind, sondern Gottes” (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 Täufer and makes him a spokesman for the “aufgeklärten Diesmus des 19. Jahrhunderts” (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.

D. Conclusion

Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainline Anabaptists and their beliefs appear as a major theme in a number of fictional texts. The novels and novellas treating the early movement draw their information about Anabaptism from historical accounts, rather than from personal encounters with the faith group. All three selected fictional works employ historical material from the sixteenth century. In addition to the early modern writings on the Täufertum, the authors also consulted research of contemporary historians who had become increasingly interested in the history of the Anabaptists. For the first time, historical scholars such as Carl Cornelius und Ludwig Keller had critically analyzed the sixteenth-century records, thereby uncovering and correcting preconceptions inherent in the tracts of secular and ecclesiastical authorities. However, this advanced research was of limited influence. It was mostly employed by writers who were familiar with the studies due to their scholarly involvement in the field of (church) history. Other authors, most prominently Gottfried Keller, resorted to historical works that
reiterated old prejudices against the religious minority. As a result of biased sources as well as a personal inexperience with the Brotherhood and a temporal distance from its early development, the nineteenth-century fictional narratives fabricate an ambivalent image of the faith group.

Unlike earlier fictional writings that focus on the practical, social, and economic aspects of the religious minority that authors observed in their acquaintance with Brethren, the nineteenth-century literary texts treat issues that were frequently discussed in historiographies, such as the Münsterite heritage and theology. In the case of Stern and Keller, not only the historical material but also the narrative structure and the explanatory strategies of contemporary historical research have influenced the literary texts and their depictions of Anabaptism. The nineteenth-century fictional literature begins to address the matter of Anabaptist faith and religious doctrine. The exaggeration as well as the specific selection of components of Anabaptist theology helps flag the purpose of these literary portrayals. As early Anabaptism was perceived as a historical phenomenon, authors were able to project certain ideas and programmatic objectives into their fictionalization of the radical Christian sect.

Stern’s literary representation of Anabaptists in the German Lowlands derived from his interest in the cultural history of the region. His narrative aims to expose prejudice against the group and to vindicate its reputation after the fiasco in Münster. His historical novella concentrates on certain elements of Anabaptist theology, namely the aspect of pacifism and non-retaliation, in order to create a
picture of the faith commune that starkly differs from delineations of the Münster kingdom.

Keller’s depiction of early Swiss Anabaptism serves as a contrast to the concept of the Swiss national identity. In his historical novella, the *Täufertum* becomes an object of superficial ridicule. The author presents a stereotyped perception of the group’s belief. He fictionalizes anecdotal material about religious practices of aberrant branches of the movement to suit his own ends. The grotesque picture of the Anabaptist chiliastic notion and literal Biblicism fulfils the function of criticizing religious fanaticism and consequently supporting a national spirit and culture.

Hausrath directly employs the Anabaptist theology for his anti-Catholic propaganda. In his historical novel, he assigns the old *Täufer* with the task of criticizing the dogmatic character of the established church. With the voice of a progressive Protestant instead of a pious Anabaptist, he advocates a practical Christianity that is attained by a living faith rather than through clerical structures and obligatory church theorems. The author interprets three chief characteristics of Anabaptist faith, namely adult baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the role of the pastor, in favour of his *Kulturkampf*-inspired religious-political agenda.

The historical narratives are set in different times and places, corresponding to the authors’ interest in and familiarity with native regions, histories, and programmatic aims. Particularly Hausrath’s novel, *Klytia*, illustrates the connection between narrated time and the prevailing situation at the time in which the narrative
was written. 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, Keller’s delineation of the fanatic Anabaptist sect which interferes with Zwingli’s initiative to establish a reformed church and a national awareness refers to Switzerland’s late nineteenth-century struggle between state and church and its call for a (revised) federal constitution that includes a ban of certain religious orders such as the ultramontane Jesuits.

Apart from the differences in narrated time and place, all three fictional works initially create an ambivalent image of the Brotherhood. The questionable character of the fellowship is predominantly generated by associating the Anabaptists with Münsterites, with the exception of Ursula, which, set at a time prior to the events in Münster, develops the dubious picture of the fellowship by caricaturing early beliefs. Both Stern and Hausrath incorporate references to the violent and sinful Anabaptist kingdom in order to produce a negative image of the faith group. The identification of Anabaptists with the group of fundamentalists in Westphalia transfers to a literal level the historical debate about a direct lineage between mainline Anabaptists and Münster Melchiorites. In his novella about a community of former Münsterites, Stern presents the popular opinion that views all Anabaptists being evil or insane. In the course of the narrative, he dismantles this preconception as he contrasts the image of violent Anabaptism to the persecuted group of peaceful Brethren. While Stern makes a valid distinction between genuine Anabaptists and Münsterites, Hausrath illustrates the Täufer’s sinful nature as an
inheritance of the movement’s past. He draws a direct connection between the Münster prophets and the peaceful South German Anabaptists when exemplifying humans’ constant struggle with corporal temptations.

In the selected narratives, the Anabaptists first appear as a strange, somewhat mysterious, incomprehensible, and threatening community of believers that becomes a concern to the body of the state due to its affiliation with the rebellious Münsterites and its theological principles that imply nonconformity with the secular authority and the established church. It is no coincidence that particularly the nineteenth-century fictional works of Stern and Keller portray the religious minority as nonconformists. At that time, both, Germany and Switzerland were in the process of establishing themselves as nations. This contemporary notion of a national identity is projected onto the sixteenth century, setting the groundwork for the development of national units. From the perspective of the nineteenth-century nationalist ideal, the early modern radical counterculture, epitomized by the Anabaptist movement, is irreconcilable with the concept of the national community. The issue of national identity is also discussed in Hausrath’s historical novel. However, Klytia employs the Täufer’s nonconformity as a way to point out the problems of Catholicism which the author perceives as a real threat to rationalism and national unity.

In the historical novellas written by Stern and Keller, the demonization of the Brethren as a seditious group of radical reformers contributes to their role as societal outcasts. Members of the religious minority function as antagonists that stand in diametrical opposition to the protagonists’ notions of a national and religious unity.
In Hausrath’s novel, the Anabaptist is partially demonized and becomes an outsider of the Heidelberg society. Through his experience as an outcast, the narrative exposes the irrationalism of the Catholic Church and its persecution of social outsiders. On the one hand, Hausrath’s narrative illustrates the Anabaptist attempt to separate from the outside world to avoid ecclesiastical control by the dominant church. It is precisely this group-internal motivation to separate from society that contributes to the Täufer’s image of the “other”. On the other hand, the Brethren’s ostracism in Klytia as well as Die Wiedertäufer is caused by external factors such as harassment and persecution. In the twentieth century, as scholarly research on Anabaptist history becomes increasingly concerned with the testimonies of persecution victims, the matter of oppression and isolation, addressed only marginally in these narratives, will receive more attention in the fictionalization of the Brotherhood.
Chapter 4: Nachfolge Christi—The Fellowship of Martyrs

A. Riehl: Mein Recht (1875) and Fugitive Anabaptists in the Palatinate

1. Progressive Historiography and Ethnographic Interest

Starting in the late nineteenth century, fictional texts treating the early Anabaptist movement express a greater understanding for the group’s distinct theology. In their historical narratives, writers from the fields of academia and theology alike explore the nature of the Anabaptist faith. As they become increasingly concerned with the Brotherhood’s particular beliefs and practices, they begin to abandon biased images of the faith group. Reasons for this new trend in the literary representation of the reformist group are varied. On the one hand, these theology-conscious portrayals of the Anabaptist community are informed by advancements in historical research and the discovery of the Brethren’s own literature. On the other hand, this tolerant stance toward the religious minority stems from personal contact with nineteenth-century descendants of the movement, who receive a greater acceptance by the dominant society due to their shift toward a more Pietistic approach to faith and for their agricultural prowess.

In the case of author Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, individual experience with Mennonites in the region of Wiesbaden and Crefeld in addition to his exposure to progressive Anabaptist historiography contributed to the sympathetic attitude toward Anabaptism he articulated in his fictional and ethnographic literature. According to Crous
and Horsch Bender, Riehl’s tolerant stance toward the religious minority developed through contact with Mennonite and Amish communities in the area of the Rheingau, where he grew up, and Mainz, where his grandfather resided. Both of these towns are located in the midst of old, well-established Mennonite settlements (329). His experience with the local Anabaptists is captured in *Die Pfälzer* (1857), an ethnographic study of the Palatinate, commissioned by King Maximilian II. In his work, Riehl reports on the sect’s pacifist nature, the shepherds’ learnedness, and the Mennonite farmers’ agricultural expertise. Riehl was also familiar with Mennonite communities in the North. In *Wanderbuch* (1869), the fourth volume of his cultural studies of Germany, he praises Cornelius de Greiff’s contributions to the city of Crefeld. De Greiff, a Mennonite philanthropist, is described as “ein echter Typus für den historischen Gesamtcharakter der ganzen Stadt” (100).

While Riehl’s frequent contact with contemporary Anabaptists generated respect and understanding for the Brethren and led to his sympathetic portrayal of their belief, practices, and industry in ethnological writings, his association with fellow historian Carl

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156 According to Diephouse, Riehl was influenced by his grandfather’s Pietist faith (5). Crous and Horsch Bender have even speculated that his grandfather may have been related to Mennonites in the area (329). 157 “Die Mennoniten [sind] über das ganze Land ausgestreut, und hier in größerer Zahl (3350 Seelen) sesshaft … und zwar hat sich die Zahl dieser Bekenner in einem halben Jahrhundert nahezu verdreifacht …das ist ein gutes Zeichen der wachsenden landwirtschaftlichen Bedeutung der Pfalz, denn wo der Pflug durch goldene Auen geht, da schlägt auch der Mennonite sein Bethaus auf … Unter den studierten Predigern der Häftler am Rhein gibt es übrigens Männer vor deren wissenschaftlicher und humaner Bildung das Licht manches katholischen und protestantischen Pfarrers so dunkel werden mag wie eine Westricher Straßenlaterne. Seit alter Zeiten fanden die Mennoniten in der Pfalz größere Duldung als anderswo, und schon in früheren Jahrhunderten theilten hier die Protestanten ihren Kirchhof mit den Männern dieser friedlichen Secte” (374-375). In his study, Riehl also describes the difference between the Mennonites and the Amish: “Wir haben hier ‘Häftler’ (oder ‘Bärtler’) und ‘Knöpfler,’ eine strengere und eine mildere Fraction” (374). His acquaintance with contemporary Amish and Mennonites and his knowledge about the distinguishing aspects of the two branches may explain the (historically incorrect) reference to the “Haften” in his novella, *Mein Recht* (235). 158 Crous and Horsch Bender have mentioned the author’s visits to the Mennonite community in Crefeld and his talks with the elder Johannes Molenaar (329).
Adolf Cornelius is considered to have called the author’s attention to the movement’s history. Crous and Horsch Bender elucidate a probable connection between Riehl and Cornelius during their time as professors in Munich and conclude that the latter had some bearing on Riehl’s choice of the Anabaptist theme for portrayal in his novella Mein Recht (329). Cornelius’ thorough research on the topic of Münsterite Anabaptism and his break with the traditional, biased treatment of this subject may have encouraged Riehl’s sympathetic depiction of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists in his historical narrative.

2. Plot Summary

In Mein Recht, a historical novella published in the volume Am Feierabend, Riehl addresses the Anabaptist position against vengeance. Set in the southern Palatinate in 1577, the narrative begins with a scuffle at a tavern in which the three Gülzow brothers, Hennecke, Klaus, and Joachim, try to keep their friend and neighbor, Peter Graumann, from harming a troubadour. As Joachim attempts to disarm Peter, he runs into the latter’s knife and later dies of an infection. After his burial, Klaus plans a bloody revenge, but is stopped by Hennecke, who prefers to hand the case to the court and be given justice by the judge. During the brothers’ debate about vengeance, an old Anabaptist and his young niece, both marked by exhaustion and hunger, approach the Gülzows and ask for a few days’ shelter, promising to work as farm helps in return. During a conversation with the old man, Hennecke brings up the issue of the lawsuit. Despite his own experience with torture and the witnessing of his brother’s death, the Anabaptist insists on the position of

159 Cornelius and Riehl held positions as professors in related fields at the same time and both became members of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Cornelius published an article on the Münster conquest in the 1872 issue of Raumers Historisches Taschenbuch, edited by Riehl.
non-vengeance. He and the young girl leave the village while Hennecke struggles with the news that Peter has been found not guilty. As a result of the court’s acquittal, the farmer loses faith in the legal system and decides to take matters into his own hands. He declares a feud, and with the support of his brother, he kills his neighbor. Peter’s family members press charges against the Gülzow brothers, and when the case is dismissed as an act of self-defense, they appeal to the highest court in Speyer, charging Hennecke with violation of the public peace.

Eleven years later, Martha, the young Anabaptist woman, returns to work for the Gülzows. In the meantime, Klaus has moved on with his life and started a family, whereas Hennecke is preoccupied with his pending lawsuit. He is plagued by recurring visions of Peter. When Martha reappears at the farm, he no longer hears the ghost’s voice at night. Her presence seems to have a soothing effect on him. Upon being asked about her family, she relates the story of her father’s torture and execution in the dungeons of the Windsberg castle. Hennecke admires her calm and peaceful spirit and asks her to marry him. She accepts his marriage proposal, under the condition that he abandons his lawsuit; however, the love he feels for her cannot overpower his obsession with the legal case, and so she leaves him. At night, he starts conversing with Peter’s ghost again. In the course of the following day, he thoroughly studies the matter of vengeance presented in the two Testaments. Finally, he calls the entire household to his room and pronounces judgement. He declares that the small book (the New Testament) has won over the large (the Old Testament) and concludes that he is guilty of Peter’s murder. Having announced his own conviction, he falls back into his chair and dies.
3. *Volkskunde*: The Study of Culture, Mentality, and Customs

Riehl’s historical novella treats the Christian principle of non-retaliation in the context of natural and civil order the sixteenth-century society. The farmer, Hennecke Gülzow, encounters a rigid bureaucracy and a judiciary that is based on class privilege. His experience with the local court system leads to a vengeful murder, and later to his own madness and death. As Mary B. Stein has noted, the author’s depiction of the peasant’s injured sense of justice vis-à-vis a discriminatory legal system that causes Hennecke’s insanity is reminiscent of Kleist’s novella, *Michael Kohlhaas*, from which Riehl undoubtedly gained some inspiration (503). The protagonist’s conflict with legal norms and the shattering of his faith in the judicial system, refers not only to the specific historical situation in which the novella is set, but also to a general discussion of ethical problems of “die ganze arge Welt” (Schowalter 664).

Riehl’s definition of novellas as “Sittengemälde” reflects central ideas that unite his literary and scholarly works, namely *Sitte und Stand* (Stein 501). As a folklorist, he was particularly concerned with the concept of cultural identity. According to Stein, Riehl refashioned the discipline of *Volkskunde* as an independent field consisting of empirical and social scientific inquiry that focuses on material culture, mentality, and customs. *Stamm*, *Spache*, *Sitte*, and *Siedlung* thus become integral aspects constituting Riehl’s folklore research (491-492). His study of German culture exemplifies the fusion of scholarly and poetic elements that, as Stein observes, has become a trademark

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160 The organic relationship between nature, history, and society, proposed in his four-volume study on German culture, *Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Socialpolitik* (1851-1869), was later appropriated by National Socialists in the *Third Reich*. 172
of his works (492). He approached his ethnographical research with an artistic sensibility and sought to fabricate a “mit künstlerischer Oekonomie abgerundetes Bild” of the German people (Die Pfälzer III). At the same time, his fictional texts were informed by the scholarly impulses of folklore study. In Mein Recht, for instance, the description of Hennecke’s act of vengeance and his experience with the legal system indicates a cultural critique. Permeated by a sense of cultural pessimism, the narrative depicts the peasant’s struggle with the legal and moral order that eventually leads to insanity and death.

In the introduction to his 1856 collection of novellas, Culturgeschichtliche Novellen, Riehl remarked that “die Aufgabe der Novellistik nach dieser Seite darin (liege), auf dem Grund der Gesittungszustände einer gegebenen Zeit frei geformte Charaktere in ihren Leidenschaften und Conflicten walten zu lassen” (xii). In my analysis of his novella Mein Recht, I will thus explore how the characters, although fictional, represent notions and customs that predominated in the period of early Anabaptism. I will also investigate the differences between historical fact and fictional representation to determine how authorial intervention reflects contemporary notions of ethical principles and attempts to shape the social consciousness of readers.

4. Representations of Anabaptist Customs and Theology

Mein Recht delineates the Täufer characters with much historical truth and insight into the early movement’s experience of persecution and migration. The Anabaptist refugees are first introduced as strangers who are suffering from privation, hunger, and weariness:

Da trat ein fremder alter Mann mit langem Bart zu ihnen heran; er sah matt und elend aus, bestaubt und abgerissen, als komme er von weiter Wanderschaft, und
führte ein zartes, bleiches Mädchen an der Hand, ein Kind von zwölf Jahren, welches sich vor Müdigkeit kaum auf den Beinen zu halten vermochte. (197)

In his literary sketch of the Anabaptist, Riehl incorporates his personal observations of Amish and Mennonite clothing and grooming habits collected during his ethnographic field studies in the Palatinate. According to the term “Bärtler,” Riehl assigns to the Brethren in his study Die Pfälzer, Matthias, the Anabaptist, is pictured as a strange old man with a long beard (374). Later in the story, his appearance is further described: “Matthias war keiner von den Strengen, er trug keine Haften am Rock” (235). Corresponding to the epithets “Knöpfler” (button-wearers) and “Häftler” (hook-wearers), employed by Riehl to distinguish the particularities of Amish and Mennonite attire in his ethnography on the Palatinate, he categorizes the old Anabaptist as a Mennonite (374).

The Amish, followers of the Anabaptist elder, Jakob Ammann (1656-1730), were known for a strict church discipline, reflected by outward signs such as retaining the use of hooks and eyes to fasten clothing, even after buttons had become common (Nolt 44).

Applying his knowledge about the different Anabaptist factions gained from his field study in the Palatinate, Riehl places the Reist-Ammann schism, in which the Amish broke off from the Swiss Brethren group in the 1690s, more than a century too early as his novella treats the sixteenth-century movement. This description of Matthias’ outward appearance, informed by Riehl’s Volkskundestudien, indicates his affiliation to the specific branch of the radical movement. Whether aware of this anachronism or not, the author integrates descriptions of distinctive apparel into his novella in order to illustrate the group’s “otherness”.

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This alienation of the group is also reflected in Martha’s words, when she says later in the story: “Mich ließ er [Matthias] zwar ein ganz besonderes schwarzes Häubchen tragen, aber weil mich im fremden Land die Kinder darüber auslachten, verbarg ich’s unter der Schürze” (235-236). The young girl experiences the black bonnet as a hindrance when seeking contact with the local children. She associates the ostracism caused by the Anabaptist dress code not only with her membership in the Brotherhood, but also with her peers’ rejection of her as a foreigner, thereby recalling her family’s fate as fugitives.

Aside from their distinctive apparel, the Anabaptists strike the company of locals as peculiar due to the old man’s notion of eschatology. Matthias expresses an anticipation of God’s kingdom while talking with Klaus Gülzow. When being asked about his future plans, he counters with the question: “Kann nicht schon übermorgen jene Zeit kommen, da keine Zeit mehr ist?” Responding to Klaus’ comment about the end of the harvest, he poses another question “Kann nicht schon vorher jener große Erntetag anbrechen, von welchem geschrieben steht: ‘Der Tag zu ernten ist gekommen; denn die Ernte der ganzen Welt ist dürre geworden?’” (197-198). Matthias extracts certain terms from the farmer’s inquiry and employs them in symbolism, prophesying the world to come. His apocalyptic belief is elaborated with a quotation from the Book of Revelation (14:15). This method of converting a simple question into a chiliastic reference lends him an air of mysteriousness.

A notion of mysterious secrecy surrounding Matthias and Martha is also evoked by the old man’s refusal to share his family’s story of persecution. People of the village speculate about his taciturnity and think of him as a criminal:
The villagers view Matthias’ lack of origin and a story with much suspicion. His self-exclusion from the local community as a necessary means of avoiding further persecution is interpreted as an attempt of hiding his supposed past as an outlaw. It is only the village’s pastor who feels sorry for the two refugees whom he rightly assumes to be affiliated with the Anabaptist movement:

Suspecting Matthias’ Anabaptist orientation based on some of his comments, the pastor keeps his supposition to himself in order not to inflict more pain on the suffering fugitives. He pities the Brethren for the cruel persecution they encounter wherever they flee and notes that these “arme Leute” have long since abandoned the fanaticism of their Münsterite ancestors. By having the minister incorrectly link all Anabaptists to the
Münsterites, the author shows the prejudiced reputation associated with the Brethren.\textsuperscript{161} Yet, it is not the thought of the Münsterite violence and insanity that forms the image of the fellowship given by the account of the local pastor. Rather, the events in Westphalia explain the heavy Anabaptist persecution. Portraying the Anabaptists as a victimized minority that arouses the pastor’s compassion, the author discusses the effects of prejudice, labelling, and inherited guilt. Through depictions of the group’s distinct theology, peculiar appearance, and experience of persecution and ostracism, the narrative marks them as outsiders, anticipating a confrontation between them and the non-Anabaptist protagonist over issues relating to ethical principles.

5. Principles of Forgiveness and Non-Retaliation

To save himself and the girl from further torment and injury, Matthias does not reveal his Anabaptist orientation to the local community. Nevertheless, the pacifist and non-retaliatory ideas he expresses in conversation with Hennecke clearly reflect Anabaptist principles. When the farmer insists on hearing Matthias’ opinion about the oaths of four witnesses, he replies: “Ich sage, daß vier Eide vier Sünden sind; denn es steht geschrieben: Ihr sollt aller Dinge nicht schwören, eure Rede sei ja, ja – nein, nein” (201). His rejection of the oath corresponds to the Anabaptist stance on swearing. Quoting from Matthew 5:37, he follows the line of reasoning presented in the Schleitheim Confession.

\textsuperscript{161} Despite the erroneous idea that all Brethren derived from the violent Anabaptist kingdom in Münster, Horsch Bender assumes that Riehl did not personally hold this view on the Brotherhood’s origin and rather shared Cornelius’ opinion on the matter of Anabaptist heritage (Anabaptist Novelettes 184). It appears that Riehl attempts to dismiss the Münster rebellion as “tolles Wesen” of the early movement and disengages the peaceful Brethren from the fanatical reign in Westphalia by stressing their renunciation of Münsterites’ despicable conduct. This way, he is able to reconcile assumed historical facts on the group’s origin with his personal sympathy toward contemporary descendents of the movement, reflected in the pastor’s compassionate attitude toward the faith group.
When the farmer further demands to know whether Matthias considers it a sin to take legal action to exact justice, the old man answers: “Ich halte es für unchristlich, meinen Nächsten zu verklagen” (202). His criticism of going to court to sue one’s neighbor also resembles the Anabaptist attitude toward the sword of justice. In article six of the Schleitheim Confession, the faith group states that Jesus did not wish to pass judgement and that therefore Brethren shall not pass sentence in disputes (14-15). Consequently, Matthias regards the practice of bringing matters before the court of law as a custom that contradicts Christ’s teaching. Aspiring to become a disciple to Christ, he abstains from using the court system or any form of violence to defend his rights.

In the course of the conversation with Hennecke, the old man pleads for a non-violent and un-revengeful stance. When the local farmer asks him whether he prefers to avenge the death of a brother by force rather than by legal actions, Matthias quickly replies: “Fehde und Gewalt wie aller Krieg ist noch unchristlicher als ein Prozeß und ein Eid” (202). Rejecting all forms of violence, he clearly takes a pacifist position that mirrors the Anabaptist principle of non-resistance. His inclination toward peace evolves from a commitment to follow Christ in his teachings of love and peace.

In response to Hennecke’s assumption that the old man must not have experienced injustice, let alone the death of a brother, Matthias reports of the abuse and execution of his brothers in faith:

“Glaubet mir, ich hätte den Mord nicht eines Bruders, sondern vieler hundert Brüder zu rächen; allein es steht geschrieben: ‘Die Rache ist mein, ich will vergelten, spricht der Herr!’ Und ob mir selbst kein Unrecht geschehen sei?
Blicket her!” Und er entblößte Arm und Schulter und zeigte viele tiefe Narben, wie sie von den Marterwerkzeugen der Folterkammer zurückzubleiben pflegen.

(202)

His slashed body serves as an example for the brutality that the Brotherhood experienced in trials led by state and church authorities. Although he and his faithful comrades experienced much harassment and pain, he advocates non-retaliation by quoting Roman 12:19. He proclaims the principle of peace and forgiveness that is central to Anabaptist piety. The author creates an image of the Täufer that is informed by the movement’s martyr history and theology.

The old Anabaptist further discusses the principle of non-vengeance by giving the example of his brother’s death.


Addressing the issue of non-retaliation, the novella develops parallel as well as contrastive structures between the protagonist and his strange visitor. On the one hand, the situation of Matthias bears resemblance to that of Hennecke. Both men mourn the death of their brothers, caused by acts of violence. Each of them feels pain and sorrow for the loss of the sibling. On the other hand, this parallel between the farmer’s and the Anabaptist’s lamentation of the lost brother is broken up by diverging ways of coming to terms with the tragedy.
Hennecke’s quest for retribution stands in diametrical opposition to Matthias’ notion of forgiveness and non-retaliation. Riehl pursues a didactic purpose with the juxtaposition of Hennecke’s and Matthias’ ways of dealing with the loss of the brother. As Stein has noted, the author attempts to shape the social conscience of his readers through the contrast of opposites (501). Presenting the men’s opposite approaches to the matter of injustice, the narrative sparks a discussion of law, ethics, and faith.

Martha’s character functions as a mediator between the farmer and the Anabaptist principle of non-retaliation. The novella portrays Hennecke as strangely moved by the presence of Matthias’ niece. The delicate girl of twelve, who has suffered greatly from the experience of persecution and expulsion, draws the farmer’s attention. He is captivated by her tear-filled eyes. “Dem Mädchen traten die hellen Tränen in die Augen. Hennecke heftete im Fortgehen noch einen festen Blick auf das still weinende Kind” (198). He later recalls, “und das Kind weinte, als ob es in Not sei, jetzt sehe ich erst die Tränen in seinen großen blauen Augen” (199). The image of the weeping girl impresses Hennecke deeply. Her tears not only reflect her sorrow caused by the loss of her father but also evoke his own suppressed grief for which he seeks recompense at the court of law. The feelings of sadness shared by Martha and Hennecke generate oppositional reactions. Martha deals with the pain of having lost her father by quietly mourning whereas Hennecke seeks legal revenge. In stark contrast to the man’s aggressive pursuit of his legal rights for vengeance, her emotional reaction illustrates an innocent and peaceful nature that enables her to express sorrow in its purest form.
As much as the girl’s eyes mirror the pain and grief of her family’s loss, they also reflect her peaceful disposition. Hennecke is mesmerized by her calm presence and her demeanor that radiates peace and tranquillity:

Hennecke konnte den Blick gar nicht wegwenden von dem Kinde, welches ihn mit seinem guten großen Auge so treuherzig ansah, und ihm war, als streiche ihm ein kühlender Hauch des Friedens über die glühende Stirn. Da entsann er sich, gestern abend im Anschauen dieses Kindes Ähnliches empfunden zu haben.

(207)

Her eyes shine in calmness and have a soothing effect on him. The description of her peaceful personality evokes a sense of Gelassenheit in the Anabaptist understanding of the term. She is characterized by a contentment and calm spirit that suggest a deeper level of submission and resignation to the will of God. At her young age, she epitomizes the Anabaptist virtues of humility, submission, and peacefulness.

When Martha returns to the Gülzow farm eleven years later, her calm and peaceful spirit has not diminished. Hennecke recognizes her because of her eyes, “diese Augen, welche Frieden sprachen und um Frieden baten” (222). The farmer is “seltsam bewegt” by the sight of the young woman (222). Her humble and quiet presence continues to touch him as “jener kühlende Hauch des Friedens–wie dazumal” (223). Furthermore, her presence seems to banish the nocturnal visions of the dead neighbor. Klaus observes, “Peter schweigt, seit Martha im Hause ist,” and wonders, “sollte sie ihn von der Schwelle treiben?” (224). The Anabaptist woman exudes an aura of peace and serenity that has a soothing effect on the Hennecke’s mental and emotional state.
Martha’s peaceful appearance keeps the man from starting a conversation with her. He is hesitant to talk to her as his only subject matter relates to the trial and he does not dare to speak about murder in the presence of this irenic creature. Her peaceful character forms a demarcation between Hennecke and herself. He also avoids addressing the matter of “Totschlag” due to respect of her family’s tragedy. Finally, he manages to ask her about her father’s death. Reluctantly, she relates the story to him. She recounts:

Meinem Vater wurde der Kopf abgeschlagen … Der Vater aber hat vor dem Block dem Henker verziehen und dem Amtmann und dem gnädigen Herrn und dem Kaiser und ist freudig gestorben mit dem Gebet, daß Gott seinen Verfolgern die Sünden vergeben möge. (226)

Her father’s steadfastness to his belief can be understood as part of the Brotherhood’s imitation of Christ. As he strives to incarnate the values associated with Christ’s teachings, he persists in his faith and even forgives his executioner and judges. With his act of benevolent generosity in setting prosecutors free of any guilt, he replicates God’s forgiveness in Christ.

6. Group Identity through Notions of Discipleship

The narrative conveys the essence of Anabaptism, namely discipleship to Jesus. Martha’s father epitomizes Christ’s teachings of love and forgiveness when he offers reconciliation to his executioner rather than seeking justice by law or force. Although he and his persecuted fellowship are confronted with torture and execution, they refrain from violent self-defense. In her account of her father’s death, the young woman recalls that he and other believers could have “wohl rächen... aber sie taten’s nicht” (227).
Deriving from Christ’s command of non-resistance as stated in Matthew 5:39 –“do not resist one who is evil”–they relinquish the use of force and abandon their right to revenge.

When hearing about the group’s non-resistant position toward the authority’s injustice and cruelty, Hennecke remarks that the Brotherhood could have surely taken revenge, according to “Aug’ um Auge, Zahn um Zahn, so heißt’s in der Bibel” (227). The young woman, however, counters:


Martha dismisses Hennecke’s reference to Moses 2 21:24 as Old Testament rhetoric and reminds him that vengeance is at God’s initiative and shall never be a Christian prerogative, according to Romans 12:19. The narrative draws an image of Anabaptism that is characterized by a forgiving and non-revengeful nature. The Brethren’s doctrine of pacifism and non-retaliation stands in diametrical opposition to the protagonist’s insistence on justice sought through legal and physical force. Riehl divides the characters of his novella into Anabaptists and non-Anabaptists and contrasts their positions on vengeance; the Brethren derive their unvengeful attitude from the New Testament, whereas the non-Anabaptist position is ultimately determined by folk mores and judicial conventions.
Martha’s reiteration of the pacifist and non-revengeful attitude voiced by Matthias earlier in the story indicates the construction of a group-internal identity through which the Anabaptists have maintained a firm division from the established society. In a Christocentric approach to the reading of Scripture, the group recognizes Jesus as the final standard for all matters pertaining to the religious community. Martha’s acceptance of the New Testament commandments as norms and directions of her own life reflects the Anabaptist idea of Nachfolge (following Christ). Upon entering the fellowship of believers and becoming “ein rechtes Glied der Gemeinde,” Martha committed herself to a life that follows Christ in his suffering (235). She reports to Hennecke that she promised her father, “ich [sei] bereit, für unsern Glauben zu sterben,” as he laid his hand on her head in the dungeons right before his execution, a ritual symbolizing baptism that he was not able to administer (235).

The image of Anabaptism sketched in Riehl’s narrative centers on the group’s commitment to discipleship by means of suffering and forgiveness in order to develop an antithetical position to the protagonist’s vengeful attitude. As the author follows a didactic objective in his illustration of antipodes, he only affirms the principle of non-retaliation while depicting other aspects of the Brotherhood’s piety, particularly the practice of adult baptism, with an air of skepticism. The novella reports that Hennecke was horrified to think that Martha had been baptized twice, “das deuchte ihm ein furchtbarer Frevel: war dadurch das Sakrament der Taufe nicht ganz verdorben und auf den Kopf gestellt?” (234) Only when the young woman explains to him that she had not

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162 This “theology of discipleship”, an expression coined by Harold S. Bender, requires a complete obedience to the Son of God, even on the matter of taking up the cross (Discipleship 28).
actually received a second baptism by water, he is relieved and eager to pursue his wedding plans. Here, the novella misses to recognize the concept of a voluntary and committed church associated with the act of believer’s baptism practiced by the Täufer.

It is the principle of non-retaliation that defines the identity of the Anabaptist community in Riehl’s novella. The notion of eschewing vengeance is depicted as the chief factor that generates the group’s identity and causes separation from non-believers. The author illustrates the segmentation between Anabaptists and others with the example of Hennecke’s proposal of marriage. As the farmer declares his intentions to Martha, she rejects his proposal on the grounds of her affiliation with the Gemeinde. “Ich kann Euch nicht heiraten. Gott weiß, ob unsere Gemeinde noch besteht…; aber im Geiste und Willen folge ich dem Geiste meines Vaters” (237). Since Hennecke does not comprehend the group’s concept of conciliation and refuses to give up his lawsuit, Martha leaves him. Her departure from the Gülzow farm signifies the Anabaptist emphasis on maintaining a boundary with the outside world. The narrative alludes to a sense of shared belonging within the Anabaptist community generated by the believers’ objective to strictly follow Christ’s teachings of peace and reconciliation.

**B. Stähle: Der Reichsprofos (1904) and Early South German Anabaptism**

**1. Early Twentieth-Century Historical Research on Anabaptism**

At the turn of the century, historical research experienced a profound change toward a more Täufer-sensitive investigation of the sixteenth century. Scholars began to fathom the nature and significance of the hitherto neglected branch of church history.
They broke with the traditional presentation of Anabaptist history, which up to this point paid no attention to the persecutions lasting until the eighteenth century and bringing a martyr’s death to thousands of Brethren. 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, and the separation of church and state. When historical scholarship identified a similarity between fundamental Anabaptist tenets and chief principles of modern society, a reversal of opinion regarding the movement’s nature took place. Historians were eager to become acquainted with the early confessional writings of the movement’s leaders and the collections of martyr testimonials. As a result of this new interest in Anabaptist historiography, a number of works were produced that investigated the history of the Täufer in various regions and portrayed leading personalities of the movement.\textsuperscript{163}

As part of my study, I will investigate how this shift toward a persecution-conscious portrayal of the Brotherhood, influenced by the discovery of the movement’s own literature, is reflected in fictional works treating the sixteenth-century faith group. In the first decades of the twentieth century, a series of literary works on the early Brotherhood appears in Germany and Switzerland, including Wilhelm Stähle’s novel Der

\textsuperscript{163} 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 trial 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).
Reichsprofos (1904), 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). Stähle’s historical novel, Der Reichsprofos, will serve as a representative example of the early twentieth-century fictional literature that was in the process of transforming from biased depictions of the early Täufer movement to a sympathetic treatment of the Anabaptist history of persecution and martyrdom.

In my analysis of Der Reichsprofos, I will examine the importance of the historians’ objective accounts of the Anabaptist history for the author’s literary portrayal of the faith group. I will determine what impact the access to modern research and the recently gained awareness of the Täufer’s sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature of lamentation has on the Anabaptist-themed narrative in regard to the author’s revision of the ambivalent image of Anabaptism. I will observe how Stähle’s novel gradually abandons the image of the Täufertum as a questionable fellowship and replaces it with representations that are informed by the group’s own chronicles and historical narration. Furthermore, I will determine how the author’s concern with the Brethren’s personal experience of persecution and martyrdom relates to his personal belief and commitment to the religio-political agenda of the period shortly after the Kulturkampf.

2. Plot Summary

The Protestant minister Wilhelm Stähle, who published under the synonym Phillip Spiess, studied the regional history of Württemberg and discovered the tragic fate of early Anabaptists in the area. In his Heimatroman, he fictionalizes the conflict of local
Anabaptist communities with the state. After the *Täufer* doctrine was spread in the Duchy of Württemberg by the prominent leaders Reublin and Sattler in 1526, the movement reached its climax in the years 1527 to 1530. 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 action against the spread of the radical movement. Aichelin’s harassment and execution of *Täufer* is depicted in Stähle’s historical 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 Protestant influences in the Duchy. In his office as provost of the Swabian League, he is responsible for overseeing a large territory and travels extensively. During his absence from home, his wife Grete develops an interest in the Anabaptist faith that Wallner, a travelling preacher from Austria, spreads in the area. The preacher initiates her conversion to the Anabaptist fellowship. While receiving a full body baptism during a nocturnal gathering at a forest creek, the pregnant woman dies. Deeply in pain and sorrow by the loss of his beloved wife and their unborn child, Aichelin turns into the frightful provost who persecutes and kills a large number of *Täufer* in the Württemberg and Tyrol region.

When a shunned member of the community informs him of an Anabaptist gathering, Aichelin and his horsemen surprise a congregational meeting on the farm of

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164 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 favorable ground for Anabaptist preachers (Swabian Anabaptism 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, Swabian Anabaptism 157).
Burkhardt, the Mantelbauer. The provost seizes the resident farmer and his son and takes them to the neighboring village where he hangs them from a linden tree after having repeatedly given them the opportunity to recant. Aichelin also 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 from Veronika, the Mantelbauer’s daughter who in the meantime has assumed a Lutheran rather than Anabaptist position. Upon experiencing the charity provided by the young Anabaptist woman, Aichelin turns into a proponent of the Protestant belief. On his way to the proconsul’s office, where he wants to make a plea for the Lutheran faith, he is stabbed to death by the young man who had informed him about the Anabaptist gathering at the Mantelhof.

3. Protestant Church History and the Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren

Wilhelm Stähle constructs the story of sixteenth-century Anabaptism in 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 Duchy. He gained information about the spread of the Brotherhood from Reinhold Schmid’s Reformationsgeschichte Württembergs (1904), which was published during the 500th anniversary of the German reformer Johannes Brenz, who was commemorated by the Evangelischer Bund in Baden Württemberg—the Protestant league of which Stähle was a

165 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 “Hof zum Mantel und da 1336 ein Hilprant v. Mantel lebte …, so muß wohl hier ein ritterliches Geschlecht ehemals gesessen seyn” (321).
member. In *Der Reichsprofos*, Stähle adopts Schmid’s Protestant centered perspective on the early development of the faith group. At the beginning of his novel, the author parallels the historian’s account in terms of describing the Anabaptist ambivalent nature associated with their clandestine nocturnal meetings and their oppositional stance to worldly authorities. Schmid’s historiography lacks, however, in differentiation between the various Anabaptist branches. The historian depicts the Täufer as a homogeneous group that practices “Gütergemeinschaft,” inspired by the early church (75). Apart from this generalization, the author gives an accurate account of the fellowship’s principles and doctrine, and acknowledges the Brethren’s suffering and martyrdom at the hands of state officials.

Stähle was also familiar with the Anabaptists’ own historical documents, as his explicit references to the Täufer’s testimonials and quotes from the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* show. His depiction of the persecutor as well as the victims of persecution is significantly influenced by the Anabaptists’ literature of lamentation. The account of the provost’s acts of violence and the Anabaptists’ steadfast suffering of martyrdom is largely based on records that appear in the Brethren’s chronicles. Aichelin’s brutality, for instance, is documented in the *Älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* as follows: “Gleich auch vmb disse Zeit hat der Künig Ferdinandus in ein wilden Profosen mit Namen Aichele/In Schwaben vnd das Wittenbergerlannd geschickt/ der dann vil unschuldigs bluet vergossen” (Chronik 54). In *Der Reichsprofos*, the narrator reports accordingly: “Ein Chronist der Täufer sagte schlicht, aber tief ergreifend: ‘Dieser
Aichelin, des Reichs Profos, hat gar viel unschuldig Blut vergossen an manchen Orten’” (195).

4. The Peasants’ War

The novel’s description of the Anabaptist dispersion and its relation to the Peasants’ War links Stähle’s fictional text to contemporary discussions regarding the Brotherhood’s rapid spread and its part in the 1520s commoners’ revolts. As a general introduction to the Täufertum in Swabia, the novel recounts:

Die Täuferei hatte sich in Schwaben gewaltig ausgebreitet. Wo die Predigt des Evangeliums in den Kirchen unterdrückt war, wo die Anhänger Luthers von den Kanzeln ferngehalten und verfolgt wurden, … da fanden die Männer Eingang, die still und unbemerkt durch die Lande zogen, die in einsamen Häusern und Höfen zuerst zweien und dreien das Wort Gottes auslegten, wie der Geist es ihnen gab, auszusprechen. Überall waren aus den bald zweien und dreien hundert geworden. (184-185)

During the period of religious turmoil caused by the authorities’ hesitance on the matter of accepting the Protestant faith, Anabaptist preachers were able to gather a large number of adherents. Stähle attempts to create the sense of a shared history when drawing a parallel between Anabaptists’ and Lutherans’ efforts to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church in the 1520s. The Protestant movement is presented as the foundation upon which the Täufertum builds a network of believers.
The narrative further alludes to the connection between Anabaptists, Lutherans, and the peasant uprising when describing the situation in Württemberg after the commoners’ resistance:

Die Bauern, die durch die Niederwerfung ihres Aufstands übler dran waren, als früher, … suchten in der Bruderschaft Trost für ihr gedrücktes Herz. …Die Städter, die durch die Predigten der Freunde Luthers unterwiesen worden waren, die Seligkeiten eines wahren Herzensglaubens zu schmecken, nun aber wieder niemand anders in den Kirchen walten sahen als die Meßpriester, sie suchten in ihrem Hunger das Brot, das die Sendlinge der Täufer austeilten. (185)

The description of the peasants’ increased interest in the Anabaptist movement after the end of the uprising reflects Schmid’s depiction of the situation after the Peasants’ Revolt: “nach dem Mißlingen des Bauernkrieges [flüchtete] der enttäuschte Freiheitsdrang des Volkes [in die Zukunftsträume der Wiedertäufer über die] herrliche Wiederkunft des Herrn, der seine arme Gemeinde zur Herrschaft über die Welt erben wird” (75).

Drawing a direct line between the Peasants’ War and the Anabaptist movement, Stähle’s novel supports a polygenetic approach to the emergence of Anabaptism. Although the Brethren sought to separate from all worldly conflicts, including the Peasants’ War and weapons of force, as stated in the Schleitheim Confession, research has shown that some of their fundamental principles resembled the social reforms demanded in the commoners’ uprisings and therefore appealed to the peasants. The historian Hans-Jürgen Goertz, for instance, has identified some of the similarities between the peasants’ demands and the Täufer’s principles summarized during the
Not only the peasants felt particularly drawn to the Brotherhood after their rebellion was put down; historians have also reported that the Lutheran-minded population felt attracted to the Anabaptist movement in South Germany. Accordingly, Stähle mentions this alliance between Protestants and Anabaptists in his novel. In his section on the Swabian *Täufertum* (cited above), he explains the townspeople’s interest in the articles of faith taught by wandering preachers as he references their longing for an ecclesiastical reform and an end of the Protestant oppression. The novel thus depicts the two faith groups as allies in the campaign for ecclesiastical changes. By delineating a shared origin and objective, Stähle sets the stage for a Lutheran-informed approach to the Anabaptist doctrine. Unlike Hausrath who simply employs an Anabaptist character to reiterate his own anti-Catholic sentiments, Stähle’s conception of a joint Anabaptist-Lutheran history allows him to sympathize with the group and their experience of persecution. The Anabaptist faith, suffering, and steadfastness that are portrayed in *Der Reichsprofos*, are perceived by the author as manifestations of the Lutheran Reformation and are consequently used in support of the Protestant belief.

5. Critique of Adult Baptism

The author employs two strikingly different characters to exemplify the spread of the Anabaptist movement in South Germany. Brother Wallner, the wandering preacher
from Austria, represents certain aspects of the *Täufertum* that are deemed aberrant and objectionable, whereas Father Burkhardt and his community personify Anabaptist principles that are perceived as ideal tenets of Christian faith. The contrasting figures of Wallner and Burkhardt are reminiscent of Schmid’s description of the two Anabaptist leaders, Sattler and Reublin (Brother Wilhelm) whom he presents as antithetical characters (75-76). In Stähle’s novel, the negative attributes assigned to Wallner fabricate an ambivalent image of the radical reform movement that is eventually dissolved by Burkhardt’s martyr death and Veronika’s act of charity. 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 uncanny member of the radical sect who asserts great control over Grete. Her association with the traveling preacher and his influence on her decision concerning a full commitment to the fellowship causes her death and initiates her husband’s brutal mission to eradicate Anabaptism in the area. He first gains entrance to her home disguised as a chandler. Grete and her mother-in-law immediately notice that he is not from the area and perceive him as “Fremdling” (103). The old woman calls him “närrisch” and her neighbors refer to him as “sonderbar” (104). While selling his products, he promotes yet another commodity which he describes as: “Die hilft aber dazu, daß die Seele vor ihrem Bräutigam Jesus Christen stehen kann in reinem Kleid und köstlichem Geschmiede. Die Ware biete ich bald an, und es wird euch Kunde werden, wo ich damit handle (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 *Täufer* belief creates the impression of Anabaptism as a dubious business. The early movement’s evangelism is portrayed as a suspect industry managed by ambivalent tradesmen.

Grete quickly becomes subject to Wallner’s proselytizing efforts. The author employs the female character to portray an awakening faith and an intuitive conversion. She expresses her admiration for Wallner’s devoutness with the words: “es ist ein frommer Mann, und ich wollt ich wär so weit wie der” (104). Her fascination with his spirituality derives from a suppressed notion of religious change. Earlier in the novel, Aichelin prohibits her from practicing the Lutheran belief, although her family had recently converted to Protestantism, thus enabling her to experience the “Freude am Evangelium” (62). Staying at her husband’s Catholic home, she feels a lack of true and inner devotion. In her state of religious indecisiveness, the young woman is prone to the religious teachings of Wallner. When attending a nightly gathering of the local Anabaptist community at a nearby mill, she is mesmerized by his talk:

> Grete aber hing mit ihren Augen am Munde des Krämers. Las denn der Mann in ihrem Herzen? … Vom alten Glauben hielt sie nichts mehr, und der neue war noch kein fester Besitz ihres Herzens. Der Mann der da vor ihr saß, der so fröhlich vom Sterben redete, de konnte ihr helfen, den Frieden zu bekommen. (115-116)

During this transitional period of religious uncertainty, the zealous and determined Anabaptist preacher makes a profound impression on her.
As Grete becomes more involved with the fellowship, Wallner exercises an increasing authority over her. Her frequent attendance of Anabaptist meetings causes him to gain “Herrschaft über ihr Denken und Fühlen” (124).\textsuperscript{166} His control over her life becomes particularly obvious in the matter of her relationship to Aichelin. Wallner plots against the provost and his Catholic faith by interpreting the Gospels to meet his own needs. Upon being asked by Grete about her responsibilities as a faithful and supportive “christliches Eheweib,” he dismisses her concern:

\begin{quote}
[Jesus] würde ganz gewiss auch zu dir sagen: so du nicht deinen Mann hassest, kannst du nicht meine Jüngerin sein. … Du sollst ihn nicht in allem hassen, … aber wenn er dir etwas verbieten will, was zu deiner Seele Seligkeit dient, dann muß dir des Mannes Verbot, das gegen Gottes Gebot streitet, so hassenswert erscheinen, daß du dich nimmermehr nach ihm richtest. (124-125)
\end{quote}

Wallner’s lesson on discipleship to Christ reflects not only an extreme New Testament Biblicism, but it also reveals a distortion of the Gospels as a means of refuting Aichelin’s control over his wife while Wallner increases his influence on her. Similar to Schmid’s portrayal of Reublin’s flaw in confusing “den eigenen Geist mit Gottes Geist,” Wallner interprets the Bible to suit his objectives (75). The depiction of Wallner’s improper elucidation of the Gospels may refer to the author’s criticism of the movement’s practice of preaching. Corresponding to Schmid’s assertion about the Anabaptist’s Biblical

\textsuperscript{166} The novel’s description of the Anabaptist’s exertion of control resembles Schmid’s characterization of Wilhelm Reublin. In his historical analysis of Württemberg’s reformation period, Schmid portrays the South German leader as “ein vortrefflicher Wühler und Hetzer von hinreißender Redegabe, der es verstand, Macht über die Gemüter zu gewinnen. Als der ‚Hirte Wilhelm’ herrschte er mit uneingeschränkter Macht … über die Seinigen” (75).
literalism and their untrained interpretation of the Scriptures, Stähle fabricates the image of the wandering preacher who lacks qualifications as servant of the Word.

Wallner is depicted as a manipulative character who propagates social nonconformity and disobedience to those who are not part of the fellowship of believers. As a Täufer leader, he aims to separate his congregation from worldly influences in order to secure the group’s utter compliance with the principles of the sect. His religious teachings focus on two essential tenets of Anabaptist faith, namely the practice of baptism and the notion of the Nachfolge (following Christ), without, however, addressing practical aspects of such discipleship.

During the nocturnal meetings at the mill, Wallner preaches on the certitude of salvation, “der Seele Seligkeit” (125). He promotes the Anabaptist faith as a guarantor for the saving of one’s soul. In his enthusiastic talks, he convinces the audience that salvation can only be attained by a believer’s baptism. Even Grete was “so weit von dem Bruder Wallner geführt wurden, daß sie erkannte, es fehle ihr zum völligen Heile die Taufe” (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 thoughts and feelings. Her reoccurring doubts about the Brotherhood’s rite of admission indicate that she is not fully convinced of the group’s radical approach to baptism: “Wie sie nun aber

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167 Schmid calls attention to the Anabaptist’s “sklavisches Halten am Buchstaben der Schrift, mit dessen Hilfe man vornehmlich die Kinderetaufe bestritt, daneben schrankenlose Freiheit des Geistes: ‘Habt ihr die Salbung des Geistes, so könnt ihr auch die Schrift urteilen’” (75).

168 Stähle overemphasizes the aspect of salvation. Although the early Anabaptists were certain of their salvation, the question of personal, individual salvation was not the primary concern of their theology. According to Friedmann, the Brethren’s foremost concern became obedience to the Word of God which excluded much thinking about one’s own fate. As part of their theological vision of the two worlds, they strove to attain the kingdom of God that ensures the saving of their souls (The Doctrine of the Two Worlds 106).
so allein durch das mondbeschienene enge Filstal dahineilte, da überfiel sie noch einmal
eine furchtbare Ungewissheit. Wenn doch alles miteinander nichts wäre, alles eitel
Täuschung (127)”.

The novel portrays the act of baptism as a questionable ritual by which the *Täufer*
deviate from the Lutheran theology. Grete’s experience with the Anabaptist ceremony
contributes to the narrative’s ambivalent image of the Brotherhood. Against her
husband’s will and plagued by anxiety and doubt, she secretly staggers alone through the
forest on her way to the clandestine gathering.¹⁶⁹ Upon her arrival at the baptismal site,
“wurde [sie] unruhig” (129). At the moment she is baptized by being dunked in the water
three times, “da fährt sie jäh mit der Hand ans Herz; ‘ach Gott, ach Gott!’ ruft sie und
sinkt um” (129). Her death from a sudden heart attack while receiving baptism in the
stream’s cold water reflects Stähle’s criticism of the clandestine baptismal practice.

Schowalter has noted that the author credits the *Täufer* with immersion baptism, although
historically incorrect (665).¹⁷⁰ The anachronism regarding the baptismal method signals
the purpose of the ritual’s depiction. 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. Moreover, the description
of the full body baptism fabricates the image of a fanatical sect whose zealous members

¹⁶⁹ The novel’s illustration of secrecy and transgression of traditional norms associated with the Anabaptist
baptismal practice corresponds to Schmid’s criticism of the movement’s “Heimlichkeit, die Aufregung der
nächtlichen Versammlungen, der Reiz verbotener Wald-und Bergpredigten” (74). The excitement caused
by the nightly meetings and forbidden rituals may also explain Grete’s attraction to the fellowship. The sect
provides an alternative to the austere life at her husband’s home.
¹⁷⁰ A full body baptism only became a common practice in the eighteenth-century Anabaptist-pietistic
movement, Church of the Brethren, led by Alexander Mack. Particularly the Dunkard Brethren, a small
conservative group within this movement, employed the baptismal method of a full immersion.
do not flinch from physical pain when receiving admission to the fellowship. In that regard, the baptism administered under the harsh condition of the “kühlen Oktobernacht” reveals the radicalism of the Brotherhood in terms of suffering and discipleship.

6. The Representation of Martyrdom

In contrast to the ambivalent character of Wallner and the unfavourable account of the baptismal ceremony in the forest, Burkhardt and his community of Täufer 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, “weil kein Lehrer da war, der sie unterwies, so hörten sie auf die Stimme ihres Herzens, so wurden Bauern, deren Herz erleuchtet war vom Geiste, zu Predigern (86-87)”.

Burkhardt and his fellow Brethren discuss the matter of infant baptism and criticize the Catholic practice of the sacrament:


The rhetorical question of the infant’s ability to receive the spirit reflects the line of argument employed by early South German Anabaptists to refute pedobaptism. In his criticism of the Catholic ritual of baptizing infants, Michael...
Sattler, the prominent Anabaptist leader who brought the radical Christian belief to the Duchy of Württemberg, explained that “die Kindertaufe zur Seligkeit nichts nütze, denn es steht geschrieben, daß wir allein aus dem Glauben leben; desgleichen, wer glaubet und getauft wird, der wird selig werden” (Braght, second book 4).\(^{171}\)

In the discussion about believer’s baptism, the Mantelbauer asserts that the requirements for the admission into the church community, or as Sattler has phrased it, in the “Bund eines guten Gewissens mit Gott,” 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.\(^{172}\)

While Wallner is presented as an outsider who roams the region as a traveling preacher, 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 \textit{Gelassenheit}, industry, and social harmony.

\(^{171}\) Sattler verbalized these thoughts on infant baptism as a response to the charges, the rejection of pedobaptism included, pressed against him during his trial in 1527 in Rottenburg. Similar to Burkhardt’s emphasis on the spirit, “der Geist”, as a requirement for receiving baptism and taking the vow to walk the way of discipleship, Sattler refers to the baptized members of his fellowship as those “welche Gott, der himmlische Vater, mit seiner Erkenntnis und dem Lichte des Geistes erleuchtet hat” (Braght, second book 5).

\(^{172}\) 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 unfavorable portrayal of Reublin, the historian images Michael Sattler as a “edlere Gestalt,” who received recognition for his organisation of the Schleitheim Convention as well as his martyr death that even Lutherans considered “ein ungerechtes Ende eines Gerechten” (76, 79).
Auf den Äckern des Mantelhofs wurde gepflügt, geeggt, gesät. Im buntesten Gewand blickten die Wälder des Aalbuchs herab auf den Hof, auf die fleißigen Menschen. Über den schönen breiten Acker dort an der Grenze gegen Dauerwang führte der Mantelbauer, Vater Burkhardt, selbst den Pflug. Der kleine Roßbub Frieder, dessen Eltern den Tod als Taufgesinnte durch des Profosen Hand gefunden hatten, trieb das Gespann. (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 plough evokes a comparison to the biblically-inspired metaphor of sowing the seeds for a thriving Christianity. As the leader 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 orphaned Frieder. The fate of the child’s parents points to the Brotherhood’s suffering from persecution and anticipates further conflict with the provost.

The group’s experience of persecution and martyrdom is first illustrated in the novel by a brief account of Michael Sattler’s trial. Narrated from the perspective of Aichelin, the description of Michael’s examination at court, his burning at the stake, and his wife’s death by drowning is embedded in an overall negative commentary about the Täufer’s dispersion in the Duchy. As the provost complains about the lenient treatment of Anabaptists, he refers to Michael’s persecution in Rottenburg. Reported by the archenemy
of the fellowship, the depiction of the leader’s tragic fate is colored by biased language. Aichelin, for instance, dismisses Michael’s effort to discuss each article pressed against him in court as “sie lassen den Ketzer schwätzen” (198). The provost reports that, in the aftermath of the leader’s execution, “haben die Leute in der ganzen Herrschaft Hohenberg von nichts anderem geredet als von dem Sattler; sie haben ihn einen Märtyrer, einen Heiligen genannt” (199). With amazement, Aichelin notes that a large number of people speak of Sattler as a martyr, revealing their respect for the Täufer’s steadfastness during interrogations and torture.

While the fate of Michael Sattler, a historically significant figure of the Anabaptist movement, is only presented in form of a short report without having him appear as a character in the story, the members of the Mantelhof, who have received marginal treatment in historical writings, are fictionalized in the novel. Corresponding to Lukács’ concept of a historical narrative, Stähle does not fictionalize the prominent figure of the movement (34-35); rather, he selects a less known historical figure for literary portrayal. With the Mantelbauer and the provost, he is able to fictionalize the struggles and antagonisms of the sixteenth century by means of characters who represent the opposite social and religious trends of that time. The author gives a “living human embodiment to historical-social types” through the characters of Aichelin and Burkhardt (Lukács 35). The diametrically opposed figures represent the conflict between the religious minority and the state. In the novel’s portrayal of the events that took place on the farm in 1531, the Mantelbauer personifies the movement’s collective experience of persecution and suffering caused by agents of the established order.
Little is known about the attack on the Mantelhof by the provost and his horsemen. The *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* only provides a short summary of the historical event:

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)

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 with the zealous and steadfast behavior of the fellowship. Perhaps inspired by the Anabaptist martyr chronicles, Stähle’s fictionalization of the *Täufer* characters does justice to the Brotherhood’s endurance of pain and their practice of forgiveness.

The Brethren’s steadfastness and their readiness to suffer for the sake of precipitating Christ’s return and their own redemption are particularly illustrated in the description of the burning of the Mantelhof. After Aichelin set fire to the granary in which

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174 Sea has noted that Aichelin “wurde den Bauern zum Synonym für Willkür und Grausamkeit” (134). Fellow countrymen perceived him with much “Schmach und Haß” (Bossert, Aichelin 26).
the fellowship had sought refuge from the provost’s attack, Father Burkhardt reminds the frightened group to bear the suffering and to joyfully approach the divine kingdom:


Burkhardt functions as the shepherd of his congregation, guiding his fellow believers in the moment of despair. He forms a unit with them as he joins their chant. The hymn they sing while enduring the agonies of the fire was written by Michael Sattler and captures the Anabaptist theology of suffering.  

After witnessing the killing of his Hausgenossenschaft, including his wife and fellow Brethren, the Mantelbauer faces his own torture and execution. At this excruciating moment, he epitomizes the Anabaptist steadfastness. In the process of hanging Burkhardt on a linden tree, the provost lets him back down three times and offers to spare his life if

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175 Sattler’s “Kreuzlied” was published in Schmid’s historiography as an example of Anabaptist martyr songs (76).
176 The term Hausgenossenschaft, employed in the novel, refers to an Anabaptist community that resembles the structure of the Hutterite Bruderhof. It is mentioned that the congregation works together on the Mantelhof and has communal meals. However, the concept of the true community of goods is not explicitly addressed in the novel. The early Anabaptist movement in Württemberg was split into several groups, most prominent being the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites. Clasen also reports of small groups of Philippite Brethren in the area around Heilbronn (151). It can be assumed that Stähle’s idea of the Hausgenossenschaft does not allude to a specific branch of Anabaptism. Rather, it is based on Schmid’s generalization of the movement’s practice of Gütergemeinschaft (75).
177 Mayer has noted that hanging was considered a markedly dishonorable execution and that Aichelin “verschärfte [den Todesakt] noch dadurch, daß er seine Opfer an einem dürren Ast und nicht am üblichen
he recants his radical belief. Yet, he remains true to his faith and patiently endures the agony of being tortured nearly to death. Burkhardt is characterized as a zealous member of the Anabaptist movement who retains his belief to a remarkable degree. In the face of death, the Mantelbauer forgives his executioner and prays for his mercy: “Da sagte er, seinen Peiniger mit mildem Blick ansehend: ‘Ich habe dich, o Profos, schon vor dem Thron der Gnade erfleht. Du Saulus wirst ein Paulus werden’” (248). Burkhardt responds to the persecution with forgiveness and proclaims Aichelin’s change into a true believer of Christ.\textsuperscript{178} Due to the lack of information about the events at the Mantelhof in in church or state chronicles, Stähle is able to vividly illustrate this narrative of martyrdom and characterizes the Anabaptist figure according to the early movement’s eagerness to follow Christ in his suffering and forgiveness. The openness of the facts provides more freedom for the fictional treatment of the Anabaptist group and allows the author to invent a scene that captures the Brethren’s incredible endurance and forgiveness, supporting his idealization of the entire reform movement.

\textsuperscript{178} 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 (Anabaptists perceived themselves as true followers of Christ, similar to the early disciples of Jesus): Der Aichele hielt dar oben, als ob er Saulus wär, thet voglen, praucht kein kloben; war manchem vil zu schwer, solt er vor sein gehangen, biß daß im wär entgangen, der luft auf seinen wangen (Liliencron 82)
7. Christian Virtues of Forgiveness and Charity

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 creative process 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 from her brother when she decides: “Ich werde ihn pflegen” (290). By forgiving Aichelin for 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 “eine Jüngerin Jesu” (294).

The provost is astonished by “diese[r] Liebe einer Christin, der er das tiefste Leid angetan hatte” (297). The thought of having killed innocent Christians and stirred God’s wrath torments him. In this dark moment, Veronika enlightens him about Christ’s forgiveness and converts him to the Reformed belief. She adds:

Nennt mich nicht mehr eine Täuferin. Unsere Gemeinden sind zersprengt: wir harren mit Sehnsucht des Tages, wo allüberall in den Dörfern und Städten das

179 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.
Evangelium verkündet werden darf und wir Hirten und Gemeinden da haben, wo wir wohnen. Nennt mich eine Christin, das möchte ich sein, und ein Christ solltet ihr auch werden. (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”, 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 Brotherhood’s distinct belief is substituted by a “stille Anhänglichkeit an die evangelische Lehre” (Schowalter 665).

The Anabaptist attachment to the Protestant doctrine marks the final stage of the Täufer portrayal given in Stähle’s historical novel. The literary depiction of the religious group undergoes changes. It starts with an image of Anabaptism as an ambivalent sect generated by the dubious preacher, Wallner, and his questionable ritual of nocturnal baptism. In the course of the novel, the Anabaptist image is influenced by the illustration of the Brotherhood’s suffering and martyrdom. This shift from the negative representation of group-specific features such as believer’s baptism, underground gatherings, and lay preaching to a sympathetic portrayal of common Christian virtues such as steadfastness and forgiveness parallels the novel’s 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. With the focus on principles shared by all Christians, particularly Christ’s
teaching of loving one’s enemy, the novel depicts the birth of a new era of Anabaptism. The text gives the impression of the Täufertum as being a historical phenomenon that is absorbed by the Reformed Church.\textsuperscript{180} In doing so, it neglects to recognize the uniqueness of the Anabaptist movement.

C. Rubatscher: \textit{Das lutherische Joggele} (1935) and Anabaptism in Tyrol

1. Rubatscher’s Experience as \textit{Auslandsdeutsche}

The sixteenth-century migrations of Anabaptist communities within Europe, particularly Moravia, have become an important literary theme for some German authors, a few living outside of the German Empire. Parallels between the relocated fellowship and German minorities abroad were especially emphasized in the interwar period. Maria Veronika Rubatscher, an Austrian novelist and schoolteacher, developed an interest in the fate of migrating Anabaptists against the backdrop of the contemporary situation of ethnic Germans in foreign countries.\textsuperscript{181} A member of the German-speaking minority in North Italy herself,\textsuperscript{182} she first discovered the history of the Täufertum while doing research on

\textsuperscript{180} Stähle’s affiliation with the Protestant Church as well as the Lutheran stance represented in Schmid’s historiography (which serves as the author’s main secondary source), encourage the Protestant-centered interpretation of the Reformation period. In his historical writing, Schmid describes the group’s steady decline in Württemberg after 1530. Not taking into consideration that Swiss Brethren remained in South Germany well until the eighteenth century, Schmid reports of the Anabaptist exodus to Moravia. Having prevailed in Baden Württemberg as the dominant faith originating in the Reformation period, the Protestant Church is reported to have adopted some of the fellowship’s ethical standards that contributed to the Lutheran’s “Besserung des sittlichen Lebens in ihren Gemeinden” (Schmid 80).

\textsuperscript{181} In most of her novels from the 1920s and 30s, Rubatscher fictionalizes historical subject matters that relate to current developments in the Tyrol region. As Leitgeb has asserted, the author seeks “historische Situationen oder Ereignisse, an denen sich die messen kann, z.B. in denen sich die gegenwärtige Not wiederholt, so daß ein Modell errichtet werden kann, das der Gegenwart nützt (Lebenshilfe)” (86).

\textsuperscript{182} Rubatscher was part of the German-speaking population in the province of South Tyrol. Before the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the area belonged to the Austrian County of Tyrol. After the 1919 dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, South Tyrolians found themselves living outside the newborn Austrian Republic as minorities in the enlarged state of Italy.
her ancestry and local history. When tracing her family’s genealogy all the way to the Ladin influences on the region of Tyrol, the author came across accounts of the persecution of the sixteenth-century Brotherhood. She asserts in her essay “Ahnen und Heimat” (1937):


Rubatscher’s description of the early Anabaptist movement takes into account the Brethren’s experience of persecution and their establishment of an underground church. At the same time, she fuses the Brotherhood’s Christocentric theology with German patriotism. Her representation of Anabaptism as a genuinely German folk movement battling against secularization and foreign elements echoes the nationalist sentiment after World War I and relates to the situation of ethnic Germans in northern Italy.\(^{184}\) In her essay, she elucidates the relationship between her ancestors and the movement in Tyrol and Moravia:

\(^{183}\) Heliandgeist (spirit of the Heiland) refers to the Old Saxon epic poem from the ninth century which marks an important link in the historical development of the German language and literature.

\(^{184}\) After the rise of fascism in Italy during the 1920s, the German minority in the North was forcibly integrated into mainstream Italian culture. During that time, ethnic Germans established underground (catacomb) schools and churches to preserve their national language and cultural heritage. According to Nina Schröder, Rubatscher worked as a teacher in one of these catacomb schools, after she was expelled from the public school system in the 1920s due to her German heritage. During that time, she was repeatedly interrogated by the Italian police (249).
Unter denen, die damals unter dem Drucke der Gegenreformation die geliebte Tiroler Heimat verließen und die Segnungen deutscher Kolonisation in das ferne Slavenland trugen, waren wohl jene Rubatscher, die von Mähren kommend, nun in der Landschaft Slatz und in einzelnen ihrer Nachkommen in Berlin und Hannover leben. (166)

The depiction of early Anabaptism, particularly the Tyrolean experience of eastward migration, is shaped by the author’s interest in the national local color and history. With a “glühende Heimatliebe” and a notion of expansionism, she idealizes her family history and the nation’s past (Leitgeb 28). Her research on the topic of Austrian Täufertum finds literary expression in the historical novel, Das lutherische Joggele.

2. Plot Summary

Set in the area of Brixen, southern Tyrol, in the third decade of the sixteenth century, the novel begins with the description of a nocturnal gathering of Brethren. During the clandestine meeting, led by Onofrius, the young dairyman Jakob (Joggele- the Tyrolean diminutive of Jakob) gives testimony of his faith and receives baptism. The ceremony is interrupted by a raid of Anabaptist hunters who capture all Brethren except for Jakob. The young man flees from the pursuers and finds shelter in a cave. While he resumes his work as a dairy farmer, Onofrius is imprisoned, tortured, and publicly burned. Jakob is much acclaimed for his expertise and industry as a dairyman. At the court of Count Küchenmeir, he meets the young nursemaid Gertraud, who falls in love with him. Although he warns her about the dangers she would have to face as the spouse of an
Anabaptist, she accepts his marriage proposal nevertheless. When her father discovers her engagement with the *Täufer*, he tells her to leave her family at once.

After a short period of wandering around in the countryside and receiving support from the underground Brethren community, Jakob finds employment as a dairy farmer in an area where religious dissenters are tolerated. He builds a home and cultivates land while Gertraud awaits the birth of their first child. The young family provides temporary shelter for a fellow believer who has fled from Carinthia, where the approaching Turkish army caused persecution of *Täufer* when the defenseless believers refused to support military service. When Jakob delivers some of his produce to the nearby convent, the abbess takes notice of him. Attracted by his young and energetic nature, she asks him to come to her chamber where she confesses her love to him. When he rejects her advances and reminds her of his wife and child at home, she reports him to the authorities. Joggele is captured and sent into galley slavery. After twenty years of laboring on a battleship, he escapes and returns to his home. In the meantime, his wife and child have died of fever and his house has been destroyed by a landslide. Physically hardened and mentally disoriented by his experience on the galley, he spends the rest of his life roaming through the forests and kneeling on a rock in prayer. After his death, the local community perceives him as a saint and pilgrimages to his rock, where villagers build a shrine for those seeking spiritual inspiration and healing.\(^{185}\)

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\(^{185}\) Rubatscher fictionalizes the legend of a hermit who is associated with a small shrine located in the Lüsen valley. Villagers often referred to the shrine as “beim Joggelen” (Leitgeb 213). According to the local lore, the stone next to the shrine received its cup-shaped form from the knee imprint of the praying man. Prosch has reported that villagers, who visit the shrine as part of walking pilgrimages, commemorate the hermit Jakob, who is believed to be either the excommunicated Jakob Tauber or a reported Anabaptist from the area of Lüsen (cited in Leitgeb 213). The name “lutherisches Joggele” is employed by locals.
3. Anabaptist Historical Sources

The novel’s portrait of Tyrolean Anabaptism is marked by an insight in the movement’s experience with persecution that becomes an instrument of Rubatscher’s discussion of twentieth-century minorities and the development of nationalistic identity. The details given in the fictional text indicate the author’s familiarity with contemporary research in the field of Anabaptist history as well as with the Brethren’s own martyr literature. The stories and testimonies of the early Austrian Anabaptists were largely compiled in the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*. With the collection of materials pertaining to the movement’s development in the sixteenth century, the Brotherhood wanted to keep the memory of its heroic beginnings alive.\(^\text{186}\) The compilation of martyr stories serves as a medium of internalizing the group’s collective experience of suffering “als Instrument asketischer Seelen-und Lebensführung” (Burschel 190). It significantly determines the confessional and cultural identity of the faith group. Similarly, it supports the author’s own ethnic identity. Rubatscher uses the story of the Anabaptist martyrs to define and reaffirm her identity as a member of the German minority in Tyrol. In her representation of Anabaptism, she employs the Brethren’s history, found in the *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, for the purpose of promoting steadfastness among the German-speaking minority at a time when South Tyrol was occupied by Italy.

\(^{186}\) Burschel has pointed out that these collections of martyr testimonies served the purpose “den Täufer-Gruppen je eigene heroische Vergangenheiten zu[zu]maßen, um sie als Märtyrergemeinschaften in Zeiten zusammenzuhalten, die keine Märtyrerzeiten mehr waren” (164). The idea of writing an official chronicle arose during the years of the so-called “Golden Era” in Hutterite history (1565-78), a peaceful time in which the Brotherhood was able to establish permanent settlements in Moravia.
Upon Hutterite expulsion from Hungary during the eighteenth century, some of the group’s manuscripts were confiscated by Jesuits and stored in different libraries. The Chronicle had not been known to European scholars until Josef Beck discovered the documents in Hungary and published them in his 1883 collection, Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn.¹⁸⁷ His work includes an insightful introduction to the Brotherhood’s faith. Elaborating the Schleitheim Articles, Beck draws a clear distinction between Münsterites and the peaceful movement in the South. As his knowledge about Anabaptism is based on the group’s own historical documents, he emphasizes the Brethren’s experience of martyrdom and their idea of Nachfolge. In his preface to the Geschichts-Bücher, he refers to the Brethren as “wahre Nachfolger Christi” and defines their church as “das Wort Gottes nach dem Befehle Christi gesammelten Kirche” (vi-vii). The notion of discipleship and the emphasis on the group’s persecution is fictionalized in Rubatscher’s narrative. The novelist was informed about the group’s theology and history of martyrdom through Beck’s sympathetic treatment of the Anabaptist movement. Direct quotes from the introduction of his work give evidence that Rubatscher gained much of her knowledge about Tyrolean Anabaptism from his historical study.

In addition to quoting Beck’s volume on the Chronicle, Rubatscher consulted the full print of the Geschicht-Buch, first published by Rudolf Wolkan in 1923.¹⁸⁸ The

¹⁸⁷ Beck, an Austrian jurist and hobby historian came across Hutterite manuscripts in Hungarian and Slovakian archives during his time at the Bratislava court (1854-1866). He traveled the area to acquire a large collection of these codices and eventually put them together in a mosaic-like fashion.
¹⁸⁸ Wolkan, a professor of German Literature at the University of Vienna and the co-founder of the Austrian school of Anabaptist historiography, received the task to edit and publish the Chronicle that was given to him by Brethren in Canada.
depiction of Anabaptist martyrdom in both of these books must have made a great impression on the author, and led to the respectful attitude with which she portrays the movement’s religious experience in her regionalist novel. According to Leitgeb, the novelist also included information that she evidently found in court reports and enactments, for instance the Merano Articles from 1525 (215). Rubatscher collected the historical data gained from the fellowship’s own literature and sixteenth-century legal documents and employed it as a framework for her novel. The storyline integrates various historical facts and relates them to the protagonist’s experience as a Täufer.

Rubatscher’s fictional adaptation of the Brethren’s records is enriched by a poetic language. As all of her fictional prose, Das lutherische Joggele is characterized by a poetic quality and a vivid description of the Tyrolean countryside and its people. The Tyrolese dialect in conversational passages contributes to an intimate atmosphere. Through this familiar tongue, she establishes a direct connection between the Anabaptist history and contemporary readers. Kierdorf-Traut describes Rubatscher’s language as one “die dem Volk entgegenkommt, eine menschliche, verständliche Sprache” (232). Her interest in regional history and her use of a rich, local, and comprehensible language has prompted Kierdorf-Traut to call Rubatscher a “Heimatdichterin gehobenen Niveaus” (229).  

4. The Notion of Heimat and Joggele’s Reception in Nazi Germany

The author’s notion of Heimat and commitment to a “bodenständigen, volksfrommen” narrative found favor with the Nazi regime (Kierdorf-Traut 229).

Rubatscher’s regional literature aims to depict the quiet and idyllic life in the Austrian

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189 In her “heimische Literatur,” the author celebrates the history of her homeland “in mundartlich gefärbter Sprache. Geschichte, Landschaft und Brauchtum … sind beliebte Motive” (Leitgeb 14).
countryside. Her novels illustrate the peasants’ existence in isolation from society. This fabrication of an idyllic picture and the absence of political content made her works a valuable political resource. As Waldner has noted, propagandists utilized her narratives to distract from the politicized society of Nazi Germany (160). Rubatscher distanced herself from the National Socialists after Austria was annexed by Germany in 1938, however. When the native Germans of South Tyrol received the option of either immigrating to the Austrian territory, ruled by Nazi Germany, or remaining in Italy, thereby losing all minority rights, the author chose to stay in Brixen, South Tyrol. When German troops occupied this area in 1943, she went into hiding. After having decided to remain in Italy, she was excluded from the German Writers’ Association.

Despite Rubatscher’s refusal to be utilized for propaganda purposes after the South Tyrol Option Agreement, her early novels, including Das lutherische Joggele, were widely read in Nazi Germany. The texts’ glorification of German heritage and their emphasis on the virtues of rural living were most applicable to National Socialist ideology. The notion of the Germanic folk and its homeland inherent in her narratives corresponds to the Volkstum celebrated in “blood and soil” (Blut und Boden) novels that dominated the literary landscape of Nazi Germany. The National Socialist regime praised Rubatscher’s work for its representation of the “Auslandsdeutschum” and its association of Germanic

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190 According to records at the Austrian national library, by 1939, Rubatscher became “eine entschlossene Kämpferin gegen den alles verheerenden Nazismus, durch das Goebbelsche Veto aller Berufs- und Verdienstmöglichkeiten beraubt, in Armut und Verborgenheit weiterschaffend” (cited in Waldner 161). Rubatscher experienced much resentment from fellow countrymen for her decision to stay in Italy and was labeled as “Verräterin und Italiensympathisantin” (Gradwohl-Schlacher 8).

191 While the South Tyrol clergy regarded Rubatscher’s Anabaptist novel as anti-clerical and denied publication, Germany welcomed her Heimatkichtung and praised its patriotic character.
folklore with Christian elements. In her novel treating sixteenth-century Tyrolean Täufertum, this union of Christianity and Germanic paganism, considered as the ideal folk piety in the Third Reich, is accomplished by joining primitive customs with an interest in nature and simplicity and the Anabaptist’s call for discipleship and martyr-mindedness.

Rubatscher embraces the fellowship’s martyr history not for the group’s own sake, but to discuss political and religious issues of her time. She employs the Brethren’s stories of suffering as a means to express her own ideological orientation. The subtitle of the novel, Roman aus dem Marterbuch der deutschen Seele, reveals her ambition to blend the Anabaptist tradition of martyrology with a sense of German patriotism. Her interpretation of the minority’s history is influenced by her personal experience as a member of the German minority in Italy. Employing her historical fiction as “Spiegel der Gegenwart,” she sympathizes with the Anabaptist persecution as she projects her own situation as Auslandsdeutsche onto their martyr past (Aust 44). In her narrative, history exists as a mirror of the contemporary struggle for national identity. She identifies with the historical Anabaptists and perceives their fate as an ostracized community as representative for the German minority in the Italian province. In my close reading of her novel, I will examine how she employs Anabaptist sources to create a martyr narrative that supports her nationalistic ideal. I will analyze how she fashions the literary picture of the Brethren’s

192 Adalbert Schmidt, an Austrian professor of German literature, praised her novel in Die Neue Literatur, the leading National Socialist literary journal: “Das innige Zusammengehen von deutschem Volksbewußtsein und christlicher Gläubigkeit ist für das Gesamtschaffen Maria Veronika Rubatschers so überaus bezeichnend. … Indem sie ihrem Volke dient, dient sie zugleich Gott, denn Volkstum ist gottgewollt” (172).

193 Rubatscher’s nationalistic attitude derived from the experience of Italian fascism in the late 1920s. In order to avoid an “Italianization” under the Mussolini regime, beginning in 1922, a number of authors celebrated their German heritage excessively. As Leitgeb has pointed out, Rubatscher’s “Nationalismus nationalsozialistischer Prägung ist als ein Abwehrversuch der Assimilierungstendenzen einer fremden Staatsnation durch den Beweis der Andersstammigkeit zu werten” (57).
sense of brotherhood and martyrdom followed by a discussion of its nationalistic implications.

5. The Spirit of Brotherhood and Martyrdom

The historical group of Anabaptists in Tyrol were the most unfortunate of all Täufer communities in sixteenth-century Europe. According to twentieth-century historical scholarship, the Austrian Brethren were relentlessly hunted, tortured, and executed as Ferdinand of Habsburg insisted upon the harshest possible measures against the radical faith group (Loserth, Tirol 36-40). As the authorities applied an array of means to ferret out the Anabaptists, such as the organisation of Täuferjäger (Anabaptist hunters) and the appointment of spies as well as the granting of high rewards for those who captured members of the group, the movement went underground and established a catacomb church. Maria Veronika Rubatscher gives a sympathetic account of the group’s fate as a persecuted minority that gathers and manages an underground congregation.

The Tyrolean Anabaptists are first introduced in Das lutherische Joggele as a clandestine community that, fearing persecutions by the state and church, meets secretly at night in an isolated building high in the mountains. While the Brethren listen to sermons, hold discussions, sing hymns, and administer baptisms, they are well aware of the risks they are taking, and they know the consequences of being caught by officials: “Draußen im Land, in der Nacht reiten die Richter und Pfleger, schleichen die Aufpasser und Schergen, rennen die Postboten mit des Kaisers Edikt und des Bischofs und Landsfürsten Mandat” (10). The novel depicts the Brethren’s constant fear of persecution. The mandates
and decrees with which authorities aim to eradicate any deviation from the Catholic Church pose a serious threat to the lives of the Brethren.

At the same time, this permanent danger of being captured and executed generates a sense of fellowship among the radical religionists. Their confraternity is expressed by terms such as “Geschwistriege”, “Brüder”, and “Taufgesinnte,” nomenclatures that reflect the group’s sentiment of being united by faith. Perhaps inspired by Beck’s assertion that “sie sich unter einander Brüder und Schwestern [nennen]” and the frequent use of the terms “Brüder” and “Geschwistrrigen” in the Geschichts-Bücher of the Brethren, Rubatscher employs the appropriate nomenclatures favored by the Brotherhood rather than the derogative term “Wiedertäufer” that was mostly used by non-members (v, 103). The reference to familial bonds by terms such as “brothers and sisters” supports the narrative’s image of Anabaptism as a tight-knit community.

The spirit of brotherhood is illustrated by the Brethren’s unselfish conduct and their charitable efforts to support those members of the group who are in need. During the nocturnal gathering, the Brethren collect items for an impoverished believer:

Hänsl Unterrainer, der selber lang in der Keuchen [Kerker] gelegen, ausgebroychen und in diesem Jahr Diener der Notdurft ist, breitet seinen Mantel auf die Erde hin und ein jegliches gibt sein Vermögen dar, mit willigem Gemüt, ungezwungen und ungedrungen. (13)

This nearly apostolic act of mutual aid by spreading the cloak and pooling all belongings to be shared with those members who are destitute was a common practice among the
early Brethren and is reported in the Brotherhood’s chronicle. In the face of persecution and forced migration, the community embraces the spirit of koinonia and shares material aid with needy congregation members. Brotherly love and care is a recurring theme that characterizes the Anabaptist community in Rubatscher’s narrative. After Joggele and Gertraud are shunned by her father, the newlyweds receive support from the local Anabaptist congregation. In return, they provide shelter for a fugitive from Moravia.

The invitation “Kimm lei,” which Joggele extends to the fellow believer, expresses the Brotherhood’s practice of mutual aid (112). The novel depicts the Anabaptists as a fellowship that emphasizes the simple life and is concerned with the welfare of each member. The service to the community is not regarded merely as an obligation to the poor; rather it is perceived as a blessing, “Gnad,” and a beatific experience (93).

During the secret gathering at the beginning of the story, Jakob gives testimony of his faith, thereby summarizing essential aspects of Anabaptist life and piety. He reports that, even before he joined the Brotherhood, he was fascinated by the group’s exceptional conduct:

Sie nennen einander Bruder und Schwester. Sie fluchen nit. Sie schelten nit. Sie brauchen nit Wehr und Waffen, nit Kleider, die weltlich Pomp und Pracht

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194 Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer informs about such a similar act of sharing that took place in Nikolsburg in the year 1528: “Zu der Zeit haben disse Männer einen Mantel vor dem volkh nidergebräitet vnd jederman hat sein vermögen dargelegt, mit willigem gemüet, vonzwingen vnd vngedrungen, zur unterhaltung der dürftigen, nach der leer der propheten vnd apostel” (75). Rubatscher copies this account word for word and transplants it into her storyline that is set in the 1530s.

195 Although a couple of fellow believers suffer from hardship and privation themselves, they joyfully give their last cloak to the shivering bride. “Sie haben nur den einen [Mantel]. Hat immer einer müssen in der Hütten bleiben, wenn es kalt und windig ist gewesen … Jetzt haben sie keinen mehr. Sie aber falten die Händ und danken der Gnad, die ihnen ist erwiesen worden” (92). This act of mutual aid exemplifies the Brotherhood’s strong sense of community. Having internalized the concept of koinonia, the old couple shares their few possessions generously.
anzeigen. Sie schlemmen und prassen nit. Sie rechten nit vor der Obrigkeit und
tragen alles in Geduld und dem Heiligen Geist. Hab völlig vermeint, die ersten
Christen wären wieder kömmen, und bin ihnen nachzogen. (22)

Through the perception of the young man, the narrative introduces chief characteristics of
the movement, namely its conformity to primitive Christianity, its sense of brotherhood,
and its emphasis on the simple life, humility, and patience as well as its non-resistant
stance.196 In Jakob’s words, the author characterizes the group’s patience and faith in
suffering as having brought about his conversion to their belief: “Hab’ das alles und noch
viel mehr zum höchsten beherzigt und gedacht, es müsst doch eine gewaltige Gnad’ Gottes
bei ihnen sein, daß sie so beständig in ihren Herzen bis in den Tod verharren” (23). The
Anabaptists are represented as a Christian community that remains steadfast in its faith,
even when facing death. The protagonist assumes that the fellowship has received God’s
grace, for it stays true to its belief while persevering through torments and tribulations.
Their experience of suffering and martyrdom defines their identity as a true church.

The Anabaptists’ path of suffering and acceptance of death for the sake of their
faith is emphasized throughout the novel. Each time Joggele gets together with fellow
believers, they exchange information regarding persecuted Brethren. Burschel refers to
this practice of spreading martyr stories as “ambulanter Todenkult” (161). The community
shares the news about various members who have recently faced torture and execution

Incidentally, this favorable account of the Brotherhood was first given by Christoph Andreas Fischer,
one of the most aggressive opponents of the Anabaptists in Moravia. Cited in Beck’s introduction,
Rubatscher copies Fischer’s passage from his polemic writing Von der Widertauffer verfluchten Ursprung,
leaving out his conclusion — “Wer sollte da glauben, dass unter diesen Kleidern lauter reissende Wölfe
stecken!” — in order to keep up the humble and peaceful appearance of the Anabaptists in her literary
portrayal of the group (cited in Beck v).
while bearing testimony to their faith. “Sie reden von Geschwistrigen, die in der
letztverwichenen Zeit für die Wahrheit Zeugschaft gaben” (Rubatscher 117). Numerous
names of Brethren, whose fate is described in the Geschichts-Bücher, are mentioned in the
novel. This listing of male and female martyrs of the Anabaptist movement creates the
image of a suffering church. At the clandestine meeting, for instance, one of the members
relates the events he witnessed in the dungeons:

Jörgl Übl, der Knappe, der Ruepper Hans und Gyprian, mein Bruder, nit minder
die Weibsbilder: die Verena Klasen, die Ursula Hellriglin, des Joachim Kösner
und des Josen Marken Tochter sein alle beständig geblieben. … Der Huebmaier,
alias Bastl Glaser, der Hänsl Grünfelder, der Joggel Zängerle und der alte
Oswald haben wohl sterben müssen. Ich kann euch ihre Freudigkeit nit sagen.
(15)

Later in the novel, the drowning of several Täuferinnen is described: “In dem Eisack hat
man die Täuferschwestern ersäuft … Die Katharina Raderin hat müssen die letzte sein.
Die ist die jüngste und schönste gewesen und hat noch das Wasser angelacht, nit anders
denn heut der Herbsttag lacht vor dem kalten Sterben” (61). This cataloguing of
Anabaptist persecution stories constructs a collective identity of the faith group that is
based on a shared experience of suffering and martyrdom. The community is stamped with
a deep martyr sensibility. It holds its martyrs in the highest regard and memorializes their
patient endurance of extreme pain. The novel depicts the Brethren’s sense of a suffering
discipleship that solidifies the group’s collective identity.
6. Rubatscher’s Use of Anabaptist Literature of Martyrdom

Imitating the *Chronicle*’s “Strategien der ‘Erfindung’ heroischer Traditionen,” Rubatscher’s novel portrays the Brethren as heroes who exhibit courage and discipline when remaining steadfast in moments of torture and pain (Burschel 7). As the *Chronicle*’s motivation is historical and inspirational, Rubatscher employs Anabaptist martyr stories as a means of both preserving regional history and shaping the readers’ sensibilities. Her literary portrayal of the *Täufer*’s patient endurance of earthly tribulations aims to provide encouragement for fellow members of the German minority in northern Italy. Her fictionalized accounts of Anabaptist martyrs serve as examples of steadfast behavior. They exhibit qualities of courage and perseverance to be imitated by the contemporary ethnic minority.

In the novel, the fellowship develops a martyr consciousness by circulating eyewitness reports and prison letters among congregations and singing about fellow martyrs in hymns. In the narrative, the employment of specific texts taken from the Anabaptist literary heritage resembles the community’s historical usage of martyr literature, namely the commemoration of the Brethren’s suffering and the celebration of their witness (Gregory 4). Several songs from the Brotherhood’s hymnbook are included in the narrative, reflecting the *Täufer*’s desperate situation during the time of severe persecution. During the Brethren’s march through the city on their way to the galleys, for instance, Jakob and the other galley slaves carry the tune of “Dein heilig statt” attributed to
Leonhard Schiemer.\textsuperscript{197} The hymn’s verse, “mit Schmach und Schand durch alle Land, verjaget und vertrieben … man hetzt uns mit den Hunden,” expresses poignantly the Brethren’s experience of ostracism caused by the dominant society (159).

In addition to the songs and records of martyrs taken from the Anabaptist literature of lamentation, \textit{Das lutherische Joggele} contains a passage from the \textit{Geschicht-Buch} that summarizes the various forms of physical torture and cruel execution methods the radical believers encountered during the sixteenth-century persecution:

In den finsteren Türmen haben sie verhungern und verfaulen müssen … man hat ihnen Löcher in die Wangen gebrannt … Etliche hat man zerrecket und zerrstreckt, zu Aschen und Pulver verbrannt, an Säulen gebraten, mit glühenden Zangen zerrissen, mit dem Schwert gerichtet, ins Wasser gestoßen … Sie trutzten aller Pein und Marter und blieben stark, standhaft und getrost bis in den Tod. (183-184)\textsuperscript{198}

The narrative gives a vivid account of the brutality officials employed to punish the religious deviants and compel them to return to the state church. This depiction of the Anabaptists’ fate in the dungeons and at the stake captures the group’s notion of \textit{Gelassenheit}. The Brethren are pictured as faithful believers who accept their fate and fully submit to the will of God despite any worldly tribulations. In doing so, they evolve

\textsuperscript{197} Rubatscher is very familiar with the Anabaptist hymns and even knows the melodies to which they were sung. In the case of Schiemer’s song, for instance, the narrator reports “Es geht im Ton wie das ‘Dies irae, Dies illa’” (159). The author may have gleaned this information from Beck’s \textit{Geschichts-Bücher} or Wolkan’s research about the \textit{Ausbund} published in \textit{Die Lieder der Wiedertäufer} (1903).

\textsuperscript{198} Similarly, Wolkan’s edition of the \textit{Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder} states: “Etliche gereckt und zerstreckt … Etliche, daß sie an der Marter zerrissen und gestorben sein. Etlich zu Aschen und Pulver verbrannt … Etlich an Säulen gebraten …” (184). Rubatscher incorporates the persecution account almost word for word and even mentions her source at the end of the paragraph, “so und noch viel mehr ist in den Geschichtsbüchern der Martyrer Christi zu lesen” (185).
into a community of courageous disciples who demonstrate a high degree of strength and steadfastness. As Rubatscher adopts the heroic tradition of the *Chronicle* in her historical novel, she idealizes the religious minority.

In an effort to integrate various aspects of the Anabaptist experience in Tyrol that were documented in the *Chronicle*, Rubatscher includes an instance in which imprisonment and torture cause one member of the fellowship to recant. Rubatscher embeds a case of recantation that is mentioned in Beck’s edition of the *Geschicht-Bücher* into her story: “Im Jahr 1538 wardt der Br. Lienhardt Lochmayer in der graffschaft Tirol gefangen … mit mancherlei arglistigkeit mit im handtiert, bis er zu Fall gebracht worden” (135). At the nocturnal gathering of Joggele’s congregation, the elder sympathizes with Lochmayer and he points out that authorities “lang hinter ihm hergewesen sein mit Hunger und Marter … mit mancherlei Arglistigkeit” (7). Combining factual and fictional elements, the author rewrites passages from the Anabaptist history book and integrates them into the plot of her novel. As she retells the stories with much fidelity to the Anabaptist source, she assumes a sympathetic attitude toward the faith group and replicates the heroic rhetoric employed in the *Chronicle*.

The parallels between the Hutterite historical chronicle and Rubatscher’s novel is most noticeable in the narrative’s depiction of martyr accounts of the movement’s Tyrolean leaders. The author relates to the stories of Jakob Hutter and Onofrius

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199 Similar to the account given in the *Geschicht-Bücher*, the character of Lochmayer retracts his renouncement and rejoins the fellowship, stating: “I widerruf und widersprich dasselb alles und ist mir leid und weh, daß ich’s tan hab und sag und bekenn’ und will mit der Gnad Gottes standhaft bleiben bis in den Tod” (12-13).
onofrius (offrus) griesinger was ordained as the leader of the anabaptist community in tyrol after hutter’s death. before being called to this region of austria, he had taken a group of brethren to moravia and established a settlement in auspitz. once ordained as leader in tyrol, he preached, baptized, and observed communion services. he was repeatedly captured by officials but he managed to escape each time. according to loeserth, onofrius was able to elude his pursuers several times (174). he was finally caught and executed in 1537.

the geschicht-bücher give following account of jakob hutter’s torture: “liessen in in eiskaltes wasser setzen vnd nachdem in ein heisse stuben fueren, … auch habens im sein leib verwundt, branntwein in die wundten gossen vnd an im angezndt vnd brennen lassen” (beck 122).
The prominent Anabaptist leader hardly appears as an actual character in the story. Joggele simply observes him from a distance. Yet, the elder’s gaze has a fundamental impact on the protagonist’s life. The short moment in which their eyes meet links the *Chronicle’s* account of the historical individual with the storyline of the fictional novel.

Rubatscher’s narrative relies on the documents given in the *Geschicht-Bücher* in order to construct the image of the historically attested leaders who epitomize the Anabaptist experience of suffering. In the novel’s description of Onofrius’ interrogation and execution, the author intertwines historical accounts and fictional plot. Onofrius’ martyr story is presented in the form of a messenger’s report that is spread among congregation members. The depiction of the martyr’s torture underlines his strength in remaining true to his faith and fellowship:

Sie dräuen ihn. Sie brennen ihn: Er soll ihnen seine Brüder anzeigen, die noch nit vertrieben sein, und sonderlich die ihn beherbergt und verköstigt haben. Bruder Onofrius aber hat gesagt: Ich habe mich dahin begeben alle Pei n und Marter zu erdulden, die ein Mensch erdulden kann bis in den Tod, eh daß ich’s euch sag und ein Verräter sein sollt. (32)

This portrayal of Onofrius’ commitment to the Brotherhood unto death corresponds with the report given in the *Geschicht-Bücher.* The novel also integrates the *Chronicle’s*

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202 Parallel to Joggele’s report of Jakob Hutter’s transport to Innsbruck, the *Geschicht-Bücher* relate: “Balt darnach unden sie im ein knebel in’s mail, auf das er nit reden solt küssen vnd fuerten in geen Insprukh” (Beck 122).
account of Aichele’s change of mind upon witnessing Onofrius’ steadfastness, “dem
Eichele hat Gott der Herr ein’ Schrecken eingestoßen, daß er seine Hand hat aufgereckt
und geschworen, sein Leben lang nimmer kein’ Brüeder zu richten” (Rubatscher 66).204
Employing historical records of the elder’s perseverance through the grim ordeal evokes
an admiration for the group’s persistence in the face of death.

Rubatscher enriches Onofrius’ heroic martyr legend, documented in the Geschicht-
Bücher, with a poetic language that illustrates the courage and devotion of the Anabaptist
leader. With an array of stylistic devices such as anaphora, rhyme, and alliteration, the
author emphasizes the Täufer’s patience and faith in suffering, thereby arousing sympathy
for the persecuted minority. Onofrius’ experience of torture is introduced with the vivid
description:

Immer wieder ein Stuck.

Immer wieder ein Schluck.

Immer wieder ein Ruck.

Es kracht das Gebein. Es spritzt das Blut. Schwarz von Blut

ist der Boden in den Gewölben und sind die Wänd. (31)

The novel’s fixation on the bloody sacrifices of Onofrius and other Anabaptist martyrs
exceeds the group’s notion of the Nachfolge Christi. The author glorifies the collective

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203 “Nit lang darnach, als sie den Br. Offrus vil versuecht vnd in vast dreueten zu martern, er soll inen
anzaigen seine Brüder, die noch nit vertriben seindt, vnd sonderlich die in beherbrigt, da hat er inen
gesagt: Ich hab mich dahin gegeben alle pein vnd marter zu erdulden, die ein Mensch erdulden kann, bis in
Todt, ee daz ich’s euch sag vnd ein verräter sein solt” (Beck 139).
204 Beck’s edition of the Hutterite’s chronicle states: “Gott der Herr aber hat dem Aichele ein schrecken
eingestossen durch die standhafftigkeit des Offrus, das er sein Handt hat auffgereckht vnd geschworen, sein
Lebenlang Nimer mer kain Brüeder zu richten” (140). Unlike Stähle’s fictionalization of the provost’s
change of mind, Rubatscher’s novel incorporates the legend of Aichele’s conversion as reported in the
Brehren’s Geschicht-Bücher.
suffering and fuses the movement’s heroic tradition with nationalistic elements. Onofrius’
death as a martyr not only reflects the Brotherhood’s readiness to follow Christ in his
bearing of the cross; further, it represents the oppression of an entire German folk
movement.

7. Tyrolean Anabaptism and Martyrdom as Expressions of German Nationalism

Rubatscher adopts the movement’s martyrological tradition in order to depict the
_Täufer_ as an “einig Volk,” that set a boundary to the outside world through the celebration
of martyr legends (19). Employing the notion of the Brotherhood as a distinct _Volk_, which
is frequently voiced in the Anabaptist chronicles, Rubatscher draws a comparison
between the situation of 1530s Anabaptists in South Tyrol and the German-speaking
populace in that region during the 1930s. While Anabaptists use the term _Volk_ to mean
“gemain gottes,” the author employs the shared term to transfer her ultra-patriotic stance
onto the movement’s past (Beck 151). The identification of the Brotherhood’s early
history with an awareness of the German _Volk_ is apparent in Onofrius’ remark on the
group’s settlements in Moravia:

_Ejawohl schön ist es in dem Markgräflichumb, alda Gott aus allen deutschen Landen ein Volk in seinem Namen sammelt, in einem Herzen, Sinn und Gemüt zu

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205 “Zur selben Zeit meret sich daz volkh gottes täglich vnd got gab seinem wort, daz durch seine sendbotschoten gepredigt wardt, zeugnuss” (Beck 151). In contrast to Rubatscher’s use of the term _Volk_, suggesting a national identity, the Anabaptist literature employs the term exclusively in the context of the group’s destiny as God’s chosen people.

206 According to Leitgeb, Rubatscher’s concept of history was “die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen” (239). The sixteenth-century oppression of Anabaptists in South Tyrol reminds the author of the Italian efforts to de-nationalize Germans in that region in the late 1920s and early 1930s.
wandeln, daß sich der eine um den andern in Treuen annehmen mög … ja wohl viele treue Helden haben die Wahrheit ritterlich mit ihrem Blut bezeugt, seit Gott ein einig Volk sich abgesundert hat vor allen Völkern der Welt in Deutscher Nation. (19)

The novel blends Anabaptist martyr rhetoric with a national identity. The portrayal of the fellowship as a German national movement is most problematic. Historically, the concept of nation and nationalism is extraneous to the sixteenth-century faith group. The novel’s association of the radical reform movement with the “Deutscher Nation” ignores the group’s strict separation from the world, derived from its theology of the two kingdoms. The narrative combines Anabaptism with nationalistic elements for the purpose of cloaking the author’s ideological program in the guise of the historical fellowship.

The novel’s nationalistic employment of the early Tyrolean Anabaptists becomes especially noticeable in its depiction of the protagonist. Joggele emerges as a hero who embodies virtues essential to the Blut und Boden ideology of the early twentieth century. His physical traits epitomize the Nordic type claimed as the master race by German race theorists. Referred to as “der blonde Ries,” Jakob is described as: “blutjung, braun wie Brunelle und blond wie reißendes Traid” (21-23), whose “Augen funkeln” (128). It is further noted that he “In brauner Nackheit [da]steht, herrlich und hochgemut” (26).

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207 The concept of nationalism is foreign to the Anabaptist movement. According to Hans Kohn’s definition, “nationalism is first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness” with which the individual identifies himself as a member of and gives supreme loyalty to a specific nation (10-12). As Benedict Anderson has pointed out, it was not until the nineteenth century that Europe was in the process of building nations and states, and developing notions of nationalism (83). Apart from the fact that the concept of nationalism did not yet exist in the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists have historically been a Christian fellowship that was solely committed to God’s kingdom and separated from any secular power. According to the Schleitheim Confession of Faith, stating that “the rule of the government is according to the flesh,” the Anabaptists promoted a strict separation of church and state (Yoder, Schleitheim 15).

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fellow believer praises him for strength, asserting “Ihr seid die Gesundheit” (146). The protagonist’s outward appearance indicates the novel’s emphasis on qualities of character commonly associated with the Nordic race, such as healthy and clean lifestyle, joy in manual labor, and an alert mind. As an idealized figure, Joggele is characterized by an eager, vigorous, and strong-minded nature. Even during his time as a galley slave, he bears the pain with a consistently high degree of strength and patience. Despite the torments and tribulations, he proclaims that life “ist eine Gnade!” (67). The illustration of the Anabaptist perseverance of intense suffering aboard the slave ship blends the movement’s notion of Gelassenheit with the author’s call for patience during the German oppression in South Tyrol by the Italian government.208

Joggele’s appearance and action exemplify his role as the narrative’s hero. In accordance with Barbara Potthast’s concept of the “mittlere Held” (largely based on Lukács’ definition of the “mittelmäßiger Held”), Joggele embodies the typical leading figure in historical novels (37). He is depicted as a young and inexperienced man whose rank as a common brother and work as a peasant allow for a “Volksnähe” (Potthast 37). Situated in the lower social stratum, he experiences history “teils als handelnde, teils als leidende” figure (Lukács 313). Yet, his character parts from Potthast’s proposed pattern of “mittlerer Held” because he lacks “Fehler und Schwächen” (37). Portrayed as a character without flaws and weaknesses, he becomes highly idealized in the narrative.

208 “Die passive Bejahung allen Geschehens wird mit Hilfe der Religion ideologisch aufgewertet zum duldigen Ertragen einer jeden Lebenssituation” (Leitgeb 51).
As a member of the peasantry, Joggele represents the simple rural life of the Tyrolean people. He is described as a hard worker, eager to occupy and cultivate land to create a foundation for his family’s life:

Der Joggel haut und schaufelt den ganzen Tag. Brotland schafft er für sein ungeborenes Kind aus dem dürren Staudicht. Denn auf Pieterstein hört die arge Welt auf und fangt die göttliche Wildnis an. Da regiert noch das gute alte, ungeschriebene deutsche Recht und das Land ist dem untertan und für Leib und Erben verfallen. (120-121)

The narrative romanticizes the life that Jakob and his wife lead in separation from the established society. Due to his dissident faith, the couple has settled in the remote area of the Pieterstein, avoiding conflict with society. His efforts to transform the wilderness of the Tyrolese Mountain into an agricultural area correspond to the rural values and virtues stressed by the German National Socialist ideology. As an industrious farmer, he works the land and creates living space for his growing family. The mountain serves as a safe haven for the religious minority. Motivated by the author’s love for the Tyrolean landscape, the description presents the mountainous region as a nearly divine place that conciliates “Familie, Arbeit, Natur und Religion” (Waldner 158). In correspondence to the “agrarromantische Ideologie” of the National Socialism, Rubatscher crafts an image of the Anabaptist that is characterized by his vigor and self-sufficiency in the mountainous enclave (Leitgeb 80).

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209 Peasants were celebrated as heroes by the national socialist ideology. They were regarded as guardians of the German land and racial stock (Mosse 134).
Similarly, his fellow Brethren in Moravia are described in the novel as “deutsche Brüder” who are the “friessamste[n] und fleißigste[n] Untergebene[n], die die Wüsteneien zu Gärten machten … das beste Korn und Brot … und Gerät in die Scheunen lieferten” (114). The text links the Anabaptist industry and expertise in farming to the German nationalist concept of Lebensraum.\textsuperscript{210} The Brethren’s reported settlement in the East where “sich daz volckh gottes täglich [meret]” is portrayed as an expansion mission to cultivate waste regions of Moravia (Beck 151).\textsuperscript{211} The novel identifies the migrating group as representatives of the German race rather than Anabaptists.

The Tyrolean Täufer in Rubatscher’s regionalist novel are classified as Germans. The Brotherhood is depicted as a highly respectable folk movement that is intrinsically German, contrasting with Romanic elements of the Catholic Church. Jakob is described as a German hero who combines national spirit with evangelical faith. He presents a vision of rescuing the country from ecclesiastical divisions:

Deutschland, o Deutschland, all deine Flüß sein rot vom Blut der Bekenner, deine Türm sein voll von ihrer Pein. Deine Wälder brennen und verbrennen das Gebein der Heiligen. … Wann wird der Streit: Hie lutherisch? Hie katholisch! Aus sein und der Deutsche wieder deutsch uns eins zu seinem Herrgott beten?

(20)

\textsuperscript{210} The concept of the Lebensraum was a chief principle of the Nazi ideology. It was concerned with the colonization of eastern Europe, which was assumed to provide additional space and an agricultural surplus to feed the German nation.

\textsuperscript{211} De Boor-Friedrich’s article in Frauenkultur, a journal affiliated with the Deutsches Frauenwerk (a German nationalsocialist organisation for women) indicates that Rubatscher’s description of the Anabaptist migration to Moravia was perceived as support for Germany’s colonization efforts, “keine Marter und keine Qual vermag diese stolzen und mutigen Menschen von ihrem Weg abzubringen, und so werden sie schließlich zu Trägern der deutschen Kolonization im fernen Slavenland” (23).
In this exclamation, the German nation assumes a personality that mirrors the country’s religious schism and pain. The landscape reflects the suffering of martyrs as they are drowned or burned at the stake. Yet, the visualization of the “Bekenners Pein” does not elucidate the reasons for the Anabaptist persecution; rather, it pictures the fellowship’s fate as part of an overall tragedy of the German spirit (Schowalter 668).

Reasons for the nation’s inner conflict and the Brethren’s massacre are found in foreign influences. The novel depicts the invasion of the German Empire by Romanic powers: “Inquisiter kömmen aus Hispanien mit scharfem Geschau und Bluthunden an der Leine” (81). The French sovereign and the Catholic authority pose a threat to the country’s unity, “des Königs von Frankreich böse Praktiken sind offenbar geworden. Böse Fäden spinnt der Papst in Rom” (28). The critical remarks about the papal leadership, Mary Bender justly observes, were not meant as a reaction against the Catholic Church as such (Theme 116). As a devout Catholic, Rubatscher’s object of criticism is the foreign element and moral laxity within the established church. The novel’s protagonist denounces the Latin influences and the priest’s questionable conduct when asserting, “da singen und lesen sie [die Priester] Latein, von dem der gemeine Mann nix versteht,” and proposes, “die Leutepriester sollen dem Gotteswort auswarten und nit in den Wirtshäusern liegen“

212 Rubatscher alludes to the contemporary situation in which she experienced the ruthlessness of the “Italianization” efforts in South Tyrol. Mussolini’s policy to reduce the indigenous German-speaking population was perceived as a threat to the German spirit. Representing the Auslandsdeutschum, Rubatscher’s writing is motivated by a strong desire for the reunification of the South Tyrol region with the German fatherland.

213 Rubatscher grew up in the Catholic faith, received free schooling from the Englische Fräulein (Congregatio Jesu), and completed one year of novitiate at St. Pölten where she was known as “vorbildliche Ordensanwärterin” (Leitgeb 26). Despite leaving the order in 1923, she remained a devoted Catholic and integrated “das katholische Element” into her religious-regionalist fiction (Leitgeb 266).
Joggele and the Anabaptist movement are described in the novel as a religious response to the foreign, especially Italian, infiltration of the state church.

The *Taufgesinnte* form a counter movement to the church’s politics and its foreign influences by proposing ecclesiastical changes that suggest a folk piety. However, the radical religious group in Rubatscher’s fictional novel retains an essentially Catholic disposition. The author avoids the completion of the protagonist’s baptism during the nocturnal gathering. Although Joggele responds to the elder’s questions according to the movement’s principles, he does not attain full membership through the baptismal rite. After his failed confirmation to the Brotherhood, he marries Gertraud, who venerates the Blessed Virgin Mary and encourages him to consecrate himself to the mother of Jesus. At their engagement, she presses a medallion with the picture of Mary to his lips, asking him “daß er sie in ihrem Bildnis ehren und benedeien mög, die Mutter des Herrn” (84). The veneration of saints, not practiced by the Anabaptist movement, provokes an image of the *Täufergemeinde* that fuses the fellowship’s sense of discipleship with Catholic elements. Similar to Spiess’ use of the Anabaptists for cementing his own Protestant identity, Rubatscher employs a strategy that turns the faith group into more generic Catholics.

The novel advocates a unified German folk piety that merges Christian aspects, both Catholic and Anabaptist, with Germanic paganism and closeness to nature. Upon Jakob’s return to Tyrol, he is marked by the torture experienced aboard the slave ship:

His wounds are reminiscent of the pain caused by foreign powers on Roman territory. Although the narrative affirms the religious motivation of his martyrdom, Jakob no longer represents a specifically Anabaptist character. The novel associates his persecution with foreign influences while leaving the church’s reasons for oppressing the Brotherhood unclarified. The book uses Joggele to embody the suffering and pain of all martyrs, without symbolizing the fate of the Täufer in particular. The elimination of the uniquely Anabaptist element is also noticeable in the epithet “lutherisch”, which is used to designate all non-Catholics.

The radical religious movement has lost its significance in the story and merely serves as a catalyst for the development of a folk piety that promotes a steadfast belief, the rejection of Latin influences, and an attachment to rural simplicity. The protagonist grows closer to nature and God by a life in the open in prayer. The Tyrolean landscape provides a place of safety for the physically suffering man, “er hat die Wolken und die Berg, den Wind zum Gespielen, … das schwellende Moos ist sein Lager … ja klein und fern ist alles Menschenwerk und Gott ist nah” (179). In proximity to the divine, he awaits death. According to Leitgeb, the theme of “des Leidenden, der durch die reine Natur zur ‘Stille’ kommt, ist ein häufiges Motiv der Heimatliteratur” (80). Jakob appears as the hero of a romantic myth about the development of a folk piety that does not distinguish between particular confessions. The Anabaptist faith and its unique history of martyrdom dissolve
into the concept of a universal church that combines the Christian belief with German folk elements, and a love of nature.

D. Conclusion

Fictional literature using Anabaptist history appears in a greater volume in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These works differ from earlier literary representations of Anabaptism due to their sympathetic portrayal of the group’s religious principles and their experience of persecution. The authors’ change of attitude toward the fellowship’s distinct theology and their awareness of its perseverance of pain were initiated by advancements in the research of sixteenth-century Anabaptism and the recovery of the Brotherhood’s own historical documents and testimonies, especially the editions of the *Hutterite Chronicle*. The scholarly works on the movement’s history and the fellowship’s literature of lamentation has disclosed the interconnection between the group’s religious doctrine and its readiness to suffer martyrdom. Through their familiarity with the group’s own literature, authors have developed a group-internal perspective that initiates a focus on the Brethren’s experience of suffering and martyrdom.

The literary texts discussed in this chapter employ the *Imitatio Christi* as the fundamental aspect directing the Anabaptist faith and life. Informed by contemporary scholarship and the Brethren’s own historical accounts, the narratives’ depiction of the fellowship focuses on what Harold S. Bender has categorized as the essence of Anabaptism, namely the ethic of love and non-resistance, both closely related to the group’s understanding of *Nachfolge* (Discipleship 27). The texts’ portrayals of the Brethren’s rejection of force and their insistence on the principle of brotherly love and
forgiveness sparks a discussion of ethical issues relating to the authors’ programmatic aims. All three novels utilize depictions of the Täufer’s martyrdom for didactic purposes. The vivid description of the believers’ ordeal and their steadfastness arouses an awareness of values and virtues, and offers instruction on social and ethical matters.

Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl discusses the Anabaptist position against vengeance in his novella Mein Recht. The narrative’s image of the Anabaptists is determined by their endurance of pain and their steadfastness of faith, derived from an uncompromising obedience to the teachings of Christ. The Brethren’s perseverance of torture and their act of forgiving their executioners are juxtaposed to the protagonist’s retribution efforts by means of legal and physical force. The conflict that emerges between the characters’ diametrically opposing attitudes toward revenge sheds light on the Anabaptist spirit of conciliation. Turning on the contrast of opposites, the author portrays the principle of non-retaliation as an ethical issue that awakens the social conscience of his readers.

In his novel, Der Reichsprofos, Wilhelm Stähle (alias Phillip Spiess) addresses the Anabaptists’ mission of imitating Christ by patiently enduring martyrdom, forgiving their oppressors, and praying for them. Similar to Riehl’s narrative, the Brotherhood in Der Reichsprofos is characterized by the principle of non-retaliation. Moreover, Stähle’s historical novel depicts the Brethren’s sense of conciliation and charity. Accepting the New Testament commandments as instructions for attaining a true discipleship to Christ, the young Anabaptist woman returns good for evil by protecting and even helping to restore the life of her persecutor. As a Protestant minister, Stähle pursues a catechetic purpose with his fictional text. The portrayal of the Anabaptists’ practice of forgiveness
and charity despite their severe persecution and martyrdom offers a lesson on Christ’s invitation to love one’s enemy. At the same time, the author employs the depiction of the early Anabaptist notion of Nachfolge to advocate for his Protestant denomination. In the aftermath of the Kulturkampf, Stähle promotes the Lutheran faith by suggesting an attachment of the Anabaptists to the Protestant doctrine. In doing so, the narrative not only portrays the Catholic Church as the brutal oppressor of the early reform movement, but also arouses sympathy for the Protestant Church by perceiving the Brethren’s experience of martyrdom as part of a shared history and tradition.

Maria Veronika Rubatscher’s depiction of the suffering fellowship in South Tyrol also combines instructional and programmatic aims. In her novel Das lutherische Joggele, the author crafts an image of the Brethren that is determined by their steadfastness while facing torture and execution. The portrayal of the Taufgesinnte’s sense of brotherhood and their emphasis on a simple life, humility, and non-resistance is reminiscent of the apostolic early church. Incarnating Christ’s example of patience and faith in suffering, the Anabaptists in Rubatscher’s novel exemplify a calm spirit and submission to the will of God. The literary illustration of the Brethren’s endurance of pain provides both encouragement and guidance for the reader. At the same time, the author interprets the Anabaptist sense of Gelassenheit to suit her personal situation as a member of the German Tyrolean minority in fascist Italy. In her fictionalization of the historical Täufer movement, she commends virtues such as simplicity, brotherhood, and steadfastness, all of which represent the German nationalist ideal.
Each of the selected narratives romanticizes and idealizes the early Anabaptist experience of martyrdom and steadfastness. The fictional texts underline the group’s patient endurance of pain for the sake of their faith. Bearing the agonies of persecution, the Anabaptist characters prove their courage and devotion to God. Their heroic acts as martyrs provide an uplifting example. The stories show how the Brethren bear excruciating pain with a consistently high degree of equilibrium and even express joy and give thanks to Jesus for they can participate with Him in the most intimate possible manner and consequently anticipate a similar redemptive experience. In Riehl’s novella, the Anabaptist “ist freudig gestorben” (226), in Spiess’ novel, the congregation sings “Halleluja” while being burned alive (243), and the protagonist in Rubatscher’s narrative perceives the torments and tribulations as “eine Gnade” (67).

While the narratives in this chapter include historical figures and testimonies from the movement’s chronicles, they do not emphasize the events in Münster. Modern research on the Anabaptist movement has suggested drawing a distinction between genuine Anabaptists and Münsterites. Regarded as a different and very distinct phenomenon, the Täuferreich in Westphalia owes little directly to German and Swiss Anabaptism. Furthermore, the fictional texts of Riehl, Spiess, and Rubatscher are concerned with depictions of Nachfolge Christi through suffering and martyrdom, a notion that was distorted in the Anabaptist regime in Westphalia. Consequently, the authors avoid associating the Anabaptist movement with the Münster reign. Unlike the nineteenth-century fictional texts that allude to a direct lineage between Münsterites and mainline
Anabaptists, the twentieth-century narratives, particularly those of Riehl and Rubatscher, refute any affiliation of the peaceful Brethren with the Münsterites.

In addition to the emphasis on the Brethren’s suffering and martyrdom, the narratives address a number of aspects that are linked to the fellowship’s emulation of the apostles’ early church, for instance the strong sense of community, humility, non-resistance, and the practice of forgiveness and charity. These characteristics of Anabaptist life and piety, derived from the Brethren’s strict obedience to the New Testament and their shared experience of persecution, have social implications that are portrayed favorably in the literary texts. The notion of peace, *caritas*, and social equality are universal values and consequently contribute to an idealization of the faith group. Even the Brotherhood’s distinct attitude toward the oath, church leaders, the Lord’s Supper, and the practice of the ban is articulated in the respective stories according to the works’ specific themes and programmatic intentions.

While including most of the Anabaptist fundamental principles of faith, the fictional texts carefully avoid the question of baptism. This particular ritual of the Anabaptist movement, marking the actual conversion to the faith community, is depicted as an ambivalent religious custom in all three texts. In Spiess’ and Rubatscher’s novels, believer’s baptism is administered during a clandestine gathering at night, creating the impression of a devious and deplorable act. In both stories, the baptismal rite ends in tragedy, causing the death of the protagonist’s wife in one story and the capture and execution of congregation members in the other. In Riehl’s novella, the non-believing protagonist expresses dismay upon hearing about the practice of adult baptism and is
relieved when finding out that the baptism of his prospective wife was performed without water and thus not regarded as an actual admission into the Anabaptist church. As a conspicuous aspect of the Anabaptist faith, believer’s baptism diverts most drastically from the doctrine and practice of both the Catholic and Protestant Church. The negative treatment of the Anabaptist baptismal practice, despite its recognition as the essential element of ecclesiastical voluntarism by contemporary historians, indicates the authors’ affiliation with the established church that influences their perception of the Anabaptist faith. Anabaptists are not portrayed for their own sake; rather their history of martyrdom becomes subject to the authors’ didactic and programmatic aims, so they exclude the practice of believer’s baptism that would complicate their use of the group.

The narratives illustrate the Anabaptist history of martyrdom with much sympathy and understanding for the group’s mission of \textit{Nachfolge}. Suffering and steadfastness are connected to the Brethren’s idea of discipleship and consequently determine the image of the religious group. The picture of the fellowship as an incarnation of the early apostolic church is further supported by the delineation of the group’s simple, peaceful, and charitable character. In their portrayal of the Anabaptist endeavor to establish an exceptional faith community that follows Christ in all his teachings, including those concerning the bearing of the cross, the narratives do not consider the socio-political implications of this practice. The conflicts that emerge between Anabaptists and the state about the church’s separation from secular powers receive little attention from Riehl, Spiess, and Rubatscher. In the following chapter, I will discuss historical novels that are
concerned with the social and political ramifications of the Brotherhood’s notion of religious exceptionalism.
Chapter 5: Conflict with the State—The Congregation of Faithful Dissidents

A. Tavel: *Der Frondeur* (1929) and the Bernese Brethren

1. The History of Bernese Anabaptism

In the sixteenth century, Anabaptism rose and spread quickly in the State of Bern, especially in the region of the Emmental. Witnessing the rapid growth of the fellowship, Bernese authorities issued orders that demanded the abolition and extermination of the group. Starting in 1527, the government enforced Anabaptist mandates by means of imprisonment and execution. In their efforts to rid the area from Anabaptist influences, officials also employed torture, issued severe fines, confiscated property, and banished *Täufer* from the country. In spite of unceasing persecution, the movement continued to grow. The region of Bern, notably the Emmental, remained a central location for Swiss Anabaptism until the early eighteenth century due to its distinct geographical setting. In the deep valleys and on the more inaccessible homesteads in the Oberland (highland), members of the faith group managed to avoid persecution and carried on their Anabaptist belief and practice for centuries.  

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214 At that time, Bern was organized as a city-state and often referred to as *Stand Bern* (State of Bern). Since the use of the term *Kanton* (canton) for Bernese territory and government only appeared in the eighteenth century, the area will be referred to as State of Bern in this chapter.

215 According to Delbert Gratz, the valley’s vicinity to the Lucerne border enabled members of the faith group to hide and evade the *Täuferjäger* (Bernese Anabaptism 29).
In times of political and social unrest, the radical religious movement experienced a particular increase in the number of new members and received support from local communities that sympathized with the pious fellowship. The Brotherhood reached its greatest following in the years after the violent suppression of the Bernese peasant uprising in 1653. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the group’s significant growth, which is referred to as the “zweite Blütezeit” (second period of prosperity) by Hanspeter Jecker, was viewed both with admiration and animosity (208).

The contemporaries’ reaction to the rise of Anabaptism in the region of Bern, especially the support offered by locals, caused a split in the Brethren’s attitude toward separation from the secular world and later led to the schism within the movement. The Brotherhood was confronted with the difficult task of determining its position vis-à-vis the outside world. The Brethren’s refusal to take the oath of allegiance or serve in the military was perceived as an act of civil disobedience by Bernese officials and punished accordingly. Unlike the sixteenth-century society that emphasized the aspect of heresy when persecuting Anabaptists, seventeenth-century authorities harassed the Swiss Brethren for their lack of loyalty to the state. The evolution of anti-Anabaptist attitudes is most noticeable in church polemics, for instance Georg Thormann’s 1693 monograph Probier-Stein. In his tract against the rise of the Täuferzeit, the Swiss Reformed pastor

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217 Oyer has speculated that Thormann was asked to write the polemic because he had extensive knowledge of the group through living in their midst and perhaps was thought to understand religious minorities due to his marriage with a French Huguenot (83-84).
recognizes the moral reputation of the local Anabaptist communities.\footnote{218} At the same time, however, he criticizes the group’s rejection of military service and the oath of allegiance, and warns about its anarchistic inclinations.\footnote{219}

In reaction to the Brotherhood’s non-conformity with the secular powers, the Bernese Council formed the Commission for Anabaptist Affairs (\textit{Committierten zum Täufergeschäft}) in 1659 to carry out measures against the faith group including the banishment of Brethren from the region.\footnote{220} A steady stream of Anabaptist emigrants left for the Palatinate, where they were granted limited toleration in the seventeenth century. Although the movement had experienced ostracism in various parts of Europe since its beginnings, it was especially the expulsion from Bern that left deep marks in the Brotherhood’s memory. The departure from the Emmental homeland was very traumatic for the Swiss Brethren.\footnote{221} Oyer has explained that the mountain folk struggled greatly with the exile from their homeland because they believed that “God visited them in a particular geographical locale” and therefore regarded the \textit{Oberland} as a sacred place (102).

\footnote{218}Thormann has acknowledged that “die Täufferleute viel gutes haben in ihrem Leben und Wandel” and proposes to his readers to follow the Anabaptist example in terms of the group’s steadfastness, moral conduct, and work ethic (507).

\footnote{219}The Reformed pastor has justified the persecution of \textit{Täufer} by asserting that they have their civil disobedience to blame in this case: “Weilen sie aber wieder allen … Befelch der Obrigkeit, auch alle Lands-Gebräuche und Lands-Sicherheit mit allem Gewalt wollen in dem Lande verbleiben und doch weder huldigen noch das Vatterland schützen wollen ist es nicht ihr eigener Fehler und ihre eigene Schuld so drauff hin von einer Obrigkeit ein scharpffers Einsehen gethan wird wieder sie? Wem können sie ihr Lyden in solchem Fahl zuschreiben als ihrer eigenen Hartnäckigkeit und ihrem Ungehorsam den sie bezeugen” (22).

\footnote{220}In 1699, the Anabaptist Commission (\textit{Täuferkammer}) replaced the \textit{Committierten zum Täufergeschäft}, continuing the work of looking after the confiscated estates of Anabaptists and administering Anabaptist mandates and orders issued by the Bernese government.

\footnote{221}Their love to the geographical homeland caused many of the Emmental Anabaptists to suffer from homesickness when going into exile. The experience of leaving the beloved hills and valleys was expressed, for instance, in Daniel Krehbiel’s poem “Peter Krehbiels Abschied von der Schweiz 1671”.

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This regional aspect inspired several Swiss authors to write about the seventeenth-century movement in their homeland. Particularly the events in Bern, the significant gain in the numbers of Täufer followed by severe persecution, and the substantial support given by sympathetic neighbors provide plentiful material for regional novelists. Fictional writings employing the development of Bernese Anabaptism as a principle theme began to appear in the twentieth century when authors rediscovered the Brethren’s tragic fate. The writers’ awareness of the region’s Anabaptist past is largely due to the efforts of Ernst Müller and his research assistant Adolf Fluri, who helped him to compile the history of Bernese Anabaptism in *Geschichte der bernischen Täufer* (1895). Müller, a Reformed church minister in Bern, first came into contact with Swiss Mennonites during his pastorate in the Emmental. His acquaintance with the religious principles and modest lifestyle of the contemporary Anabaptist congregation in that area aroused his interest in the movement’s history. In the introduction of his work, he explains the motivations that led to the writing of the Anabaptist history book, namely to offer current congregations a “Darstellung ihrer Geschichte, denn diese Gemeinde ist eine Märtyrerkirche, die ihre Existenzberechtigung und ihre Kraft in ihrer Geschichte hat” (2). Müller paid tributes to the early Brotherhood by identifying the Täufer’s self-sacrifice and dedication to values and beliefs as essential aspects of the Swiss character (2). With his description of the atrocities that Brethren suffered in Bern, he initiates the process of acknowledging the state’s collective guilt.222

222 “Es geziemt sich ferner, im Namen einer Mehrheit schweres Unrecht einzugestehen, das an einem ehrenwerten Teil des eigenen Volkes geübt worden ist” (2).
The foundation for such an acknowledgment of past wrongdoings could only be achieved by presenting a history that is free of false accusations and confessional bias. Ernst Müller was committed to treating the Anabaptist movement with justice. In his scholarly investigation of the group’s history, he was concerned with the writings of early Anabaptist leaders and testimonies of persecuted Brethren. He stressed that “eine unparteiische Geschichtsschreibung sich bemühen [muss], von täuferischer Seite Quellen beizubringen” (4). Yet, the study of Täufer sources was not always possible since the Swiss congregations lost many of their leaders and literate members in the sixteenth-century persecutions. Gratz has noted that Müller dealt with the lack of literature by bringing into his research sociological and psychological understanding for the development of the religious group that only a person closely acquainted with the “Bernese mind” could have (Bernese Anabaptism 5). The product of his thorough study on the hitherto misrepresented Bernese Anabaptists is a volume that combines detailed information on the Brethren with a sense of commiseration for their suffering and admiration of their steadfastness. It laid the foundation for the Swiss Vergangenheitsbewältigung and was a great impetus for several fictional texts on the Anabaptist theme, including the three presented in this chapter. In their respective novels, Rudolf von Tavel, Walter Laedrach, and Katharina Zimmermann commemorate the Täufer’s passionate conviction, religious courage, political fortitude, and endurance of pain as part of the history, culture, and identity of their Bernese homeland.

223 In the introduction to his work, he asserts: “Man mußte sich frei machen von der konfessionell beeinflussten Tradition der landläufigen Kirchengeschichte” (2).
2. Tavel’s Commitment to the Common Good

Rudolf von Tavel was one of the first Bernese writers of the twentieth century to be concerned with the history and tragic fate of the peaceful Brotherhood. Roughly two decades before his literary portrayal of Swiss Anabaptism, Ernst Marti told the story of the Emmental Täufer in his historical novel Zwei Häuser, zwei Welten (1911). In this narrative, Marti emphasizes the differences between Anabaptists and the state church. The permanent split within a family caused by the Anabaptist controversy symbolizes the irreconcilable views of the two religious groups. While Marti presents the Brotherhood and the state as two worlds that cannot be united, Tavel advocates rapprochement between the society and the marginalized group as part of his call for a common good.

The notion of “service before self” became Rudolf von Tavel’s philosophy of life. As a member of a prominent Bernese patrician family, the author and editor of Berner Tagblatt was concerned with the relationship between society and individual, class barriers between the poor peasants and the rich townspeople, and the state’s welfare programs and initiatives (Thomke 342).224 He was highly committed to the matter of “Gemeinwohl vor Eigennutz” in his personal life when he served as a member of the Bernese city parliament and the Association of Protestant Churches, volunteered in the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, and founded Pro Captivis, an aid center for prisoners of war during Wold War I (Stettler, Stärn 196).

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224 Tavel spent his childhood and youth in bourgeois-conservative circles of the city of Bern. In preparation for his time in the secondary school, he was entrusted to the care of a pastor in the small town of Diesbach. According to Bräm, “die bäuerliche Umgebung, das Zusammensein mit der Landjugend und die liebliche Landschaft wirkten heilsam auf den werdenden Menschen” (17). During these six month in Diesbach, he gained an insight into rural life and peasantry and developed an appreciation for the strong sense of community and Christian values in the pastor’s home (Bräm 17).
In his literary works, Tavel also promoted the idea of common good before self-interest. His novels and novellas reflect ethical convictions that include justice, charity, and service to all of society. Werner Günther has noted that Tavel’s depictions of the “Patrizierwesen [sich] bis hinauf zum Ideal der Selbstlosigkeit und der Aufopferung für das Volksganze steigert” (345). In his narratives, Tavel blends his plea for a common good with a sense of Heimatliebe, the glorification of the Bernese countryside and its people. His demand for respect and support for all of its inhabitants is closely related to this love for his homeland. He realizes that such a unity among all people, deriving from his ideal of a “Volksganze”, can only be achieved if the values, opinions, and beliefs of each individual are respected and honored—a notion that is imperative in a state like Switzerland where a diversity of languages, religious denominations, and cultures has historically grown (Bräm 92).

The concept of the individual and the common cause functioned as a lens through which Tavel perceived the history of his nation and life in general. Beginning in childhood, the author was fascinated with Switzerland’s development toward a confederacy. During his school years, he wrote short stories describing military events that led to the foundation of the Swiss Confederation. Many of his regional novels depict the State of Bern in the seventeenth century, particularly during the time of the Swiss peasant war of 1653 and the Second Battle of Villmergen in 1712. Hugo Marti has asserted that in each of Tavel’s historical novels “war eine immer wiederholte, vertiefte, immer leidenschaftlichere Beschwörung bernischer Vergangenheit, als ob aus ihr alles zu

225 See, for instance, *Ja gäll, so geit’s* (1903), *Der Stärn vo Buebebärg* (1907), *D’Haselmuus. E Gschicht us em Undergang vom alte Bärn* (1922), and *Ring i der Chetti. E Läbesgschicht* (1931).
schauen und zu erfahren wäre, was man zur Bewältigung der Gegenwart … wissen müsste” (185). In the unpublished foreword to his novel Der Frondeur, Tavel elucidates the similarities between the present and the past.226 He felt drawn to array contemporary issues in a historical costume to eliminate “das Gezänk der Gegenwart,” and to enable the reader to approach the subject matter without inhibition (Stettler, Stärn 189). Such “Gezänk,” as he called the political and social discord prevailing in early twentieth-century Switzerland, was caused by tensions between Federalist and Unitarian factions. The country faced social problems that originated in insufficient integration policies.227 With his literary depiction of religious and territorial disputes in the seventeenth century, Tavel attempted to address the contemporary problem of integrating all citizens into the Swiss state.

Tavel’s historical novels do not only connect the present with the past by depicting issues that remained problematic for Swiss society, especially the struggle to unify the diverse population; the author also made history accessible to readers by writing most of his stories in the Bernese dialect.228 The familiar language bridges the gap between the novels’ historical settings and the contemporary audience and creates a sense

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227 Despite integration efforts with respect to religious, cultural, and linguistic differences, not all citizens were able to identify fully with the Swiss Confederation since none of these state programs took social class into consideration (Thomke 341).

228 After having penned a few dramas in standard German, Tavel started writing narratives in the dialect spoken in the city of Bern. He commented on his choice of language: “es war ein glücklicher Einfall. Ich hatte damit mein ureigenes Gebiet entdeckt” (Marti 115).
of kinship between the reader and the fictional characters. By enriching his narratives with the familiar tongue and descriptions of regional landscapes, figures, and lore, Tavel seeks to capture the “bernische Volksseele” (Marti 185). In accordance with his ideal of a “Volksganze,” he integrates a variety of social, religious, and cultural elements into his literary portrayal of the Bernese character. This idea of including “verschiedene Meinungen und die Glaubensbekenntnisse der Einzelnen” into a common whole is particularly pronounced in his novel Der Frondeur (Bräm 92). In this historical narrative, Tavel demonstrates respect and understanding for the persecuted Anabaptists in his homeland.

3. Plot Summary

Set in the Emmental in the second half of the seventeenth century, the novel tells the story of Heros von Herbort, a Swiss mercenary who returns to his wife and children after having fought for six years in the Thirty Years’ War. While serving as an officer of the Swiss regiment abroad, he accumulated a fortune that he wants to invest in the remodelling of his residence. During an excursion in the nearby forest, he and his children encounter a remote settlement belonging to Swiss Anabaptists. As they watch the Brethren return from a community meeting, Heros expresses his appreciation for the Brotherhood’s simple and pious life. After he and his children return from their hike, two councilmen pay him a visit and ask him to become a member of Bern’s city council. Heros, however, refrains from politics and pursues his work on redesigning his property.

229 As Settler has asserted quite poetically, with the use of the Bernese dialect, “[verflüchtigt sich] die historische Perspektive wie ein Herbstnebel vor den warmen Strahlen der Sonne” (Stärn 189).
Since these ambitious remodelling plans soon exceed his budget, he decides to leave his family once more to serve as a mercenary soldier in Italy.

During his absence, the city council issues sharp Anabaptist mandates that result in the imprisonment, torture, and expulsion of Brethren in the Emmental. Heros’ son Gideon, who lacks discipline and guidance, neglects his responsibilities on the family estate. Instead, he goes out drinking and reveals the names of local Täufer to state authorities. Meanwhile, Heros is imprisoned after he demanded the release of Anabaptists who were sold by the Bernese government to work as oarsmen on Venetian galleys. He had discovered these fellow landsmen when he petitioned the Venetian Court for residual payments for his regiment. When he does not return to Bern with his regiment of mercenary soldiers after their service in Venice, his wife Nicolette succumbs to her pain and sorrow.

Only after a complaint from Bern’s City Council is Heros eventually permitted to leave Italy. He returns home to find his son dead. After the funeral procession, he passes the Anabaptist settlement and is reminded of the Brethren’s fate as galley slaves in Italy. He realizes that he bears responsibility for his fellow countrymen. In order to rescue the Anabaptists from their slavery in the Mediterranean, Heros decides to join the City Council.

4. Tavel’s Notion of a Christian Soldier

Tavel wrote this novel in the aftermath of World War I. His service in the aid center for prisoners of war left a profound impression on him and inspired him to address
the issue of returning soldiers in his novel about seventeenth-century Switzerland. Yet, his plans to treat this historic subject matter in the form of a narrative came much earlier. In a letter to a friend, Tavel mentioned that he had thought about combining the “Heimkehrmotiv” with the Thirty Years’ War since the 1890s. After World War I, he then felt “besser imstande, [sich] in die Rolle dessen einzufühlen, der mit zerbrochenen Masten, zerrissenen Fahnen und zunichte gewordenen Plänen aus der Fremde in die Heimat zurückkehrt” (Marti 138). The experience of World War I and the development of new national identities thereafter reconfirmed Tavel’s belief in the importance of unity within a state. In numerous writings collected in his literary estate at the Burgerbibliothek Bern, he stresses the notion of “Staatsfriede” (BBB 21.5). Analyzing the armed conflicts in the early modern history of Switzerland, he became aware of their unifying dynamism and attempted to fictionalize the “einheitsstiftende Kraft des Krieges” in his historical novels (Thomke 344).

In these narratives, Tavel combined the idea of the nation as a whole with the Christian principle of forgiveness and reconciliation. Throughout his life, he was a dedicated member of Bern’s Evangelical Reformed Church and expressed his Christian convictions in an open and public manner. In his essays and talks on the church and religion, he discussed the idea of a “frommer Söldner,” a Christian soldier, and the

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230 In a discussion of Tavel’s oeuvre, Günther has pointed out that the experience of war brought about a change in the quality of the author’s writings; his literary works in the 1920s are characterized by an “ergreifender Tiefgang” (343).
231 According to Thomke, the fusion of “Patriotismus mit dem Geist der christlichen Versöhnlichkeit … wurde zur Konstante in Tavels Werk” (343).
232 In Bern, he served as a member of the parochial church council and cantonal church synod. Later, he was elected into the administrative board of churches (Bräm 25).
responsibilities of the congregation in post-war periods (BBB 143-69). According to his biographer, he perceived faith not as dogmatic religiousness, but rather as “Christentum der Tat, das in seiner Weitherzigkeit bestes Menschentum war” (Marti 62). Deriving from the notion of a practical faith, he understood Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as a call for service “an der Stadt, am Land, am Volk” (Stettler, Stärn 199). This service aimed to ensure the well-being of the entire society, including social and religious minorities. The hope to unify the Swiss people, regardless of their denomination or social status, became the principle theme of his novel *Der Frondeur*. His concern with the Swiss Brethren in this literary work earned him “stillen Dank der Täufergemeinde in bernischen Landen” (Marti 140).

5. Anabaptism and the Bernese Society as a Rural-Urban Conflict

Inspired by Müller’s sympathetic account of the Anabaptist movement in the State of Bern, Tavel draws a literary picture of the Brethren that reflects their peaceful and pious manner of life as well as their suffering from stigmatization, ostracism, and persecution by the dominant society. The author depicts them as poor and oppressed people whose place within Bernese society is determined by their role as outsiders. They are spatially and socially separated from society and become victims of severe persecution due to their perceived political subversion.

The Anabaptists are first introduced in the novel as a small fellowship that meets in a place hidden in the remote area of the Bernese Oberland. The Brotherhood arouses the interest of the protagonist and his children who, taking a break during their morning...
hike, observe how young and old people leave a farmhouse in a single file and disperse into the vicinity:


The Anabaptist congregation apparently used this isolated building on the edge of the forest to gather for a worship service. Noticing the quiet manner by which the group of people leaves the remote farm in a single line, Heros identifies them as Täufer and concludes that they had gathered for an informal church meeting, a practice that is prohibited and punished by the Bernese government. To his son question “Isch das nid verbotte?”, Heros responds: “Si trybe nes gfährlechs Spil. Aber lue, wenn me gseh und erläbt het, was I, so lehrt me d’Lüt la mache” (84). He acknowledges that these secret gatherings are indeed unlawful and that the Brethren play a dangerous game when attending them; at the same time, he admits to his children that he is not opposed to the group’s peculiar church practices. Through his experience in the Thirty Years’ War, he received a broader view of religious toleration than most of his fellow countrymen, especially those who serve in the Bernese City Council that issues harsh mandates against the Brotherhood.
Heros continues with his thoughts on the religious minority and even expresses a sense of appreciation for the Brethren’s genuine faith and way of life. He asserts: “Wär weiß, ob die dahinde nid besser verstande, was ne der lieb Gott z’säge het, als mir i üsne Chilche, wo di Herre Predikante mängisch besser wei wüsse, was i der Bibel steit, als Gott sälber” (84-85). His sarcastic comment on the predicants’ claim to Christian superiority reflects a widespread frustration with the state church. Heros questions the theological education of Reformed Church leaders and criticizes their presumption of divine knowledge.\(^{234}\) In doing so, he sides with the Anabaptists, who also discounted theology as a means of grasping the essence of Christian religion (Oyer 90). Heros suggests that the faith group has greater insight into God’s will than the learned clergy, an assumption that he shared with many “true-hearted” neighbors who sympathized with the group and supported them during times of harsh persecution.\(^{235}\)

In his positive account of the Swiss Brethren, Heros also comments on their practice of believer’s baptism: “Und daß si sech im Wasser vo ihrne Bärgbech löi toufe—warum nid? Das gfallt mir de no grad. Das ghört so derzue. Es isch alles so wahr und luter by ne” (85). The protagonist speaks in favor of the \textit{Täufer}’s initiation ritual without referencing to its implications, namely the Anabaptist concept of church as a voluntary fellowship for those who truly commit themselves to discipleship, brotherly love, and

\(^{234}\) Müller’s historical account of Bernese Anabaptism mentions a similar criticism voiced by Katharina Zell (wife of the Straßbourg reformer Matthias Zell) who blamed the Reformed preachers and their “Lehr und Leben” for Anabaptists’ withdrawal from the state church (3).

\(^{235}\) According to Gratz, many of the Anabaptists’ neighbors regarded the Brethren highly and much of the rural populace thought of them as “saints and persons who had experienced true salvation” (50). Even the reformer Wolfgang Capito (a contemporary of Melanchthon and Brucer) had already noted in the sixteenth century that Anabaptists “besitze[n] Gottesfurcht und Eifer und er achte die meisten als Erwählte Gottes” (Müller 2).
separation from worldly enticements. Rather, his reference to the “Bärgbech” (mountain stream) creates an image of the Brethren as isolated mountain folk that lead a simple life close to nature. This image has historical roots—long-lasting persecution in the State of Bern drove most of the local Brethren to seek refuge in the mountain region. Heros and his children come across the Anabaptists during their excursion to the local mountain. Quite naturally, he associates them with the rural area and regards their baptism in a creek or stream as part of their simple life and closeness to nature—“das gehört so derzue”.

His son’s question whether “sy ächt üsi Hirten o derby?” points to the social disparity between the protagonist and the marginal group (85). While Heros is a respected citizen of Bern who owns a large piece of property and hires help to tend the land and cattle, the Anabaptists are members of the lower social stratum who serve as farm hands for the affluent ruling class. In that regard, the relationship between Heros and the Brethren is determined by social differences as well as urban-rural and power relations. Despite his higher social and economic standing, he expresses sympathy for the group when responding to his son Gideon’s question: “Es chönnti wohl sy. I frage se nid. Es sy bravi Lüt, und me mueß se nid welle ga besser mache” (85). In accordance with Tavel’s notion of “Volksganze,” the unity among all people, the protagonist acknowledges the Brethren’s good and honest nature and promotes tolerance toward the marginalized group.

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236 The name Heros (Greek, singular form of “hero”) anticipates the protagonist’s heroic mission in which he sacrifices his own good to rescue the persecuted minority and thus contributes to the greater good of society.
In this first encounter between the protagonist and the religious minority, the author introduces the Täufer as simple, honest, and faithful people who exist on the periphery of the Bernese society. As social outsiders, they live in Bern’s remote countryside and can only be observed from a distance. Gideon’s questions demonstrate how the dominant society perceives them as outcasts for their deviant religious practices and low social status. Yet, the protagonist shows sympathy and appreciation for the marginalized group. As he observes the Täufer from the top of a hill, he considers their practical faith and moral conduct. This act of seeing implies his recognition and perhaps even understanding for their distinct faith and manner of life. At the same time, the act of looking from the top of a hill down to the dispersing group of people symbolizes the power dynamic between him and the minority. In the visual discourse of Western culture, the emphasis on looking from the top down is generally regarded as a “mastering, colonizing gaze” (Bal 19). Heros assumes the role of the master who oversees the persecuted Brethren and simultaneously watches over them, a role that becomes more pronounced as the story continues.

Shortly after this first encounter, Heros defends the Brotherhood against accusations of heresy and sedition voiced by two Bernese councilmen. The protagonist offers the issue of Anabaptist persecution as an explanation for his unwillingness to serve as a member of the council. His experience in the war has changed his perspective on the state and led him to a different understanding of “Herrschaftspflichte” (92). The persecution of the Emmental Anabaptists causes a blemish on the state’s historical record. Tavel employs the tragic fate of the Brotherhood to give a realistic rather than
idealized depiction of seventeenth-century Swiss life, including the government’s fallibility (Bräm 93). In doing so, he gives the protagonist reasons to object to the Bernese government, much in accordance with the novel’s title *Frondeur* (fierce opponent of the government).

When asked by the councilmen whether or not he sides with the “Sektierer,” Heros voices criticism against the state’s anti-*Täufer* policies and declares that authorities should not find fault with the Anabaptists, but rather look at the corruption within the state church:

> Me sötti äbe nid vergässe, wär d’schuld isch a der Sektiererei. Wären üsi oberkeitleche Pfarrer, wie si sy sötte, so gäb’s im Bärnerland keini Täufer. Aber lueget, wär vo Chindsbeinen a sys Brot im Härd suecht und mit Sunneschyn und Räge mueß rächne, versteit sech besser uf Gott und d’Schrift als eui schwarze Manne, wo ihri ganzi Inschpiration z’Bärn im Rathus sueche. Was i vo Täufer gseh ha-und i kennen ere meh Aug in Aug als di Herre z’Bärn- sy bravi Lüt. Si hei meh Disziplin als mänge Pfarrer. Me dörft se ganz rüejig la mache. (92)

Having observed the rural populace, Heros has been profoundly impressed by the simplicity and sincerity of the Brethren’s Christian faith as compared to the clergy’s dearth of genuine inspiration and lack of moral propriety. Through the protagonist’s sympathy for the Brethren’s Christian life and practice, Tavel stresses the group’s ethics of good works as it relates to his own notion of “Christentum der Tat” (Marti 62).

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237 The term “Sektierer” was particularly employed by the state and church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to emphasize the movement’s marginal and deviant nature manifested in a divergent belief, rejection of domination by state and state church, and separation from the world through the idea of the two kingdoms. The dominant church used the term in a derogatory way, implying “heresy and schism, together with denial of sacerdotal claims” (Wilson 16).
Depicting them as simple and practical believers whose Christian faith is primarily reflected in their ethical conduct and rural modesty, he arouses admiration and empathy for the Bernese Anabaptists.

However, Heros is the only character in the novel who appreciates the Anabaptist practical faith. The Bernese government and townspeople do not share his sympathy for the marginalized group. Rather, they treat the Brethren as outcasts, ridicule their simple and rural nature and persecute them, or simply avoid any contact with them for fear of being labelled *Halbtäufer*. Even Heros’ wife Nicolette maintains a strict separation between her family and the Brethren, as she is concerned about the social and economic ramifications of being associated with the faith group. Worried about putting her husband’s high standing in the Bernese society at risk, she treats the local Anabaptists as outcast and warns her children to stay away from the Brotherhood. Despite her Anabaptist-phobic reaction, she acknowledges the Brethren’s peaceful and pious character, noting: “Nid nume tűe si niemerem nüt z’leid, si sy im Gägeteil e Säge für ds Land” (148). Yet, she also realizes that their evangelical effort puts them in great danger, especially at times of severe persecution, when corrupt persons betray them to officials in order to gain favor with the authorities. Mentioning these acts of treason, she depicts the Anabaptists as “arme, plagete Lüt,” who suffer from discrimination by the state and its people (149).

The image of the Anabaptists as “plagete Lüt” (afflicted people) also appears in the novel through the account of a confrontation between Hans Stuckli, a member of the faith group, and Bernese townspeople who molest the *Täufer* and force him to drink a
whole flagon of wine all at once. Hans is introduced as a “Wiedertöufer … da tue\n
niemerem nü t'leid” (129). His outward appearance, especially his “offes, ärnschts und
doch heimeligs Gsicht,” reflects sincerity, discipline, and non-resistance—qualities that
are commonly associated with Anabaptism in the seventeenth century (131). Observing a
moral decline in the Bernese state and the authority’s effort to fight such sinful and
corrupt conduct by issuing mandates and prohibitions, he complains about society’s loss
of piety and discipline, saying: “Es isch nieme ke Zucht u Gottsäligkeit meh im Land”
(133). Anabaptist social discrimination is concerned more generally with the conflicts
existing between different groups within the Bernese state. Hans Stuckli’s experience
with the townspeople illustrates the division and discord among the people of Bern which
the protagonist later attempts to dissolve. Hans does not appear so much as a Täufer in
this scene but rather as a peasant who becomes the townsmen’s object of ridicule for his
rural and naïve character.

The confrontation between the urban-rural population as well as the lower-higher
social strata is further emphasized when Heros arrives in his horse-drawn carriage,
noticing the Anabaptist in this unusual setting and admonishing him for his excessive
consumption of wine, without giving him a chance to explain the situation: “La gschoue,
Hans, schäm di! Was machsch du da? …Gang du nes Hus wyter, du ghörsch nid dahäre!”
(141). Heros commands him to leave the courtyard, stating that he does not belong in this
environment, thereby drawing a line of demarcation between his own and the
Anabaptist’s rural sphere. Hans is characterized as a submissive peasant who apologizes
with the words “Herr, verzieht” while Heros represents the Bernese governing elite,
determined to separate the two spheres (141). Tavel depicts the ambivalent relationship between the ruling class and the rural minority, emphasizing the boundary distinguishing the two groups. Yet, the protagonist’s words of monition are not voiced in a hateful or prejudicial manner—“daß er’s nid bös meint mit ihm, merkt me grad”—rather, he sends the Anabaptist away to protect him from further harm by fellow townsmen (141).

The author presents a somewhat one-sided delineation of the two social classes, glorifying the patriciate and degrading the common people as simple-minded folk—a criticism that has often been expressed in regard to his historical novels. By depicting the Anabaptists—whom he equates with the rural population—as “Bäuerliche schlechthin,” he creates a relationship of dependency between the protagonist and the rural outsiders (Stettler, Stärn 195). However, Heros only becomes fully aware of their persecution and involved in liberating them when he encounters members of the group on the Venetian galleys. Upon seeing these familiar people and their deplorable state of slavery, he feels committed to rescuing them from the inhumane conditions.

6. Civic Responsibility through Witnessing Galley Slavery

The Anabaptists are marked by the painful experience as galley slaves, a punishment that was feared nearly as much as the death sentence:

Im Hofe usse lige di Zsämegchetteleten usem Pflaschter i der Sunne. Di einte hei sech scho ergä gha i ihres truurige Gschick. D’Lyde vom Transport hei ihre

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238 After having travelled to Italy in 1894, Tavel returned to Venice once more to follow traces of Bernese mercenary service in the Mediterranean. While he was doing field research on the historical events, “[tauchten] vor seinem Geiste die lombardischen Herresstraßen und die Galeeren in den Lagunen auf, auf denen junge Berner freiwillig, oder gezwungen als verschickte Täufer, harten Kriegsdienst leisteten” (Marti 171).

Und e Schweyzer isch es. (344)

After their agonizing journey to Venice, many of the Brethren in Tavel’s novel are shown to have lost all hope and to be resigned to their fate. In his depiction of their arrival in Italy, the author received inspiration from Müller’s account of four Bernese Täufer who were sentenced to work as oarsmen on the Venetian galleys in 1671. Müller mentioned that these four men were repeatedly given the chance to recant and be sent back to Switzerland during their passage to Italy, but that they remained steadfast. Tavel, however, does not include any references to the men’s persistence in their faith and their willingness to bear all suffering rather than renounce their Anabaptist belief. Instead, he depicts them as hopeless convicts who have fallen victim to anti-Anabaptist politics in Bern. The narrative credits the presence of the Swiss officer, rather than their distinct faith with providing them with a sense of hope and encouragement.239

The Bernese Brethren regard Heros as a savior who comes to rescue them from the terrible life of slavery. Once they recognize him, they embrace him, quite literally, and beg him on their knees for help (343):

Der Zebedee und di beien andere Täufer fallen uf d’Chneu und stricken ihri einti, freji Hand na-n-ihm us. Er fasset se, di Händ, wo sech a de Ringgisbörter hert

239 Müller also mentions Herr Georg Orell, a Swiss military officer who was assigned with the task of petitioning residual payments of the Swiss mercenary regiment at the Venetian Court at the same time the Bernese Brethren arrived as galley slaves (219). When reading Müller’s description of the officer’s mission in Italy, it becomes obvious that the character of Heros is based on this historical figure. While Orell reports on the arrival of the Brethren to the Bernese government without intending to rescue these men, Tavel fictionalizes this historical encounter and suggests the officer’s concern with the persecuted Täufer.
gwärchet hei, und findt schier d’Stimm nid …Die drei andere jammere, er söll sech erbarmen und ne hälfe. (343-44)

By this quasi worshipful act of falling to their knees and reaching out for Heros, they assume a submissive position in which they utterly rely on the officer’s sense of charity. The moment he turns toward them and takes them by the hand marks his conversion to an actively committed Bernese citizen, devoted to caring for the needs of these persecuted Swiss Brethren. The physical contact, “er fasset si,” symbolizes a unity between him and the Täufer that corresponds to Tavel’s vision of a “Volksganze”. The people Heros once watched from a distance are now in immediate proximity as they gather around him. Despite the physical closeness to the Täufer, this situation reiterates social hierarchy and power relations between the officer and the captives. Heros assumes an elevated position in which he is now surrounded by members of the faith group whose lower social standing and dependence on his mercy is indicated by their act of prostration.

Heros could have prevented the harsh Anabaptist persecution, if he had committed to serving in the City Council rather than in the Swiss regiment abroad. As a dedicated burger of Bern, he could have protected the marginalized faith group and contributed to a common good. Instead, he left his hometown to pursue selfish interests such as fame and fortune. In his depiction of Heros’ neglect of his responsibilities as a father, husband, and member of Bernese ruling society, Tavel addresses the theme of guilt and expiation and makes the Anabaptist persecution a consequence of the protagonist’s selfish conduct. Heros only becomes aware of the degree of damage caused by his insufficient
commitment when he discovers the horrible fate of Bernese Brethren as galley slaves in Italy.

In an attempt to atone for his lack of service to the people of Bern, Heros petitions the Venetian court to redeem the Anabaptist captives, an act that results in his own imprisonment. Even after he is discharged from prison and returns to Bern, he is ridden with guilt whenever he passes the local Täufer settlement:

Herr, Gott! Nei, er cha’s nümme gseh. —Dert use hei si se gjagt. Underem Trouf vüregschrisse hei si se, di Manne, will si ihre bsundere Gloube hei. Hiehäre gschlepft hei si se. Üsi arme brave Buremandli als Ruederc hnächte zwüsche Röuber und Mörder yne verdinget. (356)

Tavel’s novel portrays the Täufer as a peaceful religious minority that is victimized for its eccentric religious customs. Throughout the narrative, the group is referred to as “arme brave” people who are severely persecuted and unjustly sentenced to galley slavery.

Corresponding to Tavel’s concept of “der Einzelne und die gemeinsame Sache,” the protagonist takes initiative and fulfills his duty as a committed burger of Bern (Marti 185). The Brotherhood’s persecution by the state becomes a means of convincing him to desist from selfish interests and instead to contribute to a common cause. 240 Although the novel gives a vivid description of the Täufer’s persecution in the State of Bern, it does not fully illuminate the reasons for such cruel treatment of the faith group. Tavel explains the cause of their persecution by referring to their distinct religion, without, however,

240 In addition to witnessing the persecution of the Bernese Brethren, the loss of his wife contributes to Heros’ realization of his duties as a member of society. As the author has noted in the “Dispositionsplan” to Der Frondeur, the concept of “Schicksal” and “Gnade” determine Heros development as the main character (BBB 21.5).
noting the social implications of the group’s literal reading of the New Testament, such as the refusal to swear oaths and participate in military service, which were regarded as politically subversive by seventeenth-century Bern. In order to create an image of the Anabaptists as persecuted outsiders who can only be saved by the protagonist’s effort to establish a “Volksganze,” the author excludes aspects of their theology and practice that were considered a threat to the political and social order of the Bernese state.

B. Laedrach: *Passion in Bern* (1938) and the Bernese Brethren

1. Laedrach’s Interest in Regional History

   The novelist and secondary-school teacher Walter Laedrach also offered a fictional treatment of Bernese Anabaptism roughly a decade after Tavel’s depiction of the persecuted Emmentaler Täufer. In his novel *Passion in Bern*, Laedrach gives a sympathetic and historically accurate portrayal of the Bernese Brethren at the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Having studied history, geography, and literature at the University of Bern and analyzed the Reformation’s impact on the Benedictine monastery of Trub in his doctoral thesis, the author was eager to explore the socio-religious particularities of the Emmental region. In his literary as well as pedagogical efforts, he was also greatly influenced by the writings of the nineteenth-century pastor Albert Bitzius, who was a proponent of Pestalozzi’s educational reforms and published historical fiction under the pseudonym of Jeremias Gotthelf.

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241 According to his biographer Paul Hugger, Laedrach grew up in a Pietist home (13). It can be assumed that his interest in the local church development was motivated by his personal commitment to the Christian faith.
As a teacher in the rural area of Hasle-Rüegsau, Laedrach came to appreciate the Bernese countryside and consequently combined aspects of local history and rural scenery into his literary works and folkloristic nonfiction. In his early novels, he focused predominantly on Bernese history from the Middle Ages to the Napoleonic Era. His historical narratives are concerned with those whom society has placed at a disadvantage. His fictional works are characterized by “Sympathie für die Zukurzgekommenen,” whether depicting individuals who have been neglected by society, as for instance in *Aufstieg zur Sonnseite* (1941) and *Die Genesung* (1948) or entire groups who experienced persecution by the state, such as the Anabaptists in the novel *Passion in Bern* (Berner Schriftsteller-Verein 96).

2. Plot Summary and Historical Sources

Laedrach’s *Täufer* novel is set in the midst of the conflict between Swiss Brethren and the Bernese authorities in the late seventeenth century. The story begins with Peter Hertig’s return to his Bernese homeland after having served as a mercenary soldier in France. When his brother and sister-in-law refuse to accommodate him during the winter months, Hans and Anna Flückiger provide shelter and care for the wounded soldier, whose injuries were caused by the unethical conduct of the regiment’s colonel. While

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242 In his collection of folkloristic nonfiction and as editor of the *Berner Heimatbücher*, Laedrach was concerned with the portrayal of the Bernese rural countryside and lifestyle (Meister 1). Due to his great investment in the history of Bern—many of the manuscripts collected in his literary estate at the Staatsarchiv Bern deal with matters of the local Bernese history—he became known as “lokaler Kulturträger” (Hugger 13). In the *Berner Heimatbücher* as well as his regionalist fiction, he expressed his “tiefe Sympathie zur Kreatur, zur heimatlichen Landschaft, zu den Menschen, die sie gestalten” (Hugger 7).

243 In his earliest fictional work, *Die Brücke von Rüegsau* (1926) as well as the historical novel *Unter der Krummstab im Emmental* (1936), for instance, he gives a vivid account of the late medieval monastery landscape in the Emmental. The novel *Der Prinzenhandel im Emmental* (1935) is concerned with the local history at the time Napoleon came to power.
recovering and gaining back his strength at the Flückiger home, he notices the family’s affiliation with the *Taufgesinnte*. Anna is a member of the faith group and frequently hides Anabaptist preachers in a small chamber built into the wall of their house. Although her husband attends the local Reformed Church service, he supports her efforts to protect fellow Brethren from persecution. After suffering from another act of cruelty by the regiment’s colonel whose father-in-law, Johann von Willading, was recently elected mayor of Bern, Peter turns to the Brotherhood for spiritual nurture and guidance. In the moment of Peter’s great despair, the Anabaptist pastor Zedi provides support and encouragement and thus converts him to the movement’s radical faith. Following a spiritual instruction by Zedi, Peter receives baptism and admission to the underground church.

In the meantime, Willading pursues an anti-French policy intended to weaken the country’s power in Europe. As he prepares for war against French influence in Switzerland, he starts a new campaign to enforce the pledge of allegiance and military conscription. Hearing about the Brethren’s refusal to swear an oath or bear arms, he calls for a strict implementation of Anabaptist mandates and deputizes a corps of *Täuferjäger*. During one of these Anabaptist hunts, Anna and Peter are captured and put in prison where they are starved into submission. After a year of hard labor and little food, Anna miraculously manages to escape from the dungeon and finds temporary shelter at the nearby home of an old Anabaptist woman. Despite her weakened condition, she undertakes the strenuous journey to reach her home in the *Oberland*, only to die in the company of her family.
In its efforts to drive the Brethren out of the country, the state organizes the deportation of all Anabaptist prisoners to the New World. However, this compulsory emigration plan fails and Peter returns to the Flückiger family in the Oberland. Yet, his sister-in-law reports him to state officials, resulting in the imprisonment of both himself and Hans, who has harbored the dissident believer. While being interrogated by the authorities, Hans proclaims his conversion to Anabaptism in order to experience the same pain that his wife had previously suffered during her imprisonment. However, when the church bells ring to announce the victory of Willading’s troops, he suddenly realizes that he owes responsibility to the state and his family. He recants the Anabaptist faith, returns to his children, and tears down the secret chamber in his house. Willading, on the other hand, regrets not having been able to convince the Brethren of the state’s cause. Realizing the severity of his anti-Anabaptist politics, he commissions the release of a small group of Täufer from galley slavery in the Mediterranean. Thus, Peter, who had been forced to work as an oarsman on the Sicilian galleys, returns to Bern and emigrates with his wife—the Flückiger’s daughter—to the French Jura mountains where the Brethren face less persecution than in their Bernese homeland.

Laedrach’s fictional treatment of the Bernese Anabaptists provides a valuable illustration of the Oberland Täufer in respect to historical accuracy and insight into the spirit of the faith group. In his literary depiction of the religious movement, the author addresses central aspects characteristic of the situation of the faith group in seventeenth-century Bern: the transition from religious to secular persecution based on the Brethren’s rejection of the oath and military service; the government’s strategic approach to rid the
country of Anabaptist influences by establishing a centralized commission and a network of spies and Täuferjäger; the strict implementation of harsh punishment including galley slavery; the religious renewal and vitality of the Brotherhood despite severe persecution; the Brethren’s closeness to the geographic location and the solidarity within the village communities, regardless of church affiliations.

Laedrach combined factual and fictional elements in his Täufer novel. Fictional figures such as Peter and Anna represent typical Anabaptist characters and illustrate the Brotherhood’s religious principles and ethical conduct.\(^{244}\) Historical personages, for instance, the Reformed pastor Thormann and the Dutch Mennonite Vlamingh, appear as they do in historical references and their own writings of that time.\(^{245}\) In his portrayal of the historical events, places, and figures, Laedrach was greatly influenced by Müller’s pioneering work. Major aspects of his Täufer novel, such as the Brethren’s opposition to military service, their interaction with the local population, and their terrible lives as slaves on the galleys, are directly taken from Müller’s historical writing.\(^{246}\) In the preliminary novel layout and manuscript of his Täuferroman, the novelist occasionally adds page numbers of Müller’s work that correspond thematically to sections of his narrative (St.A.B. 7). Thus, some of the details, such as the description of the secret chamber, resemble the historian’s account of the underground Anabaptist movement in

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\(^{244}\) In fact, the author’s handwritten notes pertaining to the Täufer novel indicate that Peter Hertig’s character is based on the historical figure Hans Bürki who served as an Anabaptist preacher in the Emmental in the late seventeenth century. Laedrach drafted Bürki’s biography with the heading “Der Täufer vom Trachselwald,” including well-known facts about Bürki’s life—for instance, his capture by the government, confinement in the Bernese dungeon tower, and deportation to the Netherlands—as well as general information about the Brethren’s convictions and labor as galley slaves (St.A.B. 7).

\(^{245}\) The archival material of Passion in Bern contains an outline in which Laedrach lists reported Bernese Brethren and local Täufer hymns, to be included into his historical novel (St.A.B. 7).

\(^{246}\) See Müller 132, 136, 215-232.
Moreover, the novelist adopts Müller’s somewhat didactic approach to the issue of the conflict between the religionists and the state articulated in the last section (“Ergebnisse”) of his historical writing. The historian concludes that both the Brotherhood and the Bernese state advocated “alte Wahrheitselemente,” namely Christ’s sole magistracy on the one hand and the appointment of authorities by God on the other hand, realizing that “zu einem Zusammenwachsen in eine höhere Form waren sie noch nicht reif” (399). Following Müller’s notion of different but equal theological concepts, Laedrach ends his novel with Willading’s assertion: “Eigentlich wollten wir ja das Gleiche! Ich wollte einen mächtigen Staat, und sie …? Sie auch! Aber nicht ganz auf die gleiche Art” (288). The historian’s depiction of the diverging concepts of authority significantly shapes the novel’s image of the faith group defined by its opposition to the Bernese government.

3. The Separatist Theology of Bernese Anabaptism

The Anabaptist portrayal in Passion in Bern reflects the Brethren’s separatist ecclesiology as well as their relationship to the rural population. In contrast to the submissiveness of the Bernese Brethren in Tavel’s novel, independence and an opposition to state authorities characterize the Täufer in Laedrach’s fictional text. Shifting the focalization from the political figure Willading to the Anabaptist family

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247 Müller has related in his work that “als vor etwa zwanzig Jahren das alte Haus abgebrochen wurde, fand sich zwischen zwei Wänden ein verstecktes Gemach, in dem ein Stuhl und ein Bajonett sich befand” (122). Similarly, Laedrach describes the hidden “Gemach” as a dark and narrow cranny that is furnished with one chair and hanging on the wall “ein[en] krummen[n] Säbel, den vor vielen Jahren ein verprügelter Täuferjäger verloren [hat]” (10-12).
Flückiger and its guest Peter, the omniscient narrator presents the perspective of both the oppressor and the oppressed.

The narratative’s focus on the theology of the oppressed Brotherhood is first noticeable in the description of Peter’s conversion. The young man is depicted as desperate and lost after his experience of injustice and maltreatment by state authorities until he suddenly hears the Anabaptist minister rendering Matt. 5:10: “Selig sind, die um der Gerechtigkeit willen verfolgt werden” (60). Pointing out the beatitude of those who suffer persecution for the sake of their righteousness, the words of the old pastor illustrate the Anabaptist notion of the two kingdoms. The author draws an image of Anabaptism that is determined by the boundaries distinguishing the Gemeinde from the fallen world.

The fellowship’s separatist ecclesiology is further described in the novel by the practice of (re)baptism. Through the act of believer’s baptism, Peter commits himself to discipleship and becomes a member of the religious community that is composed exclusively of those who have had a conversion experience. The movement’s baptismal ritual thus becomes a distinguishing mark of commitment and separation from the world, as reflected in Anna’s words addressed to the local Reformed pastor: “Ihr seid die Welt … aber wir Brüder und Schwestern wissen, daß der Welt Freundschaft Gottes Feind schafft. Wer der Welt Freund sein will, der wird Gottes Feind sein” (122). In her explanation, she draws a line between the church and the world, alluding to the existence of two kingdoms: the secular kingdom and the kingdom of God. This notion of the two worlds functions as a group-building element in the novel. The Anabaptists develop their
collective identity through their separation from the world and their commitment to God’s kingdom, which they consider the only means of achieving salvation.

While the novel stresses the group’s separation from the secular power structure of the Bernese state, it simultaneously depicts the local village life as standing in solidarity with the religious minority—an interaction between the Brethren and the local population that is quite unique in the movement’s history. Fascinated by the region’s history, Laedrach draws an accurate picture of Bernese society, particularly the affiliations between the local populace and the Anabaptist group. His literary depiction of the interaction between Anabaptists and villagers serves as an illustration of the group’s oppression by state authorities. The Brethren receive support from the local community when the government enforces anti-Anabaptist mandates by means of Täuferjäger. As the Brethren are fully integrated into village life, the rural populace develops a sense of responsibility for protecting them from state persecution.

Laedrach’s depiction of the Anabaptist hunters is based on an account of the historical Täuferjäger in Müller’s work. The author employs the historian’s detailed description of the hunters to support his contrastive depiction of the oppressor and the oppressed, thereby arousing sympathy for the persecuted Brethren. The Anabaptist hunters in the story are referred to as “leibhafte Satane” and described as “ungekämmt, verkommen und liederlich … wilde Gesellen,” who have either been previously expelled

248 In the chapter “Täuferjäger,” Müller gives a description of the infamous Täuferkammer and its agents, quoting from reports of local villagers saying that one of the hunters “voller Unmanier und Ungebühr ganz frevelhaft [sei]” while another one is referred to as “ein schlimmer Gsell, Lump und Höllenhund” (341-345).
from mercenary regiments or sentenced to prison time (124-125). Their portrayal as some of the worst rogues stands in binary opposition to the characteristics attributed to the Anabaptists, such as honesty, righteousness, non-violence, and hard work.

In the narrative, the Anabaptists’ separatist theology does not interfere with their affiliations to the rural community. However, the group’s concept of the two kingdoms causes major conflicts with the state authorities. The Brethren’s insistence that the Christian faith manifests itself in a moral transformation, noticeable, for instance, by a commitment to non-violence and a refusal to swear oaths, is perceived in the story as a threat to the foundation of Swiss political and social order. Throughout the novel, the Anabaptists are characterized as quiet and peaceful “die keinem Menschen ein Leid taten,” thus creating the image of the defenseless Christians (18). During an interrogation by the provincial governor, Hans notes that “nur bei den Taufgesinnten Gerechtigkeit zu finden ist, denn nur sie tun einander nichts zuleide” (247). Even the authorities acknowledge the Brethren’s principle of non-resistance: “Wenn es Täufer sind, so wehren sie sich ja nicht” (246). The Brotherhood’s rejection of the oath based on a literal reading of the New Testament becomes most pronounced in Peter’s words to state officials during an interrogation:

Was das Eidschwören betrifft, so glauben wir, … daß der Herr Christus den Seinen dasselbe untersagt und verboten hat, daß man auf keinerlei Weise

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249 In the novel’s handwritten manuscript, the author explains the reasons for Bern’s employment of these questionable fellows as Anabaptist hunters, namely “Die Obrigkeit schickte kaum eigene Leute aus, um die Unglücklichen dingfest zu machen … der Zugang zu diesem zweifelhaften Beruf war nicht gross, deswegen erhielt die Stadtewache den Auftrag, nach geeigneten Leuten Ausschau zu halten und sie auf den Stellen aufmerksam zu machen” (St.A.B. 7).

250 According to Müller, the historical movement in seventeenth-century Bern often referred to itself as “wehrlose taufgesinnte Gemeinde” (1).
schwöre, sondern daß ja, ja und nein, nein müsse sein. Daraus verstehen wir, daß
uns alle hohen und geringen Eide verboten sind. (77)

In keeping with the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he employs the same line
of argument presented in article VII of the Schleitheim Confession. This practice of
discipline generates the Anabaptist collective identity in the story. Using the pronoun
“wir,” Peter identifies with the religious group, thus separating himself from the state
when following the Brotherhood’s distinct theological system and its practical
implications.

4. State Reaction to Separatist Theology

The Anabaptist theological convictions and social ethics raise doubts about the
concept of a Christian ruler. The Täufer’s vision of a true church consisting of dedicated
disciples who are committed to complete obedience of Jesus’ commandments implies
separation from the world and non-conformity with secular powers. While certain
elements of this separatist theology, such as believer’s baptism, non-resistance, and the
rejection of swearing oaths, are illustrated by the Anabaptist characters in Laedrach’s
novel, the aspect of civil disobedience as a consequence of the group’s emphasis on
Christ’s rule is predominantly addressed by non-members of the Brotherhood. In the
narrative, the Täufer are idealized as peaceful and pious members of the rural
community, and at the same time, they are demonized as political dissenters by state
authorities. It is a dialectic that derives from the biased portrayal of the religious group in
seventeenth-century accounts such as Thormann’s Probier-Stein. Laedrach incorporates
anti-Anabaptist rhetoric, reminiscent of the seventeenth-century Swiss polemics against
the radical movement, to illustrate the government’s point of view and its frustration with the minority’s separatist attitude, which threatens to dissolve the bonds of political, social, and religious unity in the State of Bern.

Thormann himself is fictionalized in Laedrach’s novel. Similar to the pastor’s historical position, his character in the narrative sides with the state authorities and perceives the Brethren’s practical application of New Testament teachings as a serious danger to the customary social and political order of the state. Approving the officer’s comparison of the faith group to a “dumme[n] Bauernjunge[n], der zu unrecht von seinem Vater Prügel bekam und nachher nicht essen wollte und im Trotz sagte: Extra hab ich Hunger und friß keinen Käs,” Thormann’s character contributes to a picture of the Brethren as subversive (90). The councilman’s illustration of the Täufer’s perceived stubbornness addresses the central theme of the novel, namely the issue of civil (dis)obedience. From the perspective of the ruling government, the Täufer appear as a religious minority that refuses to acknowledge the necessity of a worldly authority after having experienced harsh persecution by the State of Bern.

In Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer, Müller quotes from archival sources documenting the arguments Brethren presented in debates as well as the anti-Anabaptist rhetoric used by state officials in reports and mandates (131, 144). Laedrach employs a similar contrastive structure in his novel, integrating some of the anti-Anabaptist rhetoric drawn from Täuferkammer reports into his narrative. Willading, as head of the Bernese authorities, becomes the chief antagonist of the peaceful Brethren in the novel. As he
orders mandates to rid the country of all Anabaptist influence, he expresses the state’s resentment against the religious minority:

Keine Ehrenämter bedienen, keinen Eid tun wollen, nicht kriegen; das langt nun vollkommen, daß wir sie nicht unter uns dulden dürfen. Wer keine öffentlichen Aemter annehmen will, kehrt dem Staat den Rücken; wer gar den Militärdienst verweigert, erklärt sich als Landesfeind, für den wir keinen Platz unter uns haben. (110)

Through the eyes of the Schultheiß, the Anabaptists and their refusal to hold public office, swear the oath of allegiance, or serve in the military become a threat to the established order. Willading perceives the group’s “Absonderung” (separation from the state) as a seditious act that ought to be punished with expulsion from the Bernese territory (111). In his speech denouncing the group’s nonconformity, he creates the image of the Anabaptists as a cancer in the body of the state, noting that “niemals wird eine hohe Obrigkeit dulden, daß das schändliche Gewächs der Sektiererei sich wieder in ihren Landen einniste” (231). He commands that state officials ought to “mit scharfen Blick in alle Schlupfwinkel der Wiedertäufer hinein zu leuchten und ihre Nester auszunehmen” as he sees “in diesen täuferischen Ungeziefer … den gefährlichen staatsfeindlichen Unteran” (106-107). Employing the derogatory term “Wiedertäufer” and comparing the faith group to vermin that infiltrate the country with seditious thoughts, he calls for an extermination of the movement.

In his critical remarks about the faith group, Willading speaks disapprovingly of the Anabaptist rejection of state domination. His words indicate that he is not concerned
with religious differences. Indeed, he admits that “nicht seines Glaubensbekenntnisses wegen, nicht seiner Fußwaschungen und Erwachsenentaufen wegen, die mich kalt lassen; aber seiner Staatsfeindlichkeit wegen müssen wir gegen diesen Landesfeind scharf vorgehen” (113). Instead, his comments reflect the state’s disapproval of the Brotherhood’s “Grundsatz der Waffenlosigkeit” (211). The Brethren’s refusal to bear arms and participate in military service, “allgemeine Wehrpflicht,” is perceived in the novel as a threat to the well-being of the state. The Anabaptists are clearly marked as public enemies by secular authorities because they refuse to support the state on issues of governance and war.

5. Representation of Persecution and Martyrdom

As a result of their perceived dissident character, the Bernese Brethren are faced with another wave of severe persecution. In Laedrach’s narrative, the civil authorities persecute members of the faith group for reasons of subversion rather than religious differences. Nonetheless, the Brotherhood interprets these anti-Anabaptist policies in the language of persecution and martyrdom. The government’s hostility toward the movement thus becomes a crucial component in the formation of an Anabaptist identity. Perceiving themselves as “Ausgestoßene,” the Brethren construct a self-image that is determined by their role as outsiders and victims of governmental orders (14). The possibility of suffering draws them closer to their faith community and reinforces the principle of imitating Christ in his bearing of the cross. According to the novel’s title, the
Brethren’s experience of physical, spiritual, and mental suffering due to the officials’ cruel persecution is perceived as an act of imitating the Passion of Christ.\textsuperscript{251}

Throughout the novel, a revival of Anabaptist martyr mentality is portrayed as a response to the state’s Täufer mandates. At the beginning of the narrative, Anna is asked by her daughter whether she would suffer martyrdom for the sake of her faith. When Anna simply replies “Gott weiß, was hier geschehen soll,” the child senses that “die Mutter um ihres Vaters Glaubens willen … alles erleiden würde” (24). Anna’s response indicates her willingness to endure all persecution for remaining steadfast to her faith.

She has gained this attitude of a suffering discipleship by reading about the movement’s early martyrs, for instance, Michael Sattler and Leonhard Kaiser, in the Brotherhood’s chronicles,\textsuperscript{252} and hearing reports of contemporary Brethren who have suffered from the state’s persecution. Magdalena Gurtner\textsuperscript{253} serves as an example of a Bernese Täufer who “die Hand der weltlichen Obrigkeit verspürt hat” (92-93):

Unsere gnädige Herren in Bern haben manchen Bruder nach greulichen Qualen auf die Richtstatt gebracht, und wenn sie jetzt auch keinen mehr hinrichten … so kenne ich doch noch viele Brüder und Schwestern, die Krüppel geworden sind durch die Marter, die sie erleiden mußten…Magdalena Gurtner ist seit sieben Jahrzehnten gelähmt, weil sie in Bern gefoltert wurde. [Als] junge Frau wurde sie einmal gestreckt; zuerst leer, und als sie nichts verriet, noch zweimal mit den

\textsuperscript{251} Corresponding to the title’s reference to Christ’s travails and suffering, the novel’s front cover displays the crown of thorns looming over the city of Bern.

\textsuperscript{252} The account of Leonhard Kaiser’s legendary martyr death reveals great resemblance to the report given in the Märtysrer Spiegel (see Laedrach 25, van Braght 7).

\textsuperscript{253} According to Gratz, Laedrach’s depiction of Margaret is based on the story of the historical martyr Margaret uff dem Gurten who lived in sixteenth-century Bern (Swiss Fiction 143).
The memorialization of Margaret’s ordeal reflects the steadfast character of the Brotherhood. The account of her perseverance during severe persecution supports the image of the community of the faithful by which the Brethren set themselves apart from the secular world.

The image of the persecuted yet steadfast fellowship is reiterated when Anna escapes from prison and finds temporary shelter at Margaret’s house. The two women are united by their experience of suffering: “Hier lagen nun die beiden Duldnerinnen” (169). They bear the pain that was inflicted upon them by state authorities. Reflecting on her deplorable situation as well as Anna’s state of physical suffering, the old woman notes: “Wer sich nicht gebeugt hat vor der Welt, und wer den Glauben seiner Väter nicht abgeschworen, kehrt aufrecht heim, und wären ihm seine Glieder tausendmal geschändet worden” (169).

Anna’s persecution by Bernese authorities offers another example of the link between suffering and Anabaptist identity. Her religious fervor, noticeable in “einem Glanz in den Augen, der nicht von dieser Welt war,” does not diminish after having suffered from a starvation diet for weeks in prison (132). When a Reformed pastor comes to see her, he is shocked: “als er ihren dürren, grauen Körper in dem viel zu großen Kleide sah, als er sah, welcher überirdische Glanz aus ihren tiefliegenden Augen leuchtete, die strahlten in der Gewißheit des ewigen Lebens der Auserwählten” (146). In
her heroic act of bearing the agonies of imprisonment without abjuring her belief, the “überirdischer Glanz” becomes an external sign of her inner faith.

In the midst of the persecution of Täufer and Treuherzige, Hans converts to the Anabaptist faith. As an outward sign of his conviction, his eyes are filled with a similar brightness. However, the state official who consults with him in prison notices a “fanatischen Glanz in den Augen des Bauern, der sich dazu drängte, ein Märtyrer zu werden” (248). The sparkle of his eyes is tainted by a fanatical element that indicates his obsession with becoming an Anabaptist martyr. He is characterized by an outward zeal while lacking an inner conviction.

The absence of Hans’ true faith can be explained by the experience that led to his Anabaptist conversion. Being haunted by his wife’s ghost after having discovered the poor condition in the Bernese prison and become fully aware of the pain she suffered during her time as an inmate, Hans proclaims: “Ich will gut machen, was ich zuwenig tat, ich will von jetzt an zu deiner Gemeinde, zu den Taufgesinnten halten, daß ich doch wenigstens den andern helfen kann, wie ich dir hätte helfen sollen” (247). Driven by his guilt for having left his wife to her own devices, he declares his alliance with the Täufer. He joins the Anabaptist faith not for reasons of religious conviction but as a means of atonement.

The sound of the victory bell initiates Hans’ critical consideration of the Anabaptist principle of separation from the state. He begins to realize that the country would not have been able to defend its people against enemy attacks if everyone was a Täufer. He ponders the Anabaptist practice of pacifism, concluding that the Brethren “im
Recht gewesen [wären], wenn alle Leute so gut wären, wie sie … Dann brauchte es keinen Staat und keine Polizei. Aber so waren eben die Leute nicht” (262). The Anabaptists are portrayed as an ideal society, as a community of faithful, moral, and righteous people. Yet, the practical application of their separatist theology appears as incompatible with the state’s pursuance of the common good.

In his contemplation of the issue of military intervention, Hans comes to accept the necessity of an armed state. After he recants the Anabaptist faith, he feels like a “Glied des Staates und erkannte, daß es ein Irrtum war, sich dem Staate zu entziehen” (263). He goes home, tears down the secret Anabaptist chamber, and hands the sword that had been hanging its inside wall as a reminder of the Täufer hunts to his son, noting “jetzt noch fürs Spiel, und später brauchst ihn im Militärdienst für unser schönes Land” (266). Having considered the Anabaptist as well as Willading’s point of view, the novel ends with a symbolic gesture demonstrating Hans’ support of the state. The author integrates his own passion for the Bernese homeland. As Hans Sommer has asserted, “Laedrachs Bekenntnis zu Heimat und Staat bricht … strahlend durch” (267). Although he treats Bernese Anabaptism with much understanding and sympathetic appreciation, he draws the conclusion that the well-being of all citizens can only be achieved by the state’s “starker Hand,” a position that reflects the historical development in Bern (262).

Any traces of the nonconformist group are eventually erased from the memory of the Bernese state. Peter’s emigration to the French Jura illustrates the Brotherhood’s exodus from the Swiss homeland, and the snow covering Bern at the end of the story symbolizes the state’s attempt “alles Unrecht aus[zu]löschen, daß keine Erinnerung daran
bliebe” (287). With his literary treatment of the seventeenth-century conflict between the State of Bern and the separatist religious movement, Laedrach rediscovers the history of Anabaptism in this region. Investigating the Täufer’s distinct theology, their relationship with the Oberland population, and their persecution by state authorities, the novel works toward reconciliation between the Bernese state and the Anabaptist minority.

C. Zimmermann: *Die Furgge* (1989) and the Bernese Brethren

1. Zimmermann’s Discovery of Anabaptist History

After Laedrach’s literary portrayal of the Brethren in Bern’s Oberland, the Anabaptist movement received little attention from Bernese historical and fictional writers. It appears that the tragic fate of the religious minority was once again buried in oblivion until 1989, when the Bernese author Katharina Zimmermann took it up again. In her regionalist novel *Die Furgge*, Zimmermann attempts to capture the particularities of the Emmental landscape and its people as they relate to the development of the historical Anabaptist movement. Her literary treatment of the Bernese Täufer has contributed to an awareness of the Anabaptist history in Switzerland.

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254 Apart from Laedrach’s collection of folkloristic nonfiction about Bern in the mid twentieth century, the history of the Bernese Brethren was predominantly examined by Swiss Mennonites in America, for instance Delbert Gratz and Isaac Zürcher. In his publication *Die Täufer um Bern*, the latter provided an account of his ancestral past for the Schweizerische Verein für Täufergeschichte in 1986.

255 Katharina Zimmermann and her family lived in Indonesia from 1964-79. All of her early writings, mostly in form of children’s books, dealt with her personal experience in Southeast Asia. The fictionalization of the Bernese Anabaptists marks her first historical novel. In later works, for instance *Kein zurück für Sophie W.* (2000) and her most recent novel *Der Amisbühl* (2012), the author continues to examine the regional history of her Bernese homeland.
Zimmermann investigated the persecution of the religious minority in the Emmental after having come across the name of an Anabaptist woman in old records of Schangnau’s Reformed Church. Her coincidental discovery in the “Taufrodel” (baptismal roll) led to the fictionalization of the historical Anabaptist figure as a means of Swiss Vergangenheitsbewältigung. In a personal interview with me, Zimmermann recounted the events that inspired her to investigate the Bernese Anabaptists. While her husband served as pastor at the Reformed church in Schangnau, she decided to write a novel about this area “wo die Bauernhöfe noch alle gleich hießen wie vor dreihundert Jahren”. When she discovered the name Madleni Schilt in a list of people who had been expelled from Bern during the time of the great Anabaptist deportation at the end of the seventeenth century, she contacted the municipal administration for more information. As she randomly opened one of the old baptismal rolls, she recognized Madleni’s name, a coincidence that fully convinced her to write about this former Bernese resident and her affiliation with the Anabaptist movement.

The novelist researched the subject matter extensively, assembling the picture of the historical Bernese Brotherhood like a mosaic. She sought contact with the Mennonite community in Amsterdam, consulted with scholars in the field of theology and folklore at the University of Bern, and studied Müller’s work on the history of Bernese Anabaptism. As a result of her commitment to thorough research, the novel gives a historically correct portrayal of Anabaptist persecution in seventeenth-century

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256 Zimmermann noted in the interview that her research “war sehr aufwendig, ein Zusammensuchen von Mosaikstücken”.
257 In the acknowledgement on the last page of Die Furgge, Zimmermann expresses her gratitude to Ernst Müller, who, as she asserts, has started the process of the “Rehabilitierung der Altevangelischen Wehrlosen Taufgesinnten Gemeinde” with his historical research on Bernese Anabaptism (256).
Bern. In addition to the group’s struggle with the state repression, the author addresses general aspects of peasant life in the Bernese Oberland such as birth and death, love of home and kin, and opposition to state authorities. She has integrated the findings of her detailed research on the local Täufertum into the Anabaptist storyline as well as the frame narrative. The frame narrative presents the current state of Anabaptist research, serving as a basis for the fictionalization of the Täufer theme in the embedded narrative.

2. Plot Summary

The novel is divided into two narrative levels. The frame story is set in present-day Emmental. Anna, a cellist from Zürich, visits the Bernese countryside as a relaxing getaway from the stress of her career and family life. In the small town of Schangnau, at the foot of Hohgant mountain (formerly known as “Furgge”), she makes time for herself and gathers strength. While talking to a hotel guest, she finds out about the region’s Anabaptist history. The guest leaves her with some old records documenting the lives of local Täufer in the seventeenth century. Although she has not previously heard of the Anabaptists, she soon develops a great interest in their history. She is fascinated by the religious mountain folk and their simple life in harmony with nature. As she becomes more and more invested in this local history and studies the old records in depth, she starts reconstructing the life of Madleni Schilt, a member of the local Anabaptist group.

The embedded story centers around this young Anabaptist woman, who lives with her husband Christian in the area of the Emmental. Madleni suffers a serious depression after her first two children were stillborn. Only the presence of the old Anabaptist woman Ida helps her soothe the pain of her loss. Through Ida’s religious views, Madleni regains
strength and a sense of purpose. While the young woman converts to the Anabaptist faith and participates in the fellowship’s clandestine gatherings at night, her husband remains with the Reformed Church and allows his four children to be baptized by the local pastor. As an elected member of the “Chorgericht” (the village court), he helps to divert authorities’ attention from his wife and her fellow adherents. However, when he is dismissed from his duties at the court after the pastor finds out about his secret support of the local Anabaptist congregation, he takes off his sidearm, joins his wife at a secret Täufer meeting, and soon becomes a committed member of the underground church.

Living in the remote hamlet of the Oberland, Madleni and her family are able to avoid persecution by the state and institutional church until authorities dictate a stricter enforcement of mandates against those who refuse to bear arms and swear the oath of allegiance. When state officials employ Anabaptist hunters who ferret out Täufer in the rural parts of the state, Christian is forced to flee the country, leaving behind his wife and four children who work hard to maintain the family farm. One year after his departure, the government issues the deportation of all resident Anabaptists to colonies in North America. Madleni and fellow members of the Brotherhood are brought together in the city of Bern and shipped out of the country. Expecting to be gone for only a short time to look for her husband in the Dutch Mennonite community, Madleni leaves the care of the family farm to her children. Once she arrives in Holland after a long and gruesome passage, she is not able to find Christian. Disappointed by the loss of her husband, she returns to Bern to reunite with her family. During her absence, however, the Bernese government confiscated her property and hired out her daughters to families in the area.
Hiding from Täuferjäger who continue to roam the countryside looking for illegal returnees, she finds shelter at her brother’s home. Yet, one of the spies in the neighborhood reports her to the state officials. Consequently, she is captured and sent to the dungeons where she faces imprisonment and a starvation diet until the end of her days. The novel ends with Anna’s departure from the Emmental. Having gained strength and inspiration from reading about Madleni’s steadfast faith and her courage to resist authorities, the chellist returns to her busy life in Zürich.

3. Coming to Terms with the State’s Anabaptist Past

The novel combines factual and fictional elements on these two narrative levels. While the embedded narrative fictionalizes historically attested figures and incorporates songs and attributes characteristic of the seventeenth-century movement, the frame narrative presents information about the Brotherhood in a predominantly descriptive style through reports, citations, and historical discussions. This presentation of historical facts allows Anna to reflect on the Anabaptist theme, relating it to contemporary debates concerning, for instance, Switzerland’s compulsory military and

\[\text{258} \text{ As Zimmermann has pointed out in her interview, the protagonist, Madleni Schilt “existierte wirklich. Im Taufrodel von 1690, aufbewahrt in der Gemeindeschreiberei Schangnau, steht ihr Name als Gotte des kleinen Christen”. The narrative also fictionalizes well-known characters of the seventeenth-century Anabaptist movement, for instance Hans Bürki, the Brethren preacher in the Emmental and Johann Ludwig Runckel, the Dutch ambassador to Switzerland and friend of the Brotherhood.}\]

\[\text{259} \text{ Much of this historical material, especially the information regarding the Anabaptist deportation in 1710, is drawn from Müller’s Bernischen Täufer (299-314).}\]

\[\text{260} \text{ The information presented in the frame narrative is largely based on Müller’s historical work. In one of these reports, for instance, the historian Berger dates the origin of Anabaptism back to the fourth century, when “damals das Christentum in Rom zur Staatsreligion proklamiert [wurde]” (226). Similarly, Müller traces the root of the Anabaptist-state conflict to the year 425 when the Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III issued a number of laws under which “das Christentum Staatssache geworden ist” (395).}\]
alternative service, and the coming to terms with the Holocaust and the shortcomings of Switzerland’s refugee politics during World War II.

Drawing a comparison between the exile of Jews in World War II and the banishment of Bernese Brethren in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the author perceives the discussion of the Anabaptist issue as a matter of Vergangenheitsbewältigung. In her novel, she describes and analyzes the conflict between the nonconformist group and the state, thus working through Bern’s authoritarian past. In an interview, Zimmermann noted that the oppression of the Anabaptist group “ein historisches Phänomen [sei], das aber nie aufgearbeitet wurde”.261 She explores the reasons for the state’s non-acceptance of its Anabaptist past, explaining in the frame narrative that “[man] etwas Ungutes gern verdrängt. Und dann war Angst dabei, viel Angst, die hat alle Erinnerung gelöscht” (13). Consequently, her engagement with Bern’s Anabaptist history initiates the process of resurrecting memories that had been suppressed and forgotten throughout the course of the past three centuries. Against the backdrop of Swiss Vergangenheitsbewältigung, her literary treatment of the Täufer theme is an attempt to raise consciousness about the Anabaptist-hostile era in the state’s history.

The great success of Zimmermann’s regional novel has contributed to the recent popularization of Anabaptism in Switzerland and supported the reconciliation efforts between the state and contemporary descendants of the Bernese Brethren.262 As the novel

261 Zimmermann further noted that she was enraged (“deshalb meine Wut”) when she discovered that the state’s persecution against Anabaptists has been largely ignored by Swiss historiography.
262 Die Furgge became a best seller in Switzerland and was printed seven times.
was reviewed by various (Christian) reading groups in the canton of Bern, it sparked discussions about nonconformity and religious toleration.263 When Switzerland declared 2007 as “Täuferjahr” (a year of commemorating the Anabaptists), public readings of the novel served as an important means of giving the Swiss people an understanding of the state’s Anabaptist history and asking them to treat this cultural heritage with care and respect.

4. Anabaptism as an Alternative to the State Church

Similar to the Bernese Brethren in Laedrach’s novel, who are represented as a righteous yet subversive group, the Anabaptists in Die Furgge are characterized by a strict obedience to New Testament teachings, especially non-violence, which results in an opposition to secular powers. Depicted as mountain folk, the Täufer lead a simple life close to nature, and practice an ethical faith that is rooted in the spiritual reform movement predating the Reformation. The term “Altevangelische,” frequently used in Zimmermann’s novel, alludes to the concept of a direct lineage between Anabaptism and the early church.264 As the Brotherhood remains true to the apostolic order, it sets itself apart from the state—a practice of world-church separation that is perceived as political subversion and consequently punished by civil authorities.

263 Walter Wieland, pastor of a Reformed church in the Emmental, for instance, has reported that Zimmermann’s novel raised the question “Ja, wie konnte so etwas geschehen!” Members of his parish discussed the Anabaptist theology and condemned the active role of the established church in the persecution of these fellow Christians (1).

264 The term “Altevangelische” (old evangelicals) was first introduced by Ludwig Keller, who has identified Anabaptists as descendants of the primitive church. According to his lecture on Altevangelische Gemeinden, there was a succession of true evangelical groups in the history of Christianity. In this sequence of apostolic orders, Anabaptism marks the early modern continuation of the early church tradition (41). The name “Altevangelische” was later employed by several historians, including Ernst Müller, who used the term to emphasize the group’s apostolic character as well as its split from the Neutäufer, members of the Evangelical Baptist Church, a Christian fellowship founded by Samuel Fröhlich in 1832.
In her historical novel, Zimmermann links distinctive features of the Anabaptist separatist theology, particularly the Brethren’s rejection of pedobaptism and their isolation from the fallen world, to the geographical specificities of the Bernese Oberland. The rural population of the Emmental lives on the edge of Swiss society, in terms of spatial proximity and social interaction. In lonely valleys and isolated hamlets, far away from the local churches, it was seemingly difficult to follow church practices such as baptism of newborn children and attendance of weekly church services. The author exemplifies the challenge of abiding by the rules of the state church in the remote region of the Emmental with Madleni’s struggle to take her newborn godchild through a ghastly winter storm to the predicant’s house for the infant’s baptism. Having been brought up in the belief that human beings are trapped in bondage to sin from the moment of their births, the young woman risks her own life for the sake of the child’s baptism. After the predicant administers the ritual, Madleni expresses relief: “es ist gut gegangen und wie ein schweres Gewicht von ihm [dem Madleni] abgefallen” (15). She has fulfilled her duties as a “Gote” (godmother) and can rest assured that the child’s soul is saved, “jetzt hat das Kind einen Namen und ist getauft, jetzt kann ihm nichts mehr passieren” (16).

Deriving from the understanding of baptism as a religious act that confers the infant’s salvation and saves him from the stain of original sin, an existential crisis occurs in Madleni’s life when her first two children die before the ritual is performed. The predicant’s assertion that children who have not received the benefit of baptism are “nicht von der Erbsünde bereinigt” appears to torment the young mother (86). In addition to the

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265 Madleni is frequently referred to as “es” (dative “ihm”) rather than “sie” in the narrative since her name is in the Swiss diminutive form and thus requires the neuter pronoun.
church’s belief that all non-baptized children are destined to hell, local myths about the supernatural powers of non-baptized infants—“Fingerknochen von Ungetauften seien ein gutes- ja vielleicht das beste Zaubermittel”—cause Madleni to worry about her children’s souls and the desecration of their corpses (83).

In this moment of great despair, Madleni meets Ida, an old Anabaptist woman, who comes to Madleni’s rescue. “Ehrerbietig wird sie gegrüsst,” when she enters Madleni’s house (93). The respectful gesture from the other women who have gathered in support of the deeply depressed and mentally confused Madleni indicates the status of the old Anabaptist woman within the local community. In the narrative, Ida receives much respect from the rural population, and despite, or perhaps because of, her affiliation with the Brotherhood, the other woman perceive her as a spiritual healer whose presence and prayer is reported to have worked “auch bei anderen Kranken schon Wunder” (93). Her act of laying “die Hand auf die Stirn der wild Phantasierenden,” which cures Madleni’s feverish state, is reminiscent of shamanistic customs practiced in the medieval age (93). This healing ritual, however, does not suggest an intersection between witchcraft and Anabaptism. Rather, the narrator’s presumption that “Madleni ruhiger wird, sei es durch die Kühle der aufgelegten Hand oder durch das Gebet,” alludes to the Anabaptist simple, practical conduct and firm faith (93).

Indeed, the novel portrays Ida’s Anabaptist beliefs as a remedy for Madleni’s troubled state of mind. Responding to the young woman’s question “warum ist Gott so hart? Unschuldige Kinder stösst er in die Verdamnmis,” Ida explains the concept of love

266 Earlier in the novel, Ida’s membership in the Anabaptist community has already been mentioned (27).
as the Brotherhood sees it, a vision of love that flows from the understanding of the nature and example of Christ (93). The author shows how the lesson of God’s “lautere[r] Liebe” and the Anabaptist conviction in children’s sinlessness—“ein junges Kind, ohne alle Sünd”—soothe Madleni’s worried soul and ease her emotional pain: “die Worte der alten Ida fallen wie Tau in sein heisses verwundetes Herz” (93-94). The Anabaptist faith is thus portrayed as a practical alternative to the institutional church which advocates the concept of original sin, a theological principle that causes much desperation for mothers of stillborn children.267

The narrative depicts how the protagonist feels “den Frieden und ahnt das Glück, das von [Idas] Überzeugung ausging” after hearing about the Anabaptist belief in children’s sinless nature and God’s love that provides salvation for their souls (94). Her conversion makes clear that the Anabaptist faith is regarded a radical belief that has preserved in the remote region of Bern for centuries passing down through generations. This belief, as it is portrayed in the novel, not only breaks with the state church and its traditional conceptions of baptism and salvation; it also renounces myths, superstitious practices, and the ancient belief in signs and wonders. After the old woman convinces Madleni that God loves her children, “auch ohne Zeichen,” her husband notices that she has overcome her fear of the region’s mythical creatures and the church’s vision of the devil; “er weiss auch, wie es sich seither nicht mehr fürchtet, weder vor den Berggeistern, noch vor der Frau Fasten, und auch vor dem Teufel nicht” (94, 109).

267 The narrative assumes a female perspective on the Anabaptist belief and offers an explanation for the vitality of the movement’s faith that takes into account the conflict between biology and theology in the seventeenth century.
The discussion of pedobaptism arises once more when Madleni delivers her first son after having given birth to three daughters. Although Christen is depicted as a *Treuherziger* in the narrative, sympathizing with his wife’s Anabaptist congregation, he complies with the baptismal practice of the Reformed Church. Yet, when he takes his newborn son and three daughters to the local church for baptism, the girls are dressed in “schlechten Kleidchen,” expressing their parents’ disregard of the baptismal ceremony (101). Quoting villagers who suspect that Christen chooses farm servants as his children’s godparents and neglects to honor the occasion with a decent celebration, “um den Prädikanten zu zeigen, dass sie [die Taufe] ihm nicht wichtig ist,” the text illustrates the influence of simple Oberland mentality as well as his wife’s Anabaptist convictions on his stance toward this state-sanctioned religious sacrament.

The church’s alliance with the state in matters of religious practices is reflected in the novel’s description of the children’s baptism. While the predicant dismisses the late baptism of Christen’s daughters with the words “Ja nun, es sind Mädchen, nach denen wird kein Hahn krähen,” he is determined to enter the son’s name on the baptismal roll (102):

Er hatte gemeint, das Wichtigste sei die heilige Handlung der Taufe, aber nein, laut einem Mandat von Schultheiss und Rat der Stadt Bern ist das Aufschreiben, das sorgfältige Eintragen von Namen und Daten der männlichen Täuflinge wichtiger. In der letzten Capitelsversammlung war den Prädikanten deswegen die Hölle heiss gemacht worden. Sie würden durch ihre nachlässige Führung des
In the narrative, baptism marks the infant’s status not only as a member of the church, but also as a member of the civic community. And more importantly, by entering the boys’ names on the baptismal roll, the church automatically registers them for military service. The predicant’s concern with the correct recording of the name and birth date of Christen’s baptized son indicates the indistinguishable line between church and state in seventeenth-century Bern. In her research on the baptismal rolls of Schangnau’s Reformed Church, Zimmermann came to the conclusion that the alliance between the institutional church and the state government is manifested in the strict adherence to the practice of baptism. Fascinated by “die Auseinandersetzung der Dienstverweigerer gegen die adeligen Herren” on the matter of baptism, the author focused in her novel on the conflict that arises between the Brotherhood and the (state) church over the issue of Anabaptist pacifism.\textsuperscript{268}

The narrative reports that Madleni does not attend her children’s baptism at the local church. After her conversion to Anabaptism, she refuses to participate in any of the sacraments administered there. Instead, she joins Anabaptist “Versammlungen” and becomes a proponent of the Brotherhood’s faith (101). The depiction of her avoidance of

\textsuperscript{268} In the personal interview, Zimmermann described how she uncovered the connection between infant baptism and the state’s conscription system. Studying Bernese church history, she learned that “Vater und Pate (Götti) bei der kirchlichen Handlung der Taufe das Seitengewehr zu tragen hatten, sonst war die Taufe ungültig”. She then realized that the church, “die dem Staat gehorchte und die männlichen Täuflinge melden musste als zukünftige Soldaten,” persecuted the Anabaptists because they insisted on the Christian principle of non-resistance.
the state church alludes to the fellowship’s principles and discipline by which it maintains boundaries to the fallen world.

The author explains Madleni’s separation from the established church and her refusal to partake in sacramental rituals, such as the Lord’s Supper, by the unethical character of the Reformed Church. When Madleni’s neighbor becomes pregnant with the village smith’s illegitimate child, she proclaims: “Jetzt komme es nie mehr zum Abendmahl. Es halte das nicht aus, vorn im Chor den Schmied sitzen zu sehen. Obschon verheiratet, sei er nachts auch zum Änni gegangen, und jetzt werde er nicht einmal vom Mahl des Herrn ausgeschlossen”(113). In Madleni’s words, the author captures the Brotherhood’s opposition to the concept of the Volkskirche comprised of saints and sinners. The protagonist’s opinion that the true church ought to be separated from the world and that those who live in sin ought to be excluded from the sacrament corresponds to the Anabaptist concept of church-world dualism. The narrative uses her as an example for the Brotherhood’s longing to achieve a life of moral purity and integrity by following Christ faithfully and separating from the sinful world.

In addition to depicting the church’s toleration of immorality among its followers, the author employs Madleni refusal to partake in the Lord’s Supper of the Reformed congregation to reflect the Brotherhood’s criticism of the clergy’s hypocritical conduct. Madleni exclaims: “zum Nachtmahl gehe es nicht mehr mit. Es finde nichts so hässlich

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269 Anabaptist opposition to participating in the Lord’s Supper due to the adulterous (and, more broadly, sinful) conduct of the Reformed Church members is also mentioned in Müller’s historical work. A 1690 consistorial report states that the Bernese Brethren complained “daß kein Unterschied zwischen Frommen und Gottlosen in den Kirchenversammlungen gemacht wird, sondern der Hurer, Ehebrecher, Weinsaufer, Schwörer u. dgl. wie andere, so ein gottselig Leben führen, zur Kommunion des heiligen Abendmahls … admiittiert werden” (139).
wie diese Heuchlerei, wo der Prädikant selbst am Morgen Brot und Wein, die Zeichen der Liebe austeile, und am Nachmittag Leute plagen und verfolgen helfe” (140). Her remark about the predicant’s support of the authorities’ persecution effort addresses the issue of Christian love versus worldly violence. His involvement in the harassment and prosecution of nonconformists stands in direct opposition to the Anabaptist conception of love and non-resistance rooted in Christ’s commands.

The author uses the figure of the Reformed predicant as a representative of the state church, and consequently as an antagonist of the religious minority, imbued with a set of characteristics that put him in binary opposition to the Anabaptist fellowship. Juxtaposing the Oberland Brethren and their simple, rural, and laborious lives, the predicant is depicted as a learned theologian who is unsuitable for manual work, “seine Hände sind glatt und weiss und nicht zum Arbeiten gemacht,” and who desires a rectorate in the city where he can engage in “geistreiche Unterhaltungen” and worldly pleasures (23-24). His decadent inclination—“er hat die Suppe stehen lassen und nur die Speckstücke daraus gefischt”—contrasts with the plain and hardworking mountain folk (22). The Brethren are described as living an earnest Christian life, “fleissig und massvoll in allem, ohne Lust an unflätigen Dingen” (181). While they have developed a strong emotional tie to Bern’s rural area, the predicant loathes the mountains, perceiving them as a threat—“an klaren Tagen rückten sie [die Berge] näher … und flössten Angst ein mit ihren felsigen Zacken und dem ewigen Eis” and refers to the Emmental and its people as “Unkultur” (23).
Moreover, his theological concepts, especially his emphasis on the wrath of God, contrast with the Anabaptist ethic of love. Madleni complains that “die von der Kirche immer strafen wollen, mit der Hölle drohen für die kleinste Untat” (145). The predicant sees God as vindictive and vengeful, frequently reminding the congregation of “Gottes Zorn” and even using God’s demands for justice to support the state’s military effort, whereas Madleni tells her children “Gott meine es gut mit uns und zürne nicht” (160). Instead of regarding Christ’s crucifixion as a sign of God’s wrath, the Anabaptists perceive his resurrection as an act of God’s mercy. Their confidence in God’s love is expressed by Christen, who feels an inner transformation after having converted to the Anabaptist faith, “Er möge am Morgen ganz anders aufstehen, wenn er denke, wie lieb Gott die Menschen habe” (167).

5. Peaceful Discipleship

The narrative shows how the Anabaptists embrace the concept of love as they seek to follow Christ’s teachings by integrating virtues of peace, compassion, and forgiveness into their daily practice. Yet, their attempt to adhere to the peace principle causes social and political problems in seventeenth-century Bern. Repeatedly referred to as “wehrlos” (defenseless), the Brethren are defined by their pacifist principles in the narrative. The consistorial councilor perceives their refusal to participate in military service based on their commitment to Christian non-violence as a threat to the well-being

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270 The predicant admonishes his congregation by noting “Es sei einer kein Christ, wenn er nicht an die Hölle glaube” (159). Furthermore, he teaches the children in Sunday school that “Gottes Zorn sich vielleicht bald gegen das Vaterland [richte], drum müssten die Buben jetzt auch ein Gewehr tragen” (160).
of the state: “das täuferische Gesind weigere, Wehrdienst zu leisten. Die Folgen seien erschrecklich” (103).

Juxtaposing the two oppositional perspectives, the Täufer’s peace witness on the one hand and the authorities’ concern with the civil order and military defense of the state on the other hand, leads to a dialectic of idealization and condemnation, similar to the diametrical images of peaceful Christians and seditious sectarians given in Laedrach’s historical novel. The depiction of the state’s perspective on the Täufer reveals the inherently subversive notion of their religious teachings and points to the political ramifications of their pacifist stance. The state officials refute the non-violent position, to which the Brethren remain true even when facing harsh persecution, as stubborn persistence. They regard the Anabaptists as a “Bande von trotzigen Bauern,” who “sich halsstarrig weigern, das Vaterland mit der Waffe in der Hand zu verteidigen,” and who are, therefore, not worthy of Bernese citizenship (106, 117). Calling them “Ketzer” with an “aufrüherisches Wesen,” the civil authorities fuse theological rhetoric with political objectives (104).

Similar to Laedrach’s fictional account of the conflict between the religious minority and the Bernese state, Zimmermann includes the historical character of Willading, who expresses the government’s fear of subversive notions among the rural population. He argues, for instance, “wer sich weigerte, eine Waffe zu tragen, liebe das Vaterland nicht, sei unwürdig, darin zu wohnen” (213). Using Willading as a lens, the author shows how the Brotherhood’s commitment to non-violence undermines the very foundations of the political and social order. This ambivalent conception of the Brethren
as pacifists and traitors provokes Anna, the protagonist of the frame narrative, to further reflect on the issue of “Wehrlosigkeit”. Through the profound experience of giving birth to her son, she comes to the “Überzeugung, dass jegliches Töten von Menschen, auch wenn es aus Vaterlandsliebe geschieht, verwerflich ist” (72). Yet, she also realizes that she does not take a clear stance on the matter of non-violence. For instance, she feels relieved when hearing about her son’s plans of becoming a military pilot, for she does not have to worry about a “zukünftigen Dienstverweigerer in der Familie” (73). The historical conflict between the Anabaptist mission of peaceful discipleship and pressures from authorities to conform to civil order initiates a contemporary discussion regarding the discrepancy between a citizen’s obligation to serve the nation and his commitment to ethical and Christian values.

Against the backdrop of the Anabaptist concept of non-resistance, Anna further contemplates the situation of “Dienstverweigerer” in contemporary Switzerland. While taking a walk through the Emmental, she notices three crosses on the side of the road, commemorating young recruits who lost their lives while driving a military vehicle (231). Thinking back to the Brethren’s refusal to bear arms and support the state’s military, Anna realizes that Switzerland has not yet abandoned the principle of compulsory military service. She recalls that the seventeenth-century Anabaptists had already proposed an alternative service, “sie hatten ja Ersatzhilfe angeboten, hatten im Jahr je einen Monat bei den Verbauungen an der Ilfis, der Trub und der Emme arbeiten wollen” (190). She compares their unsuccessful attempt to convince authorities to ratify their alternative service plans to contemporary debates about “Ersatzdienst,” asserting that
“Frauen würden ihn heute endlich gelten lassen, säßen sie nicht immer noch mitten in einer Männerherrschaft” (190). The author traces the country’s military tradition and national mentality to a male-dominated government that had enforced conscription laws in the past and continues to implement these policies in contemporary Switzerland.

In her depiction of the Anabaptists’ historical struggle with military mandates and its parallels to the situation of conscientious objectors (COs) in the 1980s, Zimmermann voices criticism about Switzerland’s suppression of pacifist notions. In my interview with her, Zimmermann noted that she was most interested in “die grosse Auseinandersetzung der Dienstverweigerer gegen die adeligen Herren, die bedingungslos von jedem Untertanen Kriegsdienst verlangten” because it related to the situation of contemporary Swiss COs. She explained that in the 1980s, when she wrote Die Furgge, Switzerland continued with its strict enforcement of compulsory military service and “junge Männer, die den Dienst verweigerten, ins Gefängnis kamen und schwere Einbussen in ihrer Karriere erlitten”. Being aware of the unfortunate situation of COs in the Swiss state, perhaps through her husband’s work as a pastor, she emphasized the pacifist stance of historical Anabaptists and their rejection of the military service in order to call attention to the contemporary debate regarding Swiss national service.

As a consequence of their refusal to participate in military actions, the radical believers were severely persecuted by the state. The novel depicts the harassment of Bernese Täufer on two levels; it reports historical cases of Anabaptist abuse,
dispossession, and banishment,\textsuperscript{271} and it fictionally treats the state’s repression through the example of Madleni and her family. Due to Madleni’s Anabaptist beliefs and practices, she lives a hunted life, in constant fear of being discovered by \textit{Täuferjäger}.

Madleni’s family is only able to avoid persecution as long as Christen serves as judge in the village court. These familial ties between Anabaptists and non-Brethren were quite common in the rural regions of Bern.\textsuperscript{272} Zimmermann portrays the network of family relationships as well as the support by benevolent neighbors in her historical novel. In her depiction of the fellowship’s life in the \textit{Oberland}, she addresses the differing attitudes of village neighbors toward the faith group, varying from social marginalization and betrayal to active and organized support.

The author explores the question of how the local population interacted with these radical believers, despite the group’s emphasis on separating from the world. For instance, when the state resurrects a policy of persecution, the rural community aids the Anabaptists through various signals and physical force. As Madleni hears noises one night, she reminds her daughter:

\begin{quote}
Das sind sie, die Nachtbuben, die schlagen jetzt Krach. Hörst du die Treicheln, die Hörner? Der Hans ist gewiss auch dabei, er und die andern, die passen nun
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{271} In form of a messenger’s report, the narrative describes some methods of punishment administered by the Bernese government, for instance the beating with rods and the branding with hot irons so that the \textit{Täufer} were stamped for life as criminals: “Mit Ruten haben die Knechte des Landvogts ihn ausgepeitscht. Dann haben sie ihn mit dem Brenneisen gebrannt” (63).

\textsuperscript{272} In seventeenth-century mandates, state authorities denounced the ineffectiveness of local officials in their effort to capture Anabaptists. They struggled to enforce anti-Anabaptist laws in the rural parts of Bern because many of these officials were related to members of the Brotherhood: “Die Chorrichter in Eggigwyl belangend, ist von ihnen kein Hilf zu erhoffen, weil sie all denen der Sect Zugethanen in Blutsverwandtschaft sind” (cited in Müller 338).
auf, verprügeln die Lumpenhunde, die Täuferjäger, und warnen die unsern, die
an die Versammlung gehen. (165)

While the villagers’ strike against the Täuferjäger illustrates the Anabaptists’ integration
into local village life, Madleni maintains a sense of separation, as her use of the terms
“andern” and “unsern” to differentiate between non-Brethren (including her brother
Hans, who is not a member of the Anabaptist congregation) and like-minded believers
shows. Although separated from the local populace by their participation in fellowship
gatherings, the Brethren are united with non-Anabaptist villagers by a mutual frustration
with state officials.

The novel points out the regional particularities of Bernese Anabaptism in terms
of the Brethren’s relationship to the people and the countryside of the Oberland. The
movement in Bern is determined both by the solidarity between Anabaptists and the rural
population and the Brethren’s closeness to the geographic locality. The massive Hohgant
range is depicted as a sacred place; “solange Madlenis Füsse noch über Berge und festen
Fels schritten, spürte es sich geborgen in Gottes Hand” (211). In the high altitude of the
mountain, she feels close to God.

The spatial relation to the mountain symbolizes Madleni’s tragic fate as a
persecuted Täufer. After her conversion to the Anabaptist faith, she loses her fear of
Berggeister and develops a close relationship to the mountain as she spends happy years
with her family on the Alm (alpine pasture) of the Furgge. However, when the

273 In her portrayal of the villagers’ organized support, the author once again relies on Müller’s accounts on
Bernese Anabaptism. The historian reports, for instance, of a case in the Emmental in 1702, where “die
Sympathie des Landvolks mit den Täufern sich dadurch kundgegeben [hat], daß der Weg, den die
Täuferjäger machten, durch allerlei Signale der Landschaft kundgegeben wurde … dem Hornen, Schießen,
Schreien und dergleichen Zeichen geben” (341).
government issues compulsory emigration for all Anabaptists, she is forced to leave the
Oberland. As the Furgge represents her home and family, the departure from the
mountain is a most traumatic experience for her. Marching off to the city of Bern, she
turns around once more “und hätte beinahe geschrien vor Weh. Da steht sie die Furgge,
breit und in der Mitte ein wenig eingefallen, mit vielen senkrechten Falten” (197). The
mountain reflects her deplorable condition as a banished Täufer, an existence that is
marked by grief and despair.

When Madleni attempts to return to her home in the Oberland, she is caught by
Täuferjäger and sent to prison. Her experience as a captive—“Madleni wurde gezerrt und
geschlagen”—exemplifies Anabaptist endurance of pain (247). With the depiction of her
persistence in faith, despite the harsh persecution, the narrative creates an idealized image
of the Bernese Anabaptists. Madleni is characterized as a faithful believer who seeks to
follow Christ’s precept of forgiveness:

Leise sagt es für sich den Abschnitt auf, der nun gilt. “Liebet eure Feinde und
bittet für die, die euch verfolgen. Denn wenn ihr nur die liebt, die euch lieben,
was habt ihr für einen Lohn? Tun nicht die Sünder dasselbe? … Liebet eure
Feinde, tut Gutes denen, die euch hassen.” (244)

She reminds herself with the rendering of Matt. 3:44-48 to remain true to the principle of
love and forgiveness. Yet, Christ’s teaching of forgiveness becomes seemingly difficult
to follow when she realizes that she will be incarcerated until her death: “liebet eure
Feinde, bittet für die, die euch … nein, denkt es, vergib du ihnen, Gott, ich kann nicht.
Entschlossen steigt es die Stufen hinauf” (247-48). Her inability to forgive the authorities,
yet her courageous walk up to the prison tower, represent both the heroism and the despair of the persecuted faith group.

The determination of the seventeenth-century Anabaptist Brethren to bear witness to the New Testament commandments of peace and non-resistance, even if it resulted in much suffering, fascinates the protagonist of the frame story. Anna’s reaction to Madleni’s story exemplifies the effect of historical works. According to Lukács, historical narratives allow readers to re-experience history “as a phase of mankind’s development which concerns and moves us” (42). Anna develops an understanding for the social and human motives which led the seventeenth-century group to think and act in the way it has been reported. Furthermore, the frame story illustrates the use of history as inspiration. As Anna learns more about the movement in Bern, she develops great respect for the believers’ public testimony to their faith. The story of Madleni’s steadfastness has an inspirational impact on her:


Und wie die Obrigkeit Angst bekam, weil die Staatsreligion für ihre Untertanen nicht mehr als Zuchtmittel taugte, und einen regelrechten Polizeistaat schuf.

(157)

Comparable to the spiritual support that Anabaptist martyr stories provided for Brethren who endured torture and privations during times of severe persecution, Anna gains new strength for mastering her daily struggles through hearing about Madleni’s act of perseverance. The protagonist is particularly impressed by the Täufer’s persistence on the
Nachfolge Christi. She comes to realize that their striving for complete discipleship implied a willingness to accept worldly punishment, thereby posing a threat to the political order of the day. Employing the contemporary term “Polizeistaat,” the main character of the frame narrative attempts to fathom the historical development of the State of Bern from today’s perspective.

The discussion of the state’s repressive actions against Anabaptism suggests a process of coming to terms with the Bernese past. Raising the question of whether “der Bär tatsächlich keine Ohren gehabt [hatte] zu jener Zeit? War er taub gewesen für die Klagen vom Land,” the novel points to the state’s (personified by its heraldic animal) failure to tend to all of its people (98). As part of this Bernese (and, to a greater extent, Swiss) Vergangenheitsbewältigung, the protagonist of the primary fabula seeks to understand why the Täufer’s tragic fate in the seventeenth century has been erased entirely from the state’s collective memory. Anna wonders “warum wusste ich davon nichts … ich bin in Bern zur Schule gegangen und habe nie ein Wort über die vertriebenen Täufer … vernommen” (224).

The state’s unwillingness to acknowledge its wrongdoings in regard to the Anabaptist issue has significantly influenced the contemporary conception of the faith group. The historical Brotherhood is either unknown to the general public or is dismissed as a seditious sect. Some of the common preconceived notions about the faith group are presented by Anna’s friend Petra. Complaining about “die Enge dieser Sekten, ihre Überheblichkeit und Weltanschauung,” Petra voices common prejudices against the Anabaptist movement (156). The public’s lack of knowledge about the Täufer has led to
their stigmatization as dissident sectarians. Anna’s friend simply projects negative characteristics associated with sectarian groups onto the historical Anabaptist movement without any insight into their distinctive theological concepts and practices.

Parallel to the protagonist’s effort to inform and educate her friend about the historical conflict between the state and the persecuted minority, the author aims to draw the public’s attention to the matter of Bernese Anabaptism. With her historical novel on the Anabaptist theme, she contributes to a culture of remembering. Not only does the literary treatment of the movement’s struggle with authorities revive the memory of Anabaptist persecution in Bern; it also provides guidance and inspiration for contemporary initiatives of Wehrlosigkeit. Considering the Täufer’s insistence on Christ’s teaching of peace despite severe persecution by the state, the novel concludes that the Brethren’s non-resistance “die einzig mögliche Verhaltensweise der Zukunft zu sein [scheint]” (229). It thus rehabilitates the marginalized group and promotes its pacifist position.

**D. Conclusion**

Since the early twentieth century, a number of Bernese authors have become interested in the Anabaptist theme. When these regional writers rediscovered the history of the Swiss Brotherhood, they endeavored to capture the particular characteristics of the Bernese fellowship in their fictional literature. Their historical novels focus on the “zweite Blütezeit,” a period of rapid spread and renewed anti-Anabaptist mandates. During this turbulent time in the second half of the seventeenth century, the movement largely shifted to the rural regions of the state where the Täufer found methods of hiding
and evading secular authorities. Their struggle for survival in the state’s hostile political environment and their experience of solidarity with local villagers generated a distinctive group identity among Bernese Brethren that distinguished them from the broader Anabaptist movement. The apparent paradox between the severe persecution of the Täufer, on the one hand, and their religious vitality, on the other hand, as well as their strong emotional ties to the Bernese homeland and its people, lend themselves to fictional treatment.

In their fictional narratives, the regional writers Tavel, Laedrach, and Zimmermann portray the Anabaptist fellowship in the Bernese Oberland with a deep sympathy. The authors faithfully adhere to known biographical and historical facts. They have gained extensive knowledge of the movement’s development in the seventeenth century through their study of the region’s history, especially their reading of Ernst Müller’s Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer, a fundamental work on the Brotherhood’s history in the State of Bern. Although all three of these authors employed Müller’s historical work as an important source for their literary treatment of Bernese Anabaptism, each writer selects a different aspect presented in the historian’s volume and relates it to his/her particular discourse on the concept of the state and the individual.

Tavel fictionalizes an account drawn from Müller’s chapter “Auf die Galeeren!” His literary treatment of Anabaptist persecution, especially the Brethren’s sentence to galley slavery, supports his vision of the “Volksganze,” in which the individual desists from selfish interests and, instead, contributes to the common cause. Laedrach illustrates the conflict between the religious minority and the Bernese state on issues such as the
swearing of the oath and participation in military service. Ending his novel with the protagonist’s realization that the Anabaptist ideal of a Christian kingdom is incompatible with the social reality of the Bernese state, the author voices much respect for the Brethren’s ethical beliefs and simultaneously makes a case for his personal commitment to promoting civil duty. Zimmermann is also concerned with the Anabaptist struggle with secular authorities. Describing the officials’ persecution of Anabaptists based on their refusal to bear arms and defend the state, she links the historical confrontation between secular power and minority religion to contemporary discussions of the concept of a “Polizeistaat,” thereby advocating for a pacifist stance that resembles the early Brethren’s peace witness.

In the seventeenth-century, the Anabaptists’ rejection of the military and the oath of allegiance based on a literal reading of the New Testament led to their nonconformist attitude that the state regarded as political, even anarchistic, and punished accordingly. Against the historical backdrop of the Brethren’s perceived subversive nature, all three fictional texts analysed in this chapter utilize the seventeenth-century Anabaptist history to discuss the issue of civic responsibility. Although the authors’ personal religious views—all three of them were closely affiliated with the Reformed Church—are expressed in a positive evaluation of the Brethren’s Christian values and ethical conduct, their historical novels focus on the political implications of the Anabaptist theology as manifested in their refusal to accept secular power and participate in militant actions.

The Täufer’s rejection of the established church as a way of maintaining the boundary between themselves and the fallen (unethical) world clearly exemplifies the
movement’s theology of two kingdoms. The Bernese Brethren are depicted as a distinct
group of believers whose genuine commitment to imitate Christ distinguishes them from
the state church. The narratives draw an image of the Brotherhood as the ideal religious
community that practices an ethical faith based firmly on Christ’s commandments.
Descriptions of the Täufer’s apostolic simplicity in all three novels contribute to an
idealization of the faith group. The Brethren are characterized by a moral purity and
social ethic that contrasts the immoral conduct prevailing in the institutional church.

Although the Anabaptist notion of discipleship implies separation from the world,
all three novels describe interaction of the Bernese Brotherhood congregants with the
local population. The fictionalized Brethren assume both the identity of the religious
fellowship and of the Bernese mountain folk. Their strong emotional ties to the Oberland
become most pronounced when they are forced to leave their homes in the mountains.
Depicting the Brethren’s yearning to return to their Emmental homes, the regionalist
novels romanticize their simple lives in the mountainous environs. The predominant
punishment described in this regional fiction is the Anabaptists’ separation from their
Oberland homes, whether through forced emigration, galley slavery in the
Mediterranean, or incarceration in Bern’s city prison.

The experience of persecution and banishment is an integral part of the novels’
portrayal of Bernese Anabaptism. The state’s hostility against the faith group becomes a
central element of the Brethren’s life in seventeenth-century Bern. Tavel’s novel pictures
the Täufer as victims of discriminatory politics. The author illustrates the Brethren’s
endurance of pain on the Venetian galleys without fully illuminating the religious
connotation of their persistence. The depiction of their misery simply serves the purpose of calling the protagonist’s attention to his responsibilities as a Bernese citizen.

Laedrach and Zimmermann, on the other hand, describe the persecution and suffering in order to create the image of the Brethren as steadfast believers. In Passion in Bern, the Anabaptist protagonist develops a martyr-mindedness inspired by accounts of sixteenth-century Brethren who were tortured and executed for their faith. Celebrating their memory, she assumes a similar notion of Nachfolge Christi that includes endurance of all pain in order to remain true to the Anabaptist faith. In this novel, the experience of persecution reinforces a sense of separatism that is central to the Anabaptist identity. Similarly, the protagonist in the embedded story of Die Furgge also accepts suffering as an inevitable consequence of the Anabaptist commitment to a separatist theology. The Oberland Brethren are depicted as dedicated believers whose discipleship entails the following of Christ even through persecution.

Discipleship is the essential characteristic of Anabaptist theology portrayed in Laedrach’s and Zimmermann’s novels. The Brethren are marked by their effort to gather a community of faithful disciples who resolve to follow Christ. Bearing witness to the understanding of the gospel of peace brought them into conflict with state authorities. In all three narratives, the Brotherhood is defined by its pacifist orientation. While Tavel creates the image of the good and peaceful Täufer to illustrate the protagonist’s duty to rescue them from unfair punishment, the Brethren’s adherence to Christ’s principle of non-resistance becomes the theological explanation of their political nonconformity in Laedrach’s and Zimmermann’s novels. Their refusal to support the government and
military is described as a consequence of their belief in Christ as the sole sovereign who commands his followers to renounce carnal warfare.

This Anabaptist refusal to participate in military service is perceived as political subversion by the Bernese authorities. Especially in Laedrach’s and Zimmermann’s narratives, both sides of the Anabaptist-state conflict are illustrated. The secular officials regard the Brethren’s pacifist stance as a threat to the social and political order of the state and refute their steadfastness as stubborn persistence. The Täufer, on the other hand, consider the state’s persecution as measures to test their commitment to true discipleship. The contradictory poles of political demonization and religious idealization generate a dialectic in these regional novels that corresponds to the historical conception of the faith group and its ecclesiological principle of church-world dualism. The Bernese Brethren appear as ethical, steadfast, and genuine believers whose peace witness causes an opposition to secular powers. Deriving their political subversion from their pragmatic approach to Scripture, the authors’ re-evaluation of their dissident position promotes an awareness of the seventeenth-century religious minority in twentieth-century literature and society.
Conclusion

Throughout the centuries, German fiction has delineated early modern Anabaptism as a deviation from accepted patterns of church and life. The minority’s image as the “other” is generated by its theology of discipleship with its practical and ethical implications and consequent separation from the established church and society. The group’s deviation from customary clerical and social order has become a means for authors to express their own (non) conformist attitudes. These writers select certain aspects of Anabaptist life and piety that create an image of the Täufer supportive of their own religious and ideological convictions and programmatic aims. In their fictional treatments of the radical reformist movement, they either idealize or demonize the minority based on its separatist theology and peculiar way of life. As social and religious outsiders, the Brethren are characterized by an ambiguity that either causes a rejection in fictional writings or inspires authors to modify and adjust Anabaptist belief and practices to suit their own convictions in order to eliminate such ambiguity.

Early modern fiction idealizes the religious minority for reasons of criticizing society’s moral decline and advocating Christian faith and ethics. Both Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling present early Anabaptism in a highly selective fashion. In their respective novels, they draw a more favorable portrait of the faith group than may have existed in reality, a strategy pursuant to their objective of sketching a utopian society that
exemplifies the ideal state of an ethical community. In order to maintain a positive image of the Täufer, the two authors exclude problematic aspects of Anabaptist history and theology, such as the Münster kingdom and the movement’s theological foundations. They refrain from depicting the Anabaptist ecclesiological concepts to avoid heresy discussions and potential conflict with clerical and secular powers. Their emphasis on social, economic, and ethical principles rather than religious doctrine enabled them to draw a picture of the faith group as a perfect spiritual and social order in contrast to the harsh reality of seventeenth-century society and the enlightened culture of eighteenth-century Europe.

Personal contacts with members of Anabaptist congregations (or favorable reports thereof) serve as inspiration for the authors’ depiction of social and practical aspects of the radical reform movement. Through encounters with Anabaptists (or secondary sources documenting these encounters), Grimmelshausen and Jung-Stilling developed an interest in outward manifestations of the group’s practical Christianity. They avoid critical aspects of Anabaptist theology, thereby eliminating the ambiguity that surrounds the early movement. Rather, their focus on the minority’s simple, quiet, and moral life furnishes the image of an ideal society that supports their objectives of promoting ethical practices and social unity.

Contrasting the literary picture of Anabaptists as an ideal society, historical fiction in the nineteenth century constructs an image of the Brotherhood as a questionable sect. In their fictional works, authors employ the negative picture of the faith group to express their personal positions in debates on contemporary national and confessional issues. In
comparison to earlier narratives, nineteenth-century Anabaptist fiction is marked by historical distance. Drawing information about the religious minority from historical accounts rather than personal encounters, these writers became vulnerable to biased representations of Anabaptism in traditional historiography. The Anabaptist-phobic attitude of sixteenth-century polemicists, paired with the nineteenth-century historians’ interest in establishing a sense of national unity generated a negative perception of the religious minority that can be observed in the ambivalent image of the Täufer in fictional literature of that time.

The nineteenth-century fictional portrayal of Anabaptism as a fanatical fringe of the Reformation, its association with witchcraft, and its alliance with the Münsterite reign of terror contribute to an image of the Täufer as bizarre religionists. They are labelled as religious extremists who are separated socially as well as spatially from the dominant society. Described as social outsiders, the Täufer the nineteenth-century narratives reflect the state’s increasing fears of moral decline, social and religious subversion, and violent upheaval. The Münster heritage plays a significant role in the demonization of the radical reformers. Nineteenth-century authors employ Münster references to generate the fellowship’s ambivalent character. Inspired by historiographical styles and ideological implications underlying historical works of the nineteenth century, the negative representation of Anabaptism supports the authors’ national agenda. They employ the Täufer theme to mask political and religious issues during the time of the Kulturkampf.

The fictionalization of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history for the purpose of promoting the authors’ programmatic aims and ideological objectives continues on in
early twentieth-century German literature. Although representations of the religious minority become increasingly tolerant toward the minority’s “otherness”, authors continue to interpret the historical material to suit their own ends. With the advancement in research pertaining to sixteenth-century Anabaptism and the rediscovery of the Brotherhood’s own literature documenting early developments in Europe, fictional authors became aware of the Brethren’s experience of harsh persecution and their suffering of torture for the sake of remaining true to their distinct faith. Novelists identified the Täufer’s notion of discipleship as the essential element of their religious doctrine. Depicting the Brethren’s faithful acceptance of exclusion, oppression, and violent death for maintaining their radical beliefs, historical narratives idealize the Brotherhood as true disciples to Christ.

Portraying the group’s mission to follow Christ in all his teachings, these fictional texts prompt a discussion of values and virtues. With their literary treatment of the Täufer theme, authors give an ethical evaluation of the Anabaptist religious doctrine and its practical implications. They pursue a didactic and even catechetical purpose in their fictional accounts of the radical reformists. The vivid description of the Brethren’s ordeal as galley slaves, their opposition to retaliation, and their steadfast and forgiving attitude as well as charitable actions shape the social conscience of the reader and provide instruction on ethical Christianity. The literary depictions of the Brethren’s acts of forgiveness and charity in the face of harsh persecution offer a lesson on Christ’s invitation to love one’s enemy and pray for one’s persecutor.
The minority’s adherence to religious and ethical principles and its collective experience of persecution have social implications that are portrayed favorably in the twentieth-century Täufer fiction. The distinctive components of the group’s Scripture-infused social practice generate the image of an ideal community. The authors’ emphasis on aspects of martyrdom and steadfastness contributes to a literary formulation of Christian heroism that relates to their own confessional and national identity. In order to advocate for their personal religio-political views and ideologies, they depict the Brethren’s notion of Nachfolge as part of a larger movement. They either describe the Brethren’s persecution as an integrated part of the history of the Reformed Church, thereby promoting Protestantism as the dominant faith, or they assign the Täufer specifically Germanic attributes, thus linking them to a unified German folk piety. In that regard, they exploit Anabaptist issues such as martyrdom and steadfastness to suit them to their own ideology. In these historical narratives, the Anabaptist characters serve as a foil for the authors’ conception of an ideal folk piety. Twentieth-century novelists present an idealized picture of martyrdom, thus using the religious movement for the strategy of cementing their own identity.

The utilization of the Anabaptist history for national purposes is also noticeable in twentieth-century regional fiction that treats the movement’s developments in seventeenth-century Switzerland. In these regionalist narratives, authors explore the Täufer’s objection to the unity between church and nation in early modern Switzerland. The stories reveal an admiration for the Anabaptist notion of Imitatio Christi as well as an acute awareness of its problematic nature. The group’s ethically-infused understanding
of faith and world-rejecting simplicity are portrayed as a political act that fundamentally challenges standard assumptions about political life in early modern society. In these narratives, a dialectic is at work that draws force from the contradictory poles of radical discipleship and national unity. The contrast between the Täufer’s strict adherence to Christ’s teachings of peace and the state’s national politics generates an ambivalent picture of the faith group, swinging between ideal Christianity and political dissidence.

Viewing the events in seventeenth-century Bern through the eyes of civil authorities and radical believers alike, the regional novels draw a literary picture of the complex situation that relates to contemporary debates on national unity.

In comparison to Keller’s fictionalization of the Swiss Täufer as religious fanatics, the novels treating the fellowship’s conflict with state authorities in the subsequent century portray the Brethren as peaceful and upright people who are regarded as spiritually superior by their neighbors and only experience governmental hostility due to their refusal to bear arms and swear oaths. Both Keller and the twentieth-century Bernese authors address the issue of national identity in their Täufer narrations. Keller and Tavel, for instance, employ diametrically opposed images of the Anabaptists to support similar concepts of a unified nation. In Ursula, the unethical, fanatical behaviour of the Anabaptist fellowship sets off the commitment and strength of the protagonist who represents the Swiss national character. Similarly, the protagonist in Der Frondeur develops a sense of responsibility for and connectedness to the people in his homeland, and his determination to establish a national unity is generated by witnessing the persecution of the Täufer who
appear as faithful and upright people. Both authors utilize the early Anabaptist minority to disguise personal attitudes regarding contemporary issues of nationhood in Switzerland.

The question of national identity also plays an important role in Laedrach’s and Zimmermann’s *Täufer* novels. The Brethren in these twentieth-century narratives distance themselves from society. Their focus on pragmatic ethical concerns deriving from a literalist approach to New Testament Scripture puts them at odds with the government’s endeavor to establish order and unity within the Swiss state. This confrontation between the Swiss citizenship and ecclesiological identity arises particularly around the issue of military service. Laedrach and Zimmermann employ the notion of Anabaptist non-resistance to advocate for their personal opinions on the matter of national identity. While both novels present the seventeenth-century conflict regarding compulsory military service from the perspective of the pacifist *Täufer*, Laedrach in particular incorporates the voice of the secular rule as a counterargument to the group’s refusal to bear arms. Taking the form of a dialectical synthesis, his novel arrives at the conclusion that, although the Swiss Brethren represent an ideal community, society is by no means able to follow their exceptionally ethical way of life and therefore relies on military intervention as an essential means of protecting and unifying the state. As a regionalist author who is committed to the Bernese state, Laedrach allows his protagonist to accept the necessity of an armed state at the end of his novel. Zimmermann’s narrative, on the other hand, compares the Brethren’s historical struggle with conscription laws to the contemporary situation of conscientious objectors. Creating an awareness of the past and present suppression of principles of non-violence for the sake of establishing a national identity,
the author sympathetically portrays the Anabaptist nonconformist attitude as a way of proposing a pacifist stance that transcends citizenship. The literary depiction of the Brotherhood’s peace witness enables both writers to critically assess the role of military force in the formation of the Swiss national identity.

The principle of non-violence becomes a decisive component of the Brethren’s distinct identity in twentieth-century fiction. Comparable to twentieth-century literature treating non-Swiss Anabaptism, the Bernese Brethren are characterized by a non-resistant attitude that is rooted in the group’s affirmation of Christ’s teachings of peace. At the same time, their non-resistance is expressed in form of negations, such as the rejection to bear arms and the refusal to participate in wars. Their image as a minority group is constructed by external as well as group-internal identification. In these fictional texts, an understanding of the Anabaptist identity emerges through a synthesis of society’s perception of the Brotherhood as an oppositional group and the Brethren’s self-identification as faithful disciples. Illustrating the correlation between external and internal identification processes, the twentieth-century novels on Bernese Anabaptism offer a re-evaluation of the Brethren’s dissident position.

The re-examination and rehabilitation of Anabaptism in twentieth-century Swiss historiography has contributed to this revision of the Täufer’s image in fictional writings. In particular, Müller’s pioneering work on the movement’s developments in early modern Bern served as a great impetus to the literary treatment of the minority’s historical conflict with the state. Müller applied contemporary historical methodology and utilized primary sources preserving views directly expressed by Anabaptists, and compared those to early
modern polemics composed by their opponents in order to create a more complex picture of the faith group. In his thorough investigation of the Bernese fellowship, he elucidated the Brethren’s Christological approach to issues such as nationhood and military service. Juxtaposing the Anabaptists’ biblically defenseless position and the state’s concern for social and political order, the work of the Bernese historian set the ground for the dialectic of idealization and condemnation observable in the twentieth-century regional novels.

Recognizing the separatist nature of Anabaptist theology and its practice, twentieth-century authors aim to eliminate misconceptions about the *Täufer* and raise a greater understanding for their history in Switzerland. Yet, their narratives are not free of programmatic aims. Their representations of the minority faith are inspired by discussions of political and national issues in present-day Switzerland. Similar to earlier authors treating the Anabaptist history, the Swiss novelists choose the Bernese Brotherhood as a means to define their own national identity. When considering the corpus of Anabaptist novels presented in this dissertation, the utilization of the minority’s history for political and confessional aims becomes apparent. Authors of different time periods focused on certain aspects of Anabaptist life and theology. And while their representations of the faith group vary from a demonization to an idealization, they nonetheless follow a similar path of recruiting the historical minority for confessional, national, and ideological objectives.
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