

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE?
THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN THEODOR STORM'S CONCEPT OF LOVE

BY

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Abstract

Despite the wealth of literature written about Theodor Storm's life and works, a theme central to many of his novellas has not been thoroughly explored. Much of Storm's literature is built around love relationships. The author's unique concept of love and his somewhat irrational adherence to it in his personal life make the reader's understanding of this ideal especially important for the interpretation of his works. In this analysis, Storm's concept of love is explored and special consideration is given to the pivotal role that communication plays within it. Storm's rejection of religion and consequential dedication to the precepts of secular humanism and love are first examined with respect to his private life. Attention is then turned to Storm's novellas. The love relationships in *Immensee*, *Veronica*, *Viola tricolor*, *Schweigen* and *Der Schimmelreiter* are addressed specifically. Most importantly, the communication within them is proven to be crucial to the outcomes of these novellas. The success of intimate communication hinges upon the central characters' acceptance of relatively modern gender roles for their time. This analysis illustrates the importance of the author's modern concept of communication and thereby challenges the popular notion that Theodor Storm is merely a *Heimatsdichter*.

All You Need is Love?

The Role of Communication in Theodor Storm's Concept of Love

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1. Introduction

The *Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* is one of the largest literary societies in Germany. It follows then that Storm is a well-known and thoroughly-researched author. He enjoyed popularity during his lifetime and selected works continue to be part of the core curriculum for high school and university students in German-speaking countries. Storm research has gone through a number of trends, and in the 1980s a “stimulating plurality of approaches” arose, making it difficult for anyone to write a definitive study of Storm (Jackson xi). His works, in fact, seem to lend themselves to varying interpretations. This should not be seen as a problem, but rather as an essential part of Storm himself.

Theodor Storm’s religious views have been a topic of scholarly interest for decades. His religious views were very modern for his time, yet he was criticized both during his lifetime and posthumously for his so-called “provincialism.” Similar to Feuerbach, Storm chose to deem love the focus of his life, instead of God and the beliefs outlined by the church. While a number of researchers, including Baßler, Burns and Jackson, have found this to be true, no one has yet completed this line of thought and used Storm’s concept of love as the key to the outcomes of his novellas. This study will first expand upon the existing research on Storm’s humanism and his *Ersatzreligion*, love. Using these concepts as support, the particular focus of this analysis will be on personal agency in the love relationship, manifested through Storm’s emphasis on seamless communication as love’s only chance for survival. Other researchers have acknowledged that communication was important to Storm in his own marriages, yet no one has discussed its weighty role in Storm’s portrayals of love. In her 1963 dissertation, Brech focused on Storm’s use of the act of *Schweigen*, one aspect of communication, and its effect on both the mood and the plot in his novellas. Brech, however, failed to draw a conclusion from her analysis of the uses

of *Schweigen* and did not connect her findings to the greater body of Storm research. The present study fills this research gap by confirming that communication was a central value in Storm's life, which he then carried over to his writing.

Communication and the love relationship will be explored in the novellas *Immensee*, *Veronica*, *Viola tricolor*, *Schweigen* and *Der Schimmelreiter*. These works were chosen for a number of reasons. First, they cover Storm's entire career as a writer, representing his specific concerns in the years 1849, 1861, 1874, 1883 and 1888 respectively. By examining novellas from such a large span of time, it will be shown that communication in the love relationship was an ever-present concern for Storm. Secondly, this selection of novellas includes both exceedingly popular and much lesser known works. The lesser known works are more forward about the need for communication, while *Immensee* and *Der Schimmelreiter* contain layered and veiled references to this aspect of the love relationship. Lastly, the love relationships in these five novellas represent both failed and successful attempts at communication. Due to all of these factors, this particular array of novellas will provide a strong foundation for examining the importance of this topic in Storm's works.

This study will first examine the crisis of meaning in the nineteenth century in order to provide a background for Storm's need for an *Ersatzreligion*. It will then describe Storm's response to this crisis and the troubles he later had in fulfilling and believing in his own ideals. In the third section of the analysis, Storm's message regarding the importance of communication in the love relationship will be shown to be reflected in both the form and the content of his novellas.

2. The Crisis of Meaning in the 19th Century

2.1 The Social Climate

Since the late eighteenth century, the life of the individual had begun to gain importance. The traditional sources of social organization, such as the church and inherited social class, therefore, gradually began to lose their significance. The individual now had to earn his place in society through education and personal achievements. As Nipperdey succinctly concludes about the nineteenth century: “der Mensch stellt sich auf sich selbst” (265). However, this was not a purely positive development; it caused considerable social upheaval. Institutions such as the church had offered security, the comfort of tradition, and clear social norms. With more freedom came increased vulnerability and confusion. In this period, the individual “geriet so in eine gewisse Isolierung, die oft als Entwurzelung, als Entfremdung, und konkreter gerade anfangs als Generationsbruch beschrieben worden ist” (266). In the nineteenth century, developments in the natural sciences, including the theories of Darwin along with the religious critique of Feuerbach and Schopenhauer all distanced people from religion even further. What is the meaning of life if the church’s answers no longer satisfy? When the eyes are no longer turned to heaven, meaning has to be found on earth. That was no easy task, as the shift in values exposed the individual to other forces: nature, time, society, coincidence and fate (Dimitropoulou 21). The crisis of meaning in the nineteenth century led people to turn their attention to earthly reality, which then supported the development of realism and materialism.

Focusing on the world around them, many individuals in the 19th century made worldly values, such as work, family, politics and education or art, the center of their lives. The middle class family culture was changing dramatically at this time. Family came to be separated from business, and therefore, from production and work. The men, and sometimes the women, now

pursued status and income individually, outside of the home. The world of the family became in turn a private refuge from the outside world and “Geselligkeit und Freundschaft werden in die Familien gezogen“ (Nipperdey 118). Instead of being viewed as laborers, children often came to be the hope of the family, the carriers of the family’s immortality. With this, the concept of marriage was changing, as well. Personal love started to play a larger role in the choice of a spouse. However, it is important to note that complete openness and communication within the marriage was not yet the norm. Storm criticized inactive and uncommunicative spouses, saying: “Wer da glaubt, nach der Liebeserklärung sich einer untätigen Seligkeit überlassen zu können, der weiß noch nichts von der Liebe und seine geträumte Seligkeit wird bald ihr Ende erreichen. Sieh Dir der Reihe nach die Ehen an...” (*Briefe an seine Braut*, 236). According to Storm, these marriages left something to be desired, but the fact that marriages were being based on love was still a new development. The quest for meaning in life could now be fulfilled by the family, as well as by the work to support its members. While these were the most common new values in the private sphere in the 19th century, some people turned their attention to politics or education and art. Whatever the new value, it is important to notice: “Diesseitigkeit wird das fundamentale Element moderner Lebenspraxis, der Glaube an den Menschen, der sich selbst und seine Welt gestaltet, darin das Unbedingte den Sinn hat“ (Nipperdey 449).

2.2 Storm’s Personal Outlook

Theodor Storm was much more in touch with the prevailing attitudes of his time than most of German literary history acknowledges. As Laage states, he was “ein Mann mit Gespür für die latenten Gefahren der Epoche,” and his writing was often very critical of society (*Biographie*, 122). For example, Storm, like a number of his nineteenth-century contemporaries,

found that Christianity did not suit his view of the world. This seems to have been influenced by the indifference to religion in his social environment as a child, “das strenge, auch rationalistisch-nüchterne Werteempfinden der Familie, in dessen Zentrum das Gefühl der Selbstverantwortlichkeit stand” (Fasold 3). Storm’s parents were somewhat absent in his life, but it was clear to him what his parents valued. He was given much freedom and little regimentation when it came to school and religion (4). Storm also wrote about the local woman whom he referred to as his “Ersatzmutter”, Lena Wies, displaying skepticism about the church when he was a child (7). It should not be surprising then that, as a young man, Storm did not care for the dogma and the authority of the church. Particularly, he felt that his inner freedom was threatened by the claim that the church laid to what he saw as very private experiences, such as marriages and funerals (Baßler 47). Storm shunned anything that he saw as a profanation of his own inner feelings. If the church did not value what he did, then its actions were to him profane. Storm did not like being told what to believe, especially about any possible afterlife. Without the guiding hand of the church, he had to create his own higher meaning in life and find some type of permanence (Dimitropoulou 65). Storm’s upbringing, or lack thereof in certain respects, gave him a strong sense of individuality and allowed him to distance himself from the church. However, this individuality, as mentioned in the previous section, also breeds uncertainty and fear. When Storm’s need for meaning in his life went unfulfilled, he was often plagued by depressive feelings: “sie wurden vornehmlich verursacht von dem Gefühl der Vergänglichkeit” (Laage, *Biographie* 12). Storm’s fears were those of loneliness and uncertainty which he often expressed to his friends and family in his letters. Fasold even goes so far as to call Storm’s “Verlassensängste in Einheit mit heftigen Zuwendungs- und Spiegelungsbedürfnissen, ein Schwanken zwischen Größenphantasien und Nichtigkeitsempfinden, Regressionsneigungen, etc”

symptoms of a narcissistic personality disorder (6). Such narcissism, however, is a frequent trait of artists and poets and was perhaps only exacerbated by the social climate of the time.

In keeping with his contemporaries, Storm came up with a secular solution to ease his fears. He substituted his own tenets of secular humanism for the ideas of the Christian church and formal religion (Burns 10). Secular humanism is also a central Feuerbachian premise, although no direct link has been found between Storm and Feuerbach. In this view, man is the highest being. God is merely a projection of the best human qualities of which mankind can conceive: “In Gott etwa denkt der Mensch sich selbst ohne alle Fehler und Beschränkungen” (Baßler 45). It follows then that Storm had an optimistic view of mankind. He believed in people, even when they behaved badly:

Selbst wenn es sich um einen ‚gefürchteten und viel bestrafte[n] Dieb‘ handelte, bemerkte Storm den ‚Menschen‘ in dem Angeklagten: ‚den‘, so meinte er seiner Frau gegenüber (10./11.10.63) - , haben die Verhältnisse auf diesen Platz gebracht. Etwas Sonnenschein zur rechten Zeit hätte vielleicht die sehr edle Menschenpflanze zur Erscheinung gebracht‘. (Laage, *Biographie* 184)

As shown in the above quotation, Storm believed societal forces were often to blame for corrupting people. However, he was also a proponent of people taking control of and responsibility for their own lives. After his daughter Lucie’s engagement to a young Catholic man was broken off, Storm wrote to him and implied that perhaps it would not have worked out well anyway. He was the type of man who would have tried to force Catholicism onto his daughter, and that would not have fit well with the Storm family’s conviction that, “‘freies selbstverantwortliches Denken als erste selbstverständliche Lebensbedingung gilt’” (225). Freedom from authority and dogma was very important for Storm. This seems to be the only way

he saw that humans could develop according to their true nature, which, as shown earlier, he believed to be good. This mindset not only turned Storm against organized religion, but it also put him at odds with the aristocracy. This came to light when Storm was exposed to Prussian society. On March 27, 1853, Storm wrote to Fontane:

Es ist, meine ich, das, daß auch in den gebildeten Kreisen man den Schwerpunkt nicht in die Persönlichkeit, sondern in Rang, Titel, Orden und dergleichen Nipps legt...Es scheint mir *im Ganzen* die ‚goldene Rücksichtslosigkeit‘ zu fehlen, die allein den Menschen innerlich frei macht und die nach meiner Ansicht das letzte und höchste Resultat jeder Bildung sein muss. (*Storm-Fontane* 26)

Storm's critique of the aristocracy in his novella *Im Schloss* also cuts straight to the foundation of the entire concept of class. The character Arnold tells Anna that she has been brought up with the lie that certain people are worth more than others (Storm, *Im Schloss* 514). Storm's response to the crisis of meaning was a staunch secular humanism, which led him to despise the institutions of religion and the aristocracy.

As Storm put so much importance in humanitarianism, he cherished his friends and family all the more. Evidence for this can be seen in his numerous lively correspondences. Storm put copious amounts of care into his letters. Each friend and family member received his full attention:

Ein unverwechselbares Merkmal seiner Briefe ist der Gesprächscharakter. Seine Briefe sind – so stilistisch ausgefeilt manche Partien (z.B. im Storm-Keller-Briefwechsel) auch sein mögen – im allgemeinen Ausdruck unmittelbaren persönlichen Erlebens, spontaner Gefühlsregungen und Gedankengänge. Sie sprechen den Adressanten direkt an und sind – jeder einzelne Brief für sich – ein

buntes Kaleidoskop von persönlichen Mitteilungen, gedanklichen Reflexionen und literarischen Betrachtungen. (Laage, *Biographie* 82)

Over one thousand letters from Storm to his children have been accounted for. The sheer girth of letters shows that communication with family and friends was an important part of Storm's everyday life. Considering Storm's fear of loneliness and the transitory nature of the world, communication must have served as a way for him to feel close to others and to create some form of permanence.

While Storm saw his relationships with family and friends as his safe haven from the world, he viewed his spouse as the completion of himself. His marriage was the single most important element of his life. The love between husband and wife was, for Storm, the pinnacle of all human relationships and, therefore, the key to true human happiness (Jackson 38). Marriage took on the function of making each unfinished individual whole. The idea that a person can only become whole in marriage is also found in Feuerbach's writing (Baßler 44-5). It will be shown in section 2.4 of this analysis that communication emerges as the uniting force between two individuals. Only if individuals communicate within their marriage can it fulfill its function of making a whole of two halves. If one partner does not communicate about every aspect of his or her life, "so entsteht ein Bereich, von dem der andere ausgeschlossen ist. Das gemeinsame Leben endet; jeder steht wieder für sich; Sinn und Bedeutung der Ehe gehen verloren" (Brecht 90). This elevates communication to *the* most important element of the marriage. Storm's concept of marriage was his best defense against feelings of loneliness and the transitory nature of the world.

With so much meaning invested in the love relationship, Storm wanted to draw the line between his own marriage and what society commonly thought of as marriage. His love

relationship endowed his life with higher meaning and did not reflect the materialism that society prescribed him:

Die ‚Liebe‘ sollte ihn selbst und seine Braut – wie er immer wieder betonte – bewahren vor der ‚gewöhnlichen Oberflächlichkeit‘ (I 31), vor dem ‚Schmutz der Geschäfte‘ und vor einem ‚philisterhaften‘ Leben, wie es die Eltern ‚eigentlich‘ führten (I 33). Die Liebe sollte ihm helfen, sein Dasein ‚geistig zu erheben‘ (I 61), ihn aus dem ‚lockeren‘ Leben (s.o.), das er bisher geführt hatte, herauszuholen.
(Laage, *Liebesqualen* 16)

Storm criticized the marriages he saw around him. He said most of them did not seem like they would even be worth entering into because they had no deeper emotional element (41). This conviction led Storm to protect his family and marriage passionately from the meddling of the state and the church. He requested special permission and paid a fee to have both of his weddings at home and resisted making events such as births, baptisms and funerals public events (Schuster, *Constanze* 103). Storm invested a good deal of energy into making sure that his marriage did not become merely another social convention.

In order for Storm’s wife Constanze to be his true, equal partner, she had to be educated. Most bourgeoisie women at this time waited until they were twenty-five to marry, leaving themselves a long period of time in which they had nothing to which they could direct their attention (Frevort 117). The *Private Töcherschule* in Husum was first founded in 1866 (Laage, *Liebesqualen* 46). By this time, Constanze was already a middle-aged woman. Storm, therefore, took Constanze’s education into his own hands. Before they married, he asked her father to allow her four to five hours a day for study and requested that Constanze read generous amounts of Goethe (Laage, *Biographie* 21, Jackson 40). The couple was supposed to push each other to

develop that which is beautiful and good inside one another. Storm clearly expressed his intentions for the marriage in his letters to Constanze: “‘Genießen’ dürfe nicht das höchste Ziel der Ehe sein, sondern der ‘Fortschritt in unserer innern Ausbildung’ (II 413 f.)” (Laage, *Liebesqualen* 42). Self-improvement in general was important to Storm and he was critical not only of Constanze, but also of himself. He often admitted his personality flaws and his mistakes and asked Constanze for her forgiveness (Schuster, *Constanze* 30). The couple’s private relationship was to be characterized by complete openness, mutual trust and support. To begin their marriage together, Storm worked energetically to make Constanze his equal partner. He believed that if they could grow together emotionally and support one another in becoming their best selves, then they could fulfill what he saw as the one true human need.

The importance of marriage for Storm can be summed up in one of his unfinished poems. Here he rejects the portrayal of Jesus as a human being, and with that, the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice for humanity. He refers to Jesus as only half of a person because he did not take part in “unseres Lebens Kern”, having a wife and child. Storm questions whether Jesus could have gone through with his sacrifice if he had had a wife and child. At the end of the poem, Storm is not comforted or protected by Jesus, but by the love in his marriage.

‘An deines Kreuzes Stamm o Jesu Christ
 Hab ich mein sorgenschweres Haupt gelehnt;
 Doch Trost und Kraft kam nicht von dir herab;

 Du hattest weder Weib noch Kind, du warst
 Ein halber Mensch nur; unseres Lebens Kern
 Hast du nur halb erprobt; was uns die Welt,

With such high expectations, Storm was headed for disappointment. Baßler describes Storm's problem perfectly: "Daß Storm zwischen metaphysischem und realem Anspruch nicht trennt, führt dazu, daß ihm jedes Alltagsproblem, soweit es seine Liebe zu Constanze betrifft, zum existentiellen Grundsatzproblem wird" (49). Storm travelled quite a bit and when Constanze did not write back to him right away or he did not think she put enough time and care into her letters, he reacted strongly. He constantly reminded his wife that she was the sole source of his happiness (Laage, *Liebesqualen* 43). Constanze is said to have dealt quite well with Theodor, remaining ever patient while also making him aware of his limits. Storm's emotional and physical demands, however, started to take their toll on his wife's health. Constanze had seven children and just as many miscarriages and was therefore "dogged by gynecological disorders" (Jackson 119). She died from a fever in 1865 after giving birth to Gertrud. This affected Storm deeply. However, after seeing his old flame Doris Jensen, he decided to remarry less than a year after Constanze's death. When his decision was met by great disapproval from his family, he was plunged into guilt and disillusionment. He had, after all, preached eternal monogamous love. Fueled by his feelings of guilt, "his cult of Constanze's memory assumed pathological proportions" (151). These same issues come to light in Storm's novella *Viola tricolor*, examined in section 2.4.3 of this analysis. Storm's personal solution to the crisis of meaning, his extreme devotion to his concept of the ideal relationship, created very real problems.

To make matters worse, the three Storm boys started to create problems for themselves and the family. Their behavior was most likely exacerbated by Constanze's death and Theodor's reaction to it: "die Bewältigung und Sinngebung seiner Existenz macht [Storm] nunmehr ausschließlich von seinen Kindern abhängig, zumal ihn seine zweite Ehe zumindest in den ersten Jahren nicht ausfüllt" (Dimitropoulou 74). He shared all of his problems and fears with his sons,

as well as plaguing them with his cult of Constanze. Hans had been a very difficult teenager and proceeded to become an alcoholic during his time at the university. Ernst spent time in the student prison for his riotous behavior and incurred large debts because of his drinking. Karl, the youngest of the three, contracted syphilis (Jackson 167-71). The family was already strapped for money and the boys' behavior threatened their sisters' prospects for marriage. Along with the sons' problems, the Storms' financial situation worsened throughout the 1870s. It was then that Storm began to question his humanistic beliefs (Dimitropoulou 76). He started to question the effects of parents' faults on their children and the role that heredity plays in human life. This is very evident in Storm's novella *Schweigen* from 1883, which will be discussed in section 2.4.4 of this study. As can be assessed from the abrupt ending to *Schweigen*, Storm stubbornly refused to give up his belief that people can change, regardless of the conflicting evidence he witnessed in his own life. Despite the problems that Storm encountered in the realization of his ideals, he clung to his basic belief that relationships are the source of happiness and a loving marriage is the pinnacle of all relationships.

2.3 The Harmony of Form and Message in Storm's Novellas

While some writers compose stories purely with their own creative thoughts, Storm looked for material in the world around him. He was dependent on outside stimuli to fuel his production. Sometimes he was inspired by stories he heard through his profession as a lawyer. Oftentimes, being the compulsive communicator that he was, he also obtained ideas for his novellas through his correspondences with friends, family and acquaintances (Laage, *Biographie* 67). When Storm identified material for a novella, he then took this skeleton of a story and fleshed it out to address the issues that were most significant to him. Some critics, like Fontane

in his letter on October 28, 1884, have wrongly accused Storm of merely creating “a series of genre-pictures but did not recognize any organizing center in a work” (Jackson 230). The central message of each novella, however, was very important to Storm. Burns asserts that “the issues which lie at the heart of his tragic Novellen are but variations and expansions of the same ones with which he was intensely concerned in his private world” (Burns 41). Storm wrestled with many of the same issues throughout his life and they often appear in his novellas, each time dressed with different details.

Like many authors during the period of Poetic Realism, Storm used literature as a medium to create and preserve meaning in life, both for himself and his public. As a member of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Storm also believed in the human capacity to learn. Therefore, this study aims to show that Storm saw the act of communication, the exchange between teacher and learner, as *the* hope for mankind. Storm often saw himself as the teacher, both in everyday life, which his wives and children knew all too well, and through his writing. As discussed in previous sections, Storm did not agree with many of the social conventions of his time. He wanted to communicate to his readership that all humans have the same basic needs, but the fulfillment of these needs is often hindered by societal forces and, as Storm discovered later, destructive human qualities. Communication with his public on this topic was so important to Storm that he developed a distinct narrative style in order to reach as many people as possible. He transferred his insights concerning basic human needs into images. This, he believed, would appeal to two capacities that almost all humans have: “imagination and *Gemüt*” (Jackson 47). By using imagery, Storm aimed not just to arouse feeling, but to arouse feelings attached to the convictions at the center of his novellas. He believed that by using images and thereby feelings, he would be cementing the convictions he wrote about into his readers’ moral constitutions (74).

In this way, he hoped to communicate his ideas to all people, no matter their class or education. Storm put much effort into cultivating this style. Even in his depression after his wife's death and in the fear of the ruination his sons threatened to bring upon the family, Storm continued his efforts to communicate with all who would listen. This shows that he truly did feel it was his duty as a writer to help others recognize the social pressures and innate human qualities that fuel destructive behavior.

Imagery, however, was not the only technique that Storm applied in his novellas. Poetic Realism, true to its name, strives to create "eine Synthese zwischen Wirklichkeitsbezug und Verklärungstendenz" (Dimitropoulou 26). Reality had to be made into poetry, often through the use of certain literary techniques. In *Immensee* and *Der Schimmelreiter*, for example, Storm creates narrative frames for both of the stories. Each begins with someone remembering what happened in the past. While Storm used imagery as a medium, the narrative framework serves as "both medium and message" (Jackson 246). In *Der Schimmelreiter*, there are three narrators. The first narrator is someone who remembers reading a story in a magazine as a boy. The narrator of the story in the magazine was traveling when he saw a ghostly figure on the dike as a storm was blowing in. He then stopped at a pub for shelter where the local schoolmaster, functioning as the third narrator, tells him the story of Hauke Haien. In *Immensee*, the narrative framework shows Reinhardt remembering his past with Elisabeth. It is unclear, however, whether he is then the narrator of the story-within-the-story or whether there is an omniscient narrator. By applying this technique of narrative frames, Storm creates distance and adds a degree of subjectivity. As many of Storm's narrators are remembering happenings in the past, the reader cannot know if the narrator's memory is reliable. Storm's novellas also are strewn with hints at emotions and plot connections; there is much to which is only alluded. Again, the reader cannot know for certain

what is true. Storm himself described his intentions, saying that everything should appear “lebendig und doch wie aus dem Nebel herausgetuscht” (Laage, *Biographie* 172). This technique allows Storm’s novellas to be interpreted in different ways. There is a superficial story and a more subtle, deeper meaning. An unassuming housewife reading *Immensee* in the late nineteenth century might only focus on Elisabeth’s mother’s meddling in her love life because that is a theme with which she can identify. This might then make her blind to Storm’s hints at Reinhardt’s failures. Storm’s technique of using narrative frameworks, unreliable narrators and allusive story-telling allowed him to turn the real world into a poetic one.

The question then becomes: if Storm was so intent on cementing the convictions at the heart of his novellas into people’s minds, why would he allow so much room for interpretation? Freedom of interpretation must have been a conviction in itself. Nipperdey notes that because freedom was restricted during this period in Germany, authors used “die Form des Kunstwerks (und die distanzierenden Kunst-Haltungen des Humors und der Erinnerung)... [um] den Freiheitsraum angesichts aller Einschränkungen aufrecht[zuerhalten]” (587). When a current issue is placed into a historical setting in a novel, it serves to soften the blow of the criticism. Storm’s narrative framework and subjectivity gave him freedom to address issues that were important to him without offending conservative tastes. Without their approval, Storm could not have fed his large family. By endowing himself, the author, with more freedom, Storm also gives his readers more autonomy in what they take from the story. People have an interpretive filter through which outside stimuli pass, and that this bestows life with a degree of uncertainty. Storm saw this uncertainty as part of the human condition, and in his work one perceives “eine Betonung des Menschlichen, als der letzten Instanz für jedes Verständnis des wirklichen Lebens, und zum Menschlichen gehört die Toleranz gegenüber anderen Menschen” (Cowen 178).

Uncertainty can, however, be both negative and positive. Storm chose to emphasize the positive. The subjectivity that Storm creates gives readers freedom to doubt, and as a result, also freedom to hope. Storm often expressed the need for this positive side of uncertainty, hope, in his letters to others. For example, in a letter to Hermione von Preuschen, Storm wrote: “Aber das Glück ist auch zum Menschenleben durchaus nicht nötig, nur die treue Schwester desselben, die Hoffnung, können wir nicht entbehren. Im Leben nicht und nicht in der Kunst” (Burns 63). In the nineteenth century, life could no longer be perceived as neat and tidy; uncertainty abounded. Theodor Storm’s literary techniques, his narrative frameworks, “die Auslassungen, Andeutungen, das lückenhafte Wissen um Begebenheiten, das Fehlen eines endgültigen Urteils über die Handlungen seiner Novellenfiguren mag als eine Haltung des Dichters gedeutet werden, sich nicht festlegen zu wollen bzw. zu können” (Dimitropoulou 16). Storm’s novellas are open to interpretation because he viewed life as being just so.

2.4 Communication’s Key Role in the Love Relationship

In order to discuss communication in the novellas of Theodor Storm, a definition of the concept as it applies to this analysis must first be established. Frank E.X. Dance, who has served as a professor of Communication Studies, author, and editor of such scholarly journals as the *Journal of Communication* and *Communication Education*, examined ninety-five different definitions of communication in order to write his article “The ‘Concept’ of Communication.” Despite his dissatisfaction with any of the individual descriptions as a complete definition of the concept, he identifies fifteen conceptual components of communication common to the ninety-five definitions. Some of the fifteen components seem to be closely related, including: interchange, interaction, transmission and binding (204-7). It follows then that human

communication must involve the passing of information or emotion between two parties. The second concept that is particularly applicable to this analysis is communication as the “reduction of uncertainty” (205). For Storm, love relationships were supposed to provide just that. It is therefore logical that communication proves to be one of the most important factors in his depictions of love relationships. The third component of communication that applies to this analysis is communication as the exertion of power (208). One can identify a character’s perceived authority when analyzing who chooses to communicate or not communicate. When a character chooses not to communicate in the novellas selected here, this often signals a dangerous inequality in the relationship which will have to be overcome if it is to be successful.

However, there is still another idea to consider when analyzing communication. It does not occur within a void; “communication itself occurs within the constraints of historical precedent” (Stephen 192). Active communication is subconsciously guided by a person’s awareness of what is possible within the social context. This may or may not match a person’s intentions. Timothy Stephen maintains that in a successful intimate relationship a joint world view is born, which serves as a strong bond for the couple (194). The success or the existence of such a bond depends on the overarching cultural conditions of the time, namely, the degree of social diversification and the quality of domestic sex roles. The more social diversification that exists within a society, the fewer the possibilities for successful relationships there are. In a diversified society, there are unlimited types of world views. When people find a mate who has a similar world view, this can act as a strong bonding agent because there are simply not many who have the same beliefs. While it is clear that the social diversification within Storm’s world was low, the quality of domestic sex roles was something that Storm addressed directly. As discussed in section 2.2 of this analysis, Storm made great efforts to educate Constanze. Society

did not support equal education for women and men, but Storm intended to bring their intellectual lives to a similar level. In line with Stephen's concept, this would strengthen the couple's joint world view. In the following literary analyses, the characters' perceptions of one another's gender roles are often responsible for the way in which they communicate with one another. This recalls Dance's statement that communication can serve as a way of exerting power. With the help of Dance's three components of communication and Stephen's contextualization of communication, the importance of this concept for the outcomes of Storm's novellas can be established.

2.4.1 Stunted Communication in *Immensee*

Immensee was first published in December 1849 and later reworked for the 1851 publication of *Sommergeschichten und Lieder*. Although it was Storm's breakthrough novella, his idea of the ideal marriage was already present, quietly shaping the outcome for Reinhardt and Elisabeth. Four common interpretations of the work are discussed in Lohmeier's "Wirkung und Würdigung" of *Immensee* in Storm's collected works. If, however, one looks at the story with Storm's ideal marriage in mind, these four interpretations seem to miss one of Reinhardt's key characteristics: he consistently chooses his scholarly endeavors over love. For Storm, this means that Reinhardt's fate is sealed from the very beginning.

Immensee is one of Storm's most popular novellas. Due to its popularity, many researchers have analyzed it. Storm's real intentions, however, have proven difficult to pin down. Each generation seems to have its own preferences. Among the four well-known interpretations, the first interpretation Lohmeier mentions is what is described by Fritz Böttger as "die Unterordnung des 'wohlerzogenen' Kindes unter die Entscheidung der Eltern und der daraus

folgende Verzicht, das Liebesideal durchzusetzen” (Lohmeier, “Immensee” 1022). This explanation is based on a specific episode in the story, as Elisabeth runs out of the room when Reinhardt brings up a song called “Meine Mutter hat’s gewollt” (Storm, *Immensee* 321-22). Yet does this indicate a deciding role for Elisabeth’s mother? To determine this, one must examine Elisabeth’s actions before she married Erich. First, she defends Reinhardt when her mother said that he had changed for the worse while away at school (313). Secondly, Elisabeth waits to hear from Reinhardt for two more years after his visit home. He had, after all, told her that he would tell her his big secret when he returned after two years (313). Finally, she also rejects Erich’s marriage proposal twice before giving in after the two years have passed (314). Left to play defense against her mother and Erich, Elisabeth does the best that she can in her situation. At most, Elisabeth’s fault lies in her lack of courage to break out of her given social role: “als Mädchen hat sie ja das Recht, und sogar die Pflicht, sich zurückzuhalten” (Brecht 16). Brecht reminds us that Reinhardt does accuse her of being uncourageous as a child (Storm, *Immensee* 298). However, if Elisabeth’s mother had been in complete control, then she would not have waited for two years for Reinhardt. She is also never mentioned as having any impact on Reinhardt’s thoughts or actions. This makes it apparent that Elisabeth’s mother has a much smaller role in the outcome of the story than some may think.

Another interpretation, which was most common in the time shortly after the story was published, is that Storm is trying to depict the couple as having a mysteriously irreversible fate. This type of approach, however, does not seem to fit with Storm’s theory about the duty of literature discussed in section 2.3. Stuckert, for example, remains too vague in his interpretation:

Warum schweigt Reinhart, obwohl er um Erichs Werbung weiß, die sein Glück bedroht, warum widersteht Elisabeth nicht und kämpft um ihre Liebe? Das alles

läßt sich nicht einfach aus der Weichheit oder Schwäche Reinharts und aus der Abhängigkeit der gehorsamen Bürgerstochter von dem Willen ihrer Mutter begründen. Dieses ‚Schicksal‘, als ein einmaliges und unabwendbares, gehört schon zu den Voraussetzungen des Werkes, und alle scharfe psychologische Motivation würde ohnehin dem Stilcharakter dieser Novelle widersprechen.

(Lohmeier, “Immensee” 1023)

This “fate” that Stuckert mentions is a common Biedermeier conception of the powers that be, a sort of glorified resignation. It seems, however, that if Reinhardt had been resigned, then he would not have gone to Immensee and he would not have wanted to find strawberries with Elisabeth even though they weren’t in season (Storm, *Immensee* 324). The idea of causality is a defining characteristic of Poetic Realism. No matter how Storm disguises the reasons, they are still present. As discussed in section 2.3 of this analysis, Storm was very much concerned with the message at the center of his novellas. In light of this, Stuckert’s position must be rejected. Another more recent interpretation attributes Reinhardt’s behavior to Storm’s actual experience with Bertha von Buchan. M.A. MacHaffie and J.M. Richie assume that for decency’s sake, Storm had to mask his experience of Bertha’s rejection “bis zur völligen Unkenntlichkeit” (Lohmeier, “Immensee” 1024). While an author’s life experiences often affect his work, there is no proof that the story was composed for purely cathartic reasons.

None of the above answers prove very satisfying on their own. Lohmeier, therefore, adds his own interpretation. He maintains that “das ‘verlockend Rauschhafte’ und das ‘Bürgerlich-Gehemmte’ prägen die Novelle denn auch viel deutlicher als die Liebe zu einem kleinen Mädchen” (1024). This then leads him to see another common nineteenth-century theme at work: the split between “reinen Seelenbund und sündige Sexualität” (1024). The scenes that

represent sinful sexuality are Reinhardt's interactions with the attractive gypsy girl, especially in the original version, and the scene with the water lily. While both the girl and the water lily are superficially attractive, there is something underneath that is threatening for Reinhardt and represents inappropriate sexuality. Storm is said to have felt this split himself during his time at university in Kiel. He realizes that the separation of the middle-class men from the women of their own class typically led to the men seeking sexual satisfaction from girls from the lower-class (Jackson 31). After this type of university experience, a man might have a mental disconnect between love from the heart for the girl left back home and his sexuality. It is then plausible that Reinhardt was also affected in this way. There is, however, only one instance when Reinhardt realizes the love he has for Elisabeth. After the strawberry hunt, right before he leaves for university, it becomes clear for Reinhardt: "so war sie nicht allein sein Schützling; sie war ihm auch der Ausdruck für alles Liebliche und Wunderbare seines aufgehenden Lebens" (Storm, *Immensee* 304). One is left to wonder whether one realization is enough love to qualify as a union of souls.

It seems that something is still lacking in these interpretations. How does one explain Reinhardt's behavior as a child? Even then, it seems that his future is already certain. Looking back at Lohmeier's assessment, one realizes that true love is alarmingly absent in this "love story." Both parties are fond of one another and have positive memories of their childhood together, but Reinhardt never truly commits himself to Elisabeth. Storm wrote about the two kinds of students he observed at university: "the drinking, dueling fraternity students with their girlfriends, and those immersed in their studies and oblivious to all else" (Jackson 31). Reinhardt's character must then be the latter, and it seems that *Immensee* is Storm's attempt to show how a young man can come to lead such an existence. In Reinhardt and Erich, the reader is

shown two very different men, which harkens back to Storm's classification of university students: Erich is "der geschäftige, solide Bürger" who gets the girl, Reinhardt is "der stille, verhinderte Poet" (Brecht 19). The following analysis will show that because of Reinhardt's actions, or rather inaction, no other fate but failure in love can be foreseen. From the beginning of the story, Reinhardt makes the critical mistake of putting his interests and scholarly endeavors before his relationship with Elisabeth. This creates too much distance between him and Elisabeth for them to marry.

Even as a child, Reinhardt has an intellectual or scholarly approach to life. He tells Elisabeth stories that he has heard, but he does not bat an eye at refuting their contents: "Es ist nur so eine Geschichte;" antwortete Reinhardt; 'es gibt ja gar keine Engel'" (Storm, *Immensee* 297). Reinhardt also has grand ideas of traveling around the world when he grows up. Talking about India, he says "da ist es viel tausendmal schöner als hier bei uns" (298). He wants Elisabeth to go with him, but as a five-year-old she balks at the idea of leaving her family. Reinhardt shows at this point that his trip, his intellectual curiosity, would be more important than being with Elisabeth by saying, "willst du mit mir reisen? Sonst geh ich allein; und dann komme ich nimmer wieder'" (298). One could say that children are typically so consistent in their thinking, yet one cannot refute that Reinhardt continues to think and act in the same manner. For example, when Reinhardt writes a poem about Elisabeth in class, it is fueled by his feelings for her, but afterwards he just admires his skill in writing: "Dem jungen Dichter standen die Tränen in den Augen; er kam sich sehr erhaben vor" (299). In Storm's eyes, Reinhardt's self-centered actions should prepare the reader for a character who has misplaced his priorities. Someone who thinks that elsewhere is better and will do whatever it takes to get there will not be capable of the intimate marriage that is Storm's ideal.

The outcome of the strawberry hunting scene also seems to foreshadow Reinhardt's and Elisabeth's future. The man in charge of the strawberry hunt tells all of the young folk beforehand, "wer ungeschickt ist, muß sein Brot trocken essen; so geht es überall im Leben" (300). Whoever does not find strawberries for the group, will not get any from the others. Reinhardt immediately says he knows where they can find strawberries, and he leads Elisabeth deep into the forest. He gets so engrossed in picking his way through the forest that he even forgets about helping Elisabeth. When he hears her yelling for help, he is so far away from her that he cannot see her (301). Soon after, they find that their struggle was in vain, because the strawberries are already gone. This does not bode well for the couple, as "the reader is invited to make the connection between strawberries, money and sexual possession" (Jackson 65). With this scene, we can see that Reinhardt is paving his own way even before his experience of sexuality at the university. Reinhardt and Elisabeth look for more strawberries, have no luck and turn to go back, but "an den Rückweg hatte Reinhardt nicht gedacht" (Storm, *Immensee* 302). His blind ambition has put them in a difficult situation. Reinhardt forged ahead without thinking about the consequences. Elisabeth is the one who eventually hears the bells from town, and they are then able to find their way back. True to the old man's statement, Reinhardt's actions prove to be "ungeschickt" and careless when it comes to his relationship. He is fueled by egocentric tendencies, which leaves no room for Elisabeth.

The relationship between Elisabeth and Reinhardt changes dramatically when Reinhardt leaves for the university. He promises to write Elisabeth and to send her fairytales, but he does not keep his word (308). Their communication stops completely for some time. The first printed version of *Immensee* (it was reworked for Storm's collection *Sommergeschichten und Lieder*) is very telling of Reinhardt's mindset at the time:

Der phantastische Aufputz und die freien Verhältnisse des Studentenlebens entwickelten den ganzen Ungestüm seiner Natur. Das Stilleben seiner Vergangenheit und die Personen, welche dahinein gehörten, traten immer mehr zurück; die Briefe an seine Mutter wurden immer sparsamer, auch enthielten sie keine Märchen für Elisabeth. So schrieb denn auch sie nicht an ihn, und er bemerkte es kaum. Irrtum und Leidenschaft begannen ihr Teil von seiner Jugend zu fordern. (Lohmeier, "Immensee" 1027)

Reinhardt is enjoying his new, exciting life as a student but is neglecting the ones who love him at home. After receiving Elisabeth's letter at Christmas, he writes back once, but has no contact with her again until his visit at Easter. When he finally arrives and goes to see her, he feels "als trete etwas Fremdes zwischen sie" (Storm, *Immensee* 310). By not communicating with Elisabeth, he has shown that he sees himself as having the power in the relationship. He now has a separate life as a student and intellectual, and he lets Elisabeth wait at home. Reinhardt's subconscious perception of their gender roles allows him to see Elisabeth as excluded from his intellectual life. As discussed in section 2.2, Storm asserts that a strong relationship requires constant communication between partners. In his view, there can be no aspect of a person's life to which their partner does not have access. Reinhardt does perceive at least part of the problem, because „wenn sie allein zusammen saßen, entstanden Pausen, die ihm peinlich waren" (310). He tries to alleviate the superficial issue of not having anything to say to one another by teaching her everything that he has learned in his botany class. This scholarly approach, however, is not meant to educate her, but to provide a distraction from the awkwardness of the present state of their relationship. It does not treat the real problem, and it further enforces that Reinhardt is the authority figure who has something to say. Any emotional connection that they might have had

before has dwindled to almost nothing. Reinhardt also knows about Erich's entrance into Elisabeth's life, but all he can say is that he cannot stand the presence of the canary Erich has given her (311). Reinhardt seems to take Elisabeth's attention for granted and does not truly acknowledge the threat that Erich presents to what is left of his relationship with her. Before Reinhardt's departure, Storm brings his character close to revealing his true feelings: "je näher sie ihrem Ziele kamen, desto mehr war es ihm, er habe ihr, ehe er auf so lange Abschied nehme, etwas Notwendiges mitzuteilen, etwas, wovon aller Wert und alle Lieblichkeit seines künftigen Lebens abhängt, und doch konnte er sich des erlösenden Wortes nicht bewußt werden" (312). Reinhardt then leaves Elisabeth saying that he has a secret and will reveal it to her when he comes back after two years (313). He uses his authority and postpones telling her how he feels about her until he has done what he wants, letting all lines of communication drop. By doing this, he once again allows his intellectual life in the great, wide world to have priority over his love life. Despite Reinhardt's "secret," the result after two years is the same as always: "Reinhardt hatte seit seinem Besuch in der Heimat nicht an Elisabeth geschrieben und von ihr keinen Brief mehr erhalten" (314). It should then come as no surprise that Elisabeth finally accepts Erich's proposal because Reinhardt has abandoned her. The university proved more interesting for Reinhardt than Elisabeth.

To further emphasize how Reinhardt has become an intellectual, Storm strews comments on his appearance and his behavior throughout the novella. This is important because his dedication to his intellectual life is what determines the failure of the relationship between Elisabeth and him. As Reinhardt approaches Immensee, Storm refers to him three times as "der Wanderer" (314-15). This harkens the reader back to Reinhardt's interest in travel and adventure as a child. As Erich surprises Elisabeth with Reinhardt's visit, Erich says: "er ist so lange

draußen gewesen; wir wollen ihn wieder heimisch machen. Schau nur, wie fremd und vornehm er aussehen worden ist” (318). The complete lack of communication between the two parties is reflected in the perception of Reinhardt as foreign, something separate from them. As Brech asserts, silence in marriage leads to “Entfremdung” (151). In the end, when Reinhardt leaves their home, Storm writes: „er sah nicht rückwärts; er wanderte rasch hinaus; und mehr und mehr versank hinter ihm das stille Gehöft, und vor ihm auf stieg die große weite Welt“ (Storm, *Immensee* 327). This quotation describes Reinhardt’s attitude perfectly. From childhood on, he is drawn to the opportunities of the wide world more so than fighting for a lover or marriage partner. This is emphasized again when Reinhardt becomes a collector of *Volkslieder*, which seem to express the types of feelings he never could in his own life (318, 320). Even as an old man, Reinhardt is still described as looking like “ein Fremder,” and his room looks like that of a scholar: “eine Wand war fast mit Repositorien und Bücherschränken bedeckt...einem Tische mit grüner Decke, auf dem einzelne aufgeschlagene Bücher umherlagen” (295-96). The novella ends fittingly with a scene of Reinhardt resigning himself to his choice: “Dann rückte er auch den Stuhl zum Tische, nahm eins der aufgeschlagenen Bücher und vertiefte sich in Studien, an denen er einst die Kraft seiner Jugend geübt hatte” (328). According to Storm’s marriage ideal, Reinhardt and Elisabeth’s fate is sealed when Reinhardt allows his scholarly ventures to destroy their communication. This lack is manifested in the final characterization of Reinhardt as foreign.

To further support this interpretation of *Immensee*, Theodor Storm’s fairy tale *Hinzelmeier: Eine nachdenkliche Geschichte*, written shortly before *Immensee*, will be briefly discussed. What is striking about *Hinzelmeier* is that at its core, it is the same story as *Immensee*, only in the garb of a fairy tale. Jackson asserts that they both have the theme of “a wasted life, of

the wrong options chosen” (63). The term “wasted” is perhaps too strong, as it seems that it is the one-sidedness of the pursuit that Storm condemns, not merely the pursuit. In this analysis, this is expanded upon to say that both Hinzlmeier and Reinhardt erringly chose their scholarly endeavors over love, condemning themselves to a life of wandering and solitude.

To frame the fairy tale, Storm creates the story that Hinzlmeier belongs to a very special family. All of the male members have a maiden whom they are destined to marry, if they can recognize her while on their journey. If the maiden is found, the couple’s love will provide them with eternal youth and beauty. Hinzlmeier’s parents are an example of such a couple. In *Immensee*, Reinhardt, too, is portrayed as having Elisabeth as the love of his life. She is just waiting for him to recognize her. As with Reinhardt’s departure for the university, Hinzlmeier’s real problem begins when he is old enough to learn a trade. He says to his parents “es müßte eine große Kunst sein; so eine, die sonst noch niemand hat erlernen können!” (Storm, *Hinzlmeier* 32). His mother is worried by this, but his father takes him to a master in a far away town. Finally, Hinzlmeier chooses to search for the philosopher’s stone. As he leaves for his journey, his old master sends a raven with him, which wears the master’s glasses. Every time that Hinzlmeier briefly sees his maiden along his journey, the raven crashes into the scene, dropping the glasses onto the boy’s nose. The glasses represent the “wissenschaftliche Errungenschaft, die Sicht des Menschen zu verbessern, wirkt sich...auf die Weltwahrnehmung des Protagonisten aus und veranlasst ihn zu selbstzerstörerischen Handlungen” (Vieregge 215). Hinzlmeier’s dedication to his scholarly adventure blinds him, and he cannot find his love, even when she is right under his nose. Reinhardt proves also to be incapable of dedicating himself to Elisabeth, even though he once briefly recognized her to be the “Ausdruck für alles Liebliche und Wunderbare seines aufgehenden Lebens” (Storm, *Immensee* 304). Both men are quick to forget

about love while on their educational adventures. The thought of including a woman in these adventures at this point does not cross their minds. As mentioned earlier, Reinhardt is referred to several times as “the wanderer,” which is also what Hinzelmeyer becomes on his pursuit of the stone. Before Hinzelmeyer dies exhausted and alone, having just reached the philosopher’s stone, the glasses fall off and he sees his maiden coming toward him from a distance. After his death, the maiden then is also damned to live and die in captivity inside the rose garden. Similarly, Reinhardt realizes that he has lost his chance for love forever when he visits Immensee. Elisabeth’s unhappiness is apparent in her childless marriage, in which she looks at her husband with “schwesterliche Augen” (318). Much like the maiden in the rose garden, Elisabeth is portrayed as wandering aimlessly in the gardens at Immensee, trapped forever because of Reinhardt’s failure to choose her (319, 322). Storm very accurately portrayed this tragic fate of forced dependence, which was common for the women of his time.

Storm wrote *Immensee* so that the message he gave voice to in *Hinzelmeyer* could also reach the people who no longer read fairy tales. For them, he created “a modern fairy tale based on familiar folklore motifs but in a contemporary, ‘social realist’ setting” (Jackson 63). To create two stories with the same subject, Storm must have felt very strongly about the negative effect that an educational system that restricted women had on what he felt was most important in life, love and marriage.

2.4.2 Evolving Communication in *Veronica*

The novella *Veronica* was published in 1861. As in *Immensee*, one can clearly see Storm’s marriage ideal at work, though the message is much more direct here. In contrast to *Immensee*, the characters in this story are able to resolve their conflict in such a way that their

relationship is saved. Veronica rejects a potential affair and then the church, which were both threatening her open communication with her partner.

Storm introduces Veronica as a young woman who is not unhappily married to an older man. Her husband is busy with work and due to this she begins spending her time in drawing lessons with his younger cousin. Cousin Rudolph is attracted to Veronica, and she does not mind the attention, at least at first. Veronica, however, instinctively begins to resist him when he tries to pursue her. She gets angry with Rudolph when he passionately criticizes one of her drawings in front of her husband (Storm, *Veronica* 468). He says that he cannot bear for anyone else to criticize her. Perhaps, she gets angry because she is now sure of what kind of feelings Rudolph is developing for her. When they are walking behind her husband, Rudolph is speaking to her but “aus ihren dunklen Augen blickte sie schweigend vor sich hin, als wisse sie nicht, daß jemand an ihrer Seite gehe” (466). When they are at the mill, Veronica and Rudolph have an emotional moment. In this moment, the noise from the mill is so loud that they cannot hear each other speak. Rudolph seems to be professing his love to Veronica as she stands there “wie in Scham gebannt, das Antlitz hülflos ihm entgegenhaltend, die Hände wie vergessen in den seinen” (469). The noise stops and, as she turns and walks away, he “rief ihren Namen und streckte die Arme bittend nach ihr aus. Aber sie schüttelte, ohne nach ihm umzusehen, den Kopf, und ging langsam durch den Garten nach dem Wohnhause” (470). Rudolph’s disregard for Veronica’s situation shows that he thinks he has the authority in the relationship. In the mill scene, it seems that he tries to force his emotions on her. This type of communication would destroy her marriage and Veronica knows that she does not want to be unfaithful to her husband. Although she may have an affinity for Rudolph, she cannot give in to his pressure. From then on he no longer comes over

to give her drawing lessons (474). Veronica successfully uses non-verbal communication to convey her rejection of him. In this way, she is staying true in body and action to her husband.

Although this solves the immediate problem, Veronica still feels that she has not been entirely faithful to her husband. The guilt of having had such interactions weighs her down. She is living without complete honesty to her partner. As proven in section 2.2, communication and honesty are very important to Storm's marriage ideal. To solve her problem and open up communication between herself and her husband, Veronica must abandon the comfort of the church. The poverty and bleak reality of the family whom her husband visited at the mill makes her realize the importance of her relationship. She suddenly feels as if she truly has lost her way (471). She is not focusing on what is important in life, her relationship with her husband.

Though Veronica recognizes the problem, she does not know how to solve it right away. She has grown up Catholic, and has typically found comfort in the rituals of Catholicism. For example, to be forgiven of one's sins, one must go to confession during the Easter season. In the traditional thinking, this is how Veronica should resolve her problem. However, the reader observes her struggle with this: "Veronica verschob noch immer ihren Beichtgang...[so] daß ihre Wangen von Tag zu Tage mehr erblaßten, daß unter ihren Augen leichte Schatten sichtbar wurden, welche schlaflose Nächte dort zurückgelassen" (475). Her behavior worries her husband, who does not belong to any church himself, but knows that she typically goes to confession at this time of the year. He encourages her to go, if it will make her feel better. His actions show a fundamental trust of Veronica, which bodes well for the relationship. She then finally gets dressed to go, arrives and "Veronica begann halblaut die Worte der Einleitungsformel: 'ich armer sündiger Mensch!' und mit unsicherer Stimme fuhr sie fort: 'bekenne vor Gott und Euch Priester an Gottes Statt!' -- Aber ihre Worte wurden immer langsamer..." (476). She stops after saying these

lines, which implies that she has a problem with them. This prescribed communication does not feel correct to her. The priest tries to encourage her to continue, but his words seem to make her realize that he is not the one with whom she needs to communicate. Veronica leaves without confessing her sins on the last day of the Easter season. According to the church at this time, that means she is no longer a Catholic in good standing (478). At this point she has given up her faith, and proceeds to communicate with her husband.

Veronica's rejection of the church makes a very strong statement, but she has realized something that is critical to a perfect marriage, according to Storm. She does not need the church to act as a middleman. In the manuscript, which was changed before publishing, Storm goes as far as to say that the fear of god is equal to the fear of reality (Lohmeier, "Veronica" 1106). Veronica decides not to hide from reality. The true issue is between her and her husband, and in order to save their marriage, she needs to tell him what happened with Rudolph. She can communicate with her husband because he respects her and has shown true concern for her well-being. The couple's world views are equal enough for communication to flourish. When Veronica returns to her husband, their exchange shows the equality present in their intimate sphere: "und jetzt bist du gekommen, deinem Mann zu beichten?' 'Nein, Franz' , erwiderte sie, 'nicht zu beichten; aber vertrauen will ich dir – dir allein; und du – hilf mir, und, wenn du es vermagst, verzeihe mir!'" (Storm, *Veronica* 479). It is implied that he listens and forgives her for her transgressions. The marriage is saved because Veronica chooses to stop an external force from coming between her and her husband. For Storm, "a wife confessing marital secrets to a priest was...committing a form of adultery as reprehensible as physical adultery" (Jackson 43). It would be a betrayal of the couple's communication. By not letting anything come between her and her husband, Veronica meets the standards of Storm's ideal. Her husband also facilitates this

openness in their marriage because he respects his wife's decisions. It is important to see this story not only as a rejection of Catholicism; it is a rejection of organized religion in favor of what is most important, marriage.

2.4.3 Communication and Openness in *Viola tricolor*

Storm's 1873 novella *Viola tricolor* mirrors the author's life experiences at that time quite closely. As described in section 2.2 above, Storm remarried in 1866 after his wife's death in 1865. The marriage had a very rocky beginning, as Storm was still pining for his dead wife and "saw Doris as a stop-gap and a replacement mother, referred to her as *Stiefmütterchen* and forbade the children to address her as mother" (Jackson 151). The novella circles around a very similar situation. Fittingly, Storm chose *Viola tricolor* for his title, the Latin name for a flower which is commonly called *Stiefmütterchen* in German. The solution to the stepmother problem is achieved through communication. Father and daughter must communicate with her about their past in order for her to be a true member of the family, but she must be open to them doing so.

When Constanze died, Storm had to confront his concept of love, as he had always defined it as eternal, "Liebe über den Tod hinaus" (Baßler 50). That aspect of his concept, however, no longer fit well into his real life. From the practical side, he needed someone to run his large household. Most of all, however, he needed care and support: "Er selbst bedurfte – wie er seinem Schwiegervater in Segeburg gestand (17.3.66) - 'um wirklich zu leben, der Frauenliebe mehr als Tausend und tausend Andre'" (Laage, *Biographie* 32). To satisfy these needs, both Storm and his character Rudolf in *Viola tricolor* must remarry. The resulting problem is that the new wives suffer under their husbands' devotion to their first wives.

From Ines' first arrival at her new home in *Viola tricolor*, her position as wife and mother is compromised. The little girl Agnes, called Nesi, and her father Rudolf both have their own ways of keeping Ines at a distance. Nesi's behavior will be analyzed first. At the beginning of the novella, young Nesi takes a rose from the bouquet meant to welcome her stepmother and puts it in the frame of her deceased mother's portrait. The author repeatedly refers to this rose as "die geraubte Rose" (Storm, *Viola tricolor* 132-33). This shows that her thoughts are not on her new stepmother's arrival, but on her deceased mother's memory. What comes from the first conversation between Nesi and Ines is that Nesi will not call Ines *Mutter*, because that is what she called her mother. She prefers to call Ines *Mama* (136). This results in Ines keeping her distance from Nesi, as she does not feel accepted by her. Another example of Nesi's view of Ines is when Anne, the family's servant, asks whether Nesi would be happy to have a little sister. Tellingly, Nesi answers her that she would, but "das Kind würde ja dann doch keine Mutter haben!" (155). Nesi's thoughts are only on her deceased mother. She does not act out toward Ines, and she does not dislike her, but she clearly does not accept her as a motherly figure.

As with Nesi, Ines realizes from the beginning that she must compete with a dead woman for her husband's affection. When Rudolf gives her the tour of her new home, she is aghast at the sight of what appears to be a shrine to his dead wife in his study. She does not say anything, but she thinks to herself "diese Tote lebte noch, und für sie Beide war doch nicht Raum in einem Hause!" (137). Ines then feels like she is not the woman of the house. Her husband notices that she performs all of her household duties well, but treats the dwelling itself and their possessions as if they do not belong to her (138). Her husband and stepchild are devoted to a dead woman, which prevents her from making her house a home.

Ines attempts to communicate with Rudolf about the problematic behaviors going on, but she has difficulties putting her worries into the right words. The first time that she confronts him, all she can focus on is that Nesi will not call her *Mutter*. Rudolf tells her that she is not supposed to be her *Mutter*, but does not give her what Storm calls the “nahe liegende Antwort” (140). While Rudolf sees Ines struggling, he gives into his own feelings, further compromising his relationship with Ines. He imagines himself with his deceased wife in their secret garden (145). Once, when he is steeped in his memories, Ines enters the room and catches him. She knows by the glowing lamp under his first wife’s portrait that he was with her. It is here that Ines makes her second attempt to communicate with her husband that something is wrong. This time, she confronts him about the locked garden, which serves as a metaphor for his past. She tells him that he is being unfaithful: “mit einem Schatten brichst du mir die Ehe!” (148). He admits that he is wrong, but also forces her to look at the picture, which she has been avoiding since the first time she saw it. He gives Ines the key to the garden, but she does not want to use it just yet. Despite having communicated her feelings, the problem has not yet been solved.

Ines perceives that her communication did not make her situation better. When asked by her husband what is bothering her, “schlossen sich ihre Lippen wie in Todesangst” (149). Ines feels like a dead woman has more authority than she does, and she is therefore no longer willing to communicate. One night she gets up and walks outside into the woods with only her night clothes on (150). Fortunately, the dog barks and wakes her husband. When asked why she did this, she said she was dreaming and tells a story from her childhood about the only other time she has sleepwalked. She fell in love with the Christ child when she was a girl. Her mother had given her a picture of the Madonna and child and “es war [ihr] ganz, als wenn’s lebendig wäre” (153). She must have woken in the night and taken it with her to bed because she awoke with it in the

morning. Ines is not able to make her point clear, but this is an interesting parallel to her husband's treatment of his deceased first wife's portrait. Given that Storm was not a proponent of religion, it seems that this is a criticism of Rudolf's behavior. For Storm, Jesus was simply a dead philosopher onto whom people projected their feelings (Jackson 110). He was essentially an absent being. True divinity for Storm was the love between two humans, not love for an absent person/being, serving as a substitute. Rudolf's first wife is also absent, and he is not focusing on the love he could have on earth. Even though this is such a strong criticism, the situation does not change because of it.

Some scholars, including Laage, attribute the change in the story to Ines giving birth to her own child ("Viola tricolor", 832). This explanation, however, does not fully describe the situation. The change in the relationship between Nesi and Ines comes when Ines is sick after she has given birth. She is worried that her child will not know what she looked like if she dies. Nesi is listening and starts crying. When asked why, she replies that she is crying for her *Mutter* (Storm, *Viola tricolor* 157). Instead of reacting coldly to this, Ines hugs her close and tells her to never forget her *Mutter*. Ines' concern for her own child helps her empathize with Nesi's situation. This is the first time that Ines has ever acknowledged Nesi's emotional pain for her biological mother in front of her. Instead of merely making her own feelings known, she is communicating concern for what Nesi is feeling. It is this exchange, fueled by the birth of her child, which determines the outcome of the story, not the birth alone.

As the relationship between Ines and Nesi changes, all lines of communication open. Ines suddenly recovers, and when told that she is going to live, turns to Rudolf, saying: "ich muß Teil haben an deiner Vergangenheit, dein ganzes Glück muß du mir erzählen! Und Rudolf, ihr süßes Bild soll in dem Zimmer hängen, das uns gemeinschaftlich gehört; sie muß dabei sein, wenn du

mir erzählst!” (159). Her illness and accompanying worries about her child failing to remember her seem to have helped her accept the idea of making her family’s past part of her life, as well. This complete openness to her family was the missing piece of the puzzle.

In the final scene, the family enters the no longer locked “Garten der Vergangenheit” together (163). It is symbolic of nothing being closed off or secret anymore. Rudolf can now share the portrait and the garden with his new wife. His memories of his first wife are no longer something to hide and now he can build an honest relationship with Ines. When discussing the name of the new baby, Ines suggests naming the baby Marie, after the deceased. Rudolf, however, maintains that the baby should neither be named Marie nor Ines, because for him there is only one person in the world named that (162). This scene revisits the idea that a stepmother cannot replace a biological mother and should not expect to be able to do so. That, however, does not need to affect anyone adversely; it is merely a fact of life. *Viola tricolor* makes the point that communicating one’s own feelings is important, but being open to communication from others is just as essential to leading a happy married life.

2.4.4 Silence and Self-Worth in *Schweigen*

Storm’s novella *Schweigen* was published in 1883. He calls the subject of *Schweigen* “ein apartes und heikles Thema” because of the psychological aspect of the story, and the difficulty he had in developing this aspect (Laage, “Schweigen” 829). The conflict centers on Rudolph’s mental health and the psychological aftermath of the stigma of being admitted to a mental institution. After working on the psychological motivation throughout the story, finding a fitting ending proved to be difficult for Storm. He began writing, thinking “daß Anna, nicht als Salon- , aber als echt weibliche Heldin die thatsächliche Entwicklung herbeiführen, also ihren

Mann von der Selbstvernichtung retten sollte. Dann aber kam [ihm] der an sich wohl richtige Gedanke, daß dadurch der Mann zu sehr herabgedrückt werde..." (830). Storm wrote sixty pages of the story without a concrete ending in mind. He knew only that he wanted to show that Rudolph could save himself. As a result of this, the ending that Storm decided on seems a bit abrupt and perhaps incongruent with the development of Rudolph's character throughout the story. This leads scholars to believe that *Schweigen* can only serve as a "psychologische Studie" (838). However, for the study of Storm's ideal marriage, *Schweigen* is exemplary for demonstrating the struggle for partnership. If Rudolph had been too weak to save himself, it would have betrayed Storm's belief in humankind. With the new ending, Rudolph finally communicates with his partner, saving himself and his marriage. By communicating, Rudolph is ultimately portrayed as able to successfully reject his mother's meddling influence and the cowardice which is presented as coming from his *Weibernerziehung*.

At the beginning of the story, Rudolph von Schlitz has just returned from a mental institution and his mother is fretting over him. Frau von Schlitz talks with his doctor and he recommends that "ein deutsches Hausfrauchen, heiter und verständig" would do Rudolph good and keep him from sliding back into sickness (Storm, *Schweigen* 133). Frau von Schlitz is domineering and controlling when it comes to her son, so she immediately has a particular girl in mind. Fortunately, it just so happens that she is perfect for Rudolph: "wo er sie immer antreffen mochte, im Garten oder in der Küche, die Welt erschien ihm heller, wenn er auch nur das Regen ihrer fleißigen Hände sehen konnte" (137). Rudolph finds that he is not the only one interested in Anna. Bernhard poses a legitimate threat. This threat helps fuel Rudolph's quick marriage proposal. The next day, however, Rudolph comes home visibly agitated and asks his mother if anyone knows about his recent history (144). He wants to tell his bride-to-be the truth, he

worries: “wird sie mir glauben können, daß ich nicht absichtlich sie betrogen habe?” (145). Now is when the real problem starts forming. Frau von Schlitz advises him not to tell Anna because she might then refuse to marry him; in so many words, Rudolph lets his mother scare him into keeping a secret from Anna. He protests meekly saying, “O Mutter; aber es ist dennoch unrecht!” (145). His response shows that he wants to be honorable, but he listens to his mother, which creates a barrier to communication between him and Anna before they even marry. It also confirms that he will not feel like he has any authority in his marriage, just like in his relationship with his mother.

Although Rudolph’s mother loves him very much, she is shown as a hindrance to his adult life. She had to raise Rudolph alone after her husband died, and because his upbringing was carried out by a single mother, Rudolph is unbalanced. The doctors attribute his original nervous breakdown to a certain fragility in him: “die Verantwortlichkeit des Amtes war bei seiner zarten Organisation – denn die hat er trotz seines kräftigen Baues – zu unvermittelt über ihn gekommen” (132). A conversation between the duke and Anna’s father affirms this about Rudolph: “‘ich halte ihn für recht befähigt, nur etwas zaghaft noch...’ Der Pastor nickte: ‘Exzellenz wollen nachträglich die Männererziehung noch dazu tun!’ – ‘Ich denke wir verstehen uns, Herr Pastor!’” (151). Rudolph’s marriage and his profession are supposed to help him become a balanced person. Frau von Schlitz, however, despite her good intentions in arranging the marriage, does not understand that Anna now needs to be the person to whom Rudolph is closest. Warning sirens should go off when Rudolph’s mother says: “dich lieb ich mehr, als Mann und Weib sich lieben können; was kümmern mich alle anderen Menschen außer dir!” (158). Rudolph struggles with his mother’s suffocating love and his one-sided upbringing to become a true partner to his wife.

In the beginning, Rudolph and Anna are very happy together. However, the honeymoon phase is soon over. When Rudolph stops to think, he sees the secret he is keeping from his wife in the back of his mind. Once when they are listening to the sound of the insects outside Rudolph says something odd, yet telling:

Es gibt eine schwarze Fliege, diese Sommerglut brütet sie aus, und sie kommt mit all den anderen zu uns, in dein Haus, in deine Kammer; unhörbar ist sie da, du fühlst es nicht, wenn schon der häßliche Rüssel sich an deine Schläfe setzt. Schon mancher hat sie um sich gaukeln sehen und ihrer nicht geachtet; denn die Wenigsten erkennen sie; aber wenn er von einem jähen Stiche auffuhr und sich, mehr lachend noch als unwillig, ein Tröpflein Blutes von der Stirn wischte, dann war er bereits ein dem Tod verfallener Mann. (152-53)

This strange little story does not scare Anna. She simply says, “ich will diese schwarze Fliege fortjagen; denn sie kommt aus deinem Hirn und soll mir nicht dahin zurück...” (153). Rudolph is still worried about what he is keeping from her, despite Anna’s courage.

As Rudolph’s guilt is starting to grow, he lets outside stories affect him greatly. For example, he hears a story of a man who was bit by a dog with rabies and thirteen years later he became insane and could have hurt his wife had she not screamed for help (154). Rudolph tortures himself with thoughts of his sickness returning. He gets so worried that he goes back to his mother. She tells him “dich drückt nur das Geheimnis, das Versprechen, das du mir gegeben hast; ich gebe es dir zurück, es war unnötige, übertriebene Sorge, da ich es von dir verlangte” (158). He then goes to his former doctor to make sure that his sickness would not recur. But both Rudolph’s mother and his doctor say that all he need do is communicate openly with his wife and he will no longer be alone. The doctor helps Rudolph realize that “es gab ja kein ‘allein’ für

ihn, er selber hatte ja gesagt, die seien aneinander festgeschmiedet, er konnte nicht in der Finsternis und sie im Lichte gehen..." (160). This perspective adheres tightly to Storm's marriage ideal; this is how partners should function. Rudolph, however, fails to act on his good intentions when he gets home as he fears he will ruin this nice moment with his wife. It becomes clear that Rudolph gives too much weight to his speculation about his wife's feelings and is always neglecting the communication of his own.

Rudolph convinces himself that he does not deserve to be happy and finds reasons to believe it. He hears that one of his own workers has returned from the mental institution and has brought a woman with him, a nurse there who fell in love with him. Anna comments: "Mein Gott, welch ein Wagstück! Wenn es wiederkäme!," which plays right into Rudolph's uncertainties (162). Even when Rudolph gets promoted, it does not give him the courage to approach his wife. He cannot muster any happiness about it and merely uses his promotion as a distraction in which to bury himself. Because of his perceived guilt, he starts keeping his distance from his wife, hiding in his study and never going to her for affection (163). Rudolph then further escalates his feelings of worthlessness and begins to think that he only got to marry Anna because he asked first, purely by chance. He, therefore, becomes jealous when Anna suggests a visit to Bernhard (167). Later, with thoughts of suicide on his mind, he suggests a visit to Bernhard. In an act of self-torture, he says to Bernhard "du liebst sie noch; gesteh es, daß du sie noch liebst!" (181). The final blow that leads to Rudolph's suicide plan comes when Rudolph overhears the duke talking about him. The duke calls him "ein guter Mann, aber ein schlechter Musikant" (170). Metaphorically, calling him a bad musician means that he does not know how to live his life. He cannot put together all the things that life throws at him and make beautiful music. The duke's criticism makes Rudolph angry and ashamed. The guilt that Rudolph

feels for keeping a secret shrinks his self-worth down to nothing, making him think he is not even worthy of communicating his affection for his wife to her.

Throughout the story, Storm makes it apparent that Anna sees all of her husband's pain and wants to help: "sie war ja jung, sie fürchtete sich nicht; nur wissen mußte sie, wo sie das Unheil fassen könne" (183). Even when Rudolph stops being affectionate, she "suchte nur, wo sie es immer konnte, ihm zu bringen, was er nicht mehr von ihr zu holen kam" (166). She sits next to him in his study late at night and sews until he has finished all of his work. Anna is the portrait of patience. Perhaps she is so strong because of her responsibility in bringing up her disabled brother (133). Storm hints that Anna could help her husband, if he would let her. He would only have to open up to her. She is unable to help him because he is not communicating with her. Anna even tries to encourage her husband to use the arts as an aid to healing, but to no avail: "Sein geliebtes Klavier stand trotz Annas Bitten seit Monden unberührt; die Kunst, welche auch in ihren düstersten Abgründen nach dem Lichte ringt, durfte nichts von dem erfahren, was in ihm wie unter schwerem Stein begraben lag" (169). All of Rudolph's troubles started with a secret and are perpetuated by his feeling of powerlessness which keep him from communicating with Anna.

Rudolph feels so worthless and guilty that he decides to go into the woods to take his own life. Before going, he writes a note confessing his secret to Anna and leaves it on his lectern (185). Anna finds the note as Frau von Schlitz looks on. In a frenzy, Anna tries to rush off to find him, but his mother begs Anna to take her with her. Anna knows, however, that she must do it alone "um seinetwillen"; Frau von Schlitz's authority is not needed (189). As his life partner and the one he feels he has sinned against, Anna knows she is the only one who can stop him. While Anna is searching for him, Rudolph hears the church bells and realizes that Anna must have read

his note by this time. Suddenly, he grasps the fact that “das Schweigen, das furchtbare Schweigen war ja nun zu Ende!” (190). The black cloud that had hung over him is gone. He was not actually sick; he had made himself sick with guilt about keeping a secret from Anna in the first place. By the time he has his epiphany, Anna reaches him. The ending becomes “ein Mittelding,” as Storm calls it, instead of one person being the hero, both characters contribute to a happy end (Laage, “Schweigen” 837). If Rudolph had followed his instinct and said no to his mother in the beginning, then he would not have had to go through such agony. His struggle to assert himself prevented true communication with his wife. He allowed his mother’s priorities and his fear of losing his wife’s affection to drive him insane. Once his mother changed her mind, the secret had already existed so long that his own fear and guilt kept him from being honest with his wife. However, when Rudolph honestly communicates with Anna, all of the problems dissolve into thin air. Even Frau von Schlitz has a change of heart. Anna helps her see that her son has not been stolen from her; instead, she has gained a daughter (Storm, *Schweigen* 194). In the end, all three live together, and the duke, makes a joke, saying: “selbst mit der alten Gnädigen von Schlitz verstehen sie zu leben, was meinem Schulgenossen, dem Walzerkomponisten [Rudolphs Vater], nicht so ganz gelungen sein soll; aber – die beiden Jungen sind auch bessere Musikanten” (197). With this line, Storm makes it apparent that he believed that the younger generation had better chances for happy marriages because of the modernization of the marriage concept, which his works propound.

2.4.5 Communication Undermined in *Der Schimmelreiter*

In Storm’s 1888 novella *Der Schimmelreiter*, Hauke Haien seems to have a fatal flaw, extreme self-pride, from the very beginning. This harkens back to the beginning of *Immensee*,

where Reinhardt immediately displays his flaw, his preference for education over love. Hauke, however, seems to believe in his wife Elke as his equal, while Reinhardt never expresses that kind of faith in Elisabeth. Hauke does not think highly of many people, as is displayed when he yells at the sea: “Ihr könnt nichts Rechtes...so wie die Menschen auch nichts können,” yet he thinks highly of Elke (Storm, *Schimmelreiter* 643). Hauke goes so far as to praise her skill in mathematics to his father, who is considered the smartest man in town (652). Elke’s father, the dyke master, even admits that she does a great amount of his math work, as she is much better with numbers than he: “die rechnet mich selber dreimal um und um!” (655). Elke’s intelligence wins her the respect of the hard-to-please Hauke Haien. According to Storm, this type of respect is essential to a functional partnership.

Elke is not only intelligent, but she is also a good housewife and is socially adept. Her father is described as rather incompetent, or “dumm wie ‘ne Saatgans,” which means that the fine condition of his household is due to his daughter (651). Elke was given responsibility growing up, just like Anna in *Schweigen*, and both prove to be strong female figures. Most importantly for *Der Schimmelreiter*, however, is that Elke is socially intelligent. She understands people and knows how to act correctly in different situations. From the very beginning of Hauke’s work at the Volkerts’ farm, for example, Elke helps protect Hauke from getting into trouble with Ole Peters. Ole really dislikes Hauke and gives him grueling physical tasks, meant to injure his young, undeveloped body. Elke, however, keeps an eye on their interactions: “ein Glück war es für ihn, dass Elke selbst oder durch ihren Vater das meistens abzustellen wusste” (657). Later, Elke keeps Hauke and Ole from fighting when Ole is making trouble for Hauke at the *Eisboseln* contest. Elke must have been paying very close attention to the scene to act before Hauke could, because suddenly: “packte den Zudringlichen eine Hand und riss ihn rückwärts,

dass der Bursche gegen seine lachenden Kameraden taumelte. Es war keine große Hand gewesen, die das getan hatte; denn als Hauke flüchtig den Kopf wandte, sah er neben sich Elke Volkerts ihren Ärmel zurechtzupfen...” (669-70). With her foresight, Elke is able to shield Hauke from Ole Peters. Not only does Elke protect Hauke from others, but she also protects him from himself. First of all, she tries to reconcile him with Trien’ Jans. She heard about Trien’ Jans’ cat and tells Hauke what kind of damage his actions have caused (658-9). Hauke then mends his misdeed by being friendly to the old woman at *Eisboseln* and gives her money with the words: “so haben wir uns vertragen” (668). Then the couple later takes old Trien’ Jans into their home. All of this helps protect Hauke’s reputation in the community. Once the work on the new dike starts, Hauke makes himself hated among the dike workers because he angrily yells at them for their lackadaisical effort. Elke tries to comfort those who were yelled at and “ging mitunter leise bessern” (718). Hauke has a tendency to get himself into trouble socially. Elke is not always able to stop him in time, but with her social skills she tries to soften the frequent blows that his actions have on his reputation. Hauke seems to have found a true partner in Elke, not only because she is intelligent and capable, but also because she helps to balance her husband’s negative qualities. Storm put great value in the balance which spouses can provide for one another. He often needed Constanze to do the same for him.

When Elke needs help, Hauke is there for her, as well. She, for example, worries because she has not borne any children. Hauke comforts her. He makes her realize that “was kommt, kommt für uns beide” (702). Hauke knows how a true marriage should work. Elke finally does conceive, but after the birth she gets childbed fever. It gets so bad that she has hallucinations. Hauke is beside himself and cries out to God, “ich kann sie nicht entbehren” (715). Elke obviously plays an integral part in his life. She thankfully has the strength to recover from her sickness. But then

she is subjected to another twist of fate. She realizes that their child Wienke “wird für immer ein Kind bleiben....es ist schwachsinnig” (731). Hauke again is able to comfort her with the reassurance that they will love her together, no matter what. Elke seems to respond positively to Hauke’s words right away because she is a rational person. Hauke and Elke consistently support one another, bringing their marriage close to Storm’s ideal.

After they have proven that they work perfectly as partners, what could possibly lead to their deaths? This recalls Hauke’s character flaw of extreme self-pride. Elke is wary of Hauke’s plan for the new dike from the beginning. She warns Hauke saying: ““sei nicht zu rasch, Hauke; das ist ein Werk auf Tod und Leben; und fast alle werden dir entgegen sein, man wird dir deine Müh und Sorg nicht danken”” (692). She is very aware of the situation in the community, while Hauke feels the need to prove his own worth. Elke also warns him that she always has heard that area could never be dammed. Hauke hears everything she says, but still wants to continue with his plan. Despite her doubts, Elke supports Hauke in his decision because she is his wife and, as Hauke has said before, together they can get through all of the tough times. They agree to stick together, saying: “wir wollen fest zusammenhalten” (695). However, when the situation becomes dire for Hauke, he defers to his prideful arrogance and chooses not to communicate with his wife. He wants to be able to make the decision all on his own, even though his marsh fever has sapped his strength:

‘Was ist dir?’ frug ihn Elke, welche die Sorge um ihren Mann wach hielt; ‘drückt dich etwas, so sprich es von dir; wir haben’s ja immer so gehalten!’ ‘Es hatte nichts auf sich, Elke!’, erwiderte er, ‘am Deiche, an den Schleusen ist was zu reparieren; du weißt, dass ich das allzeit nachts in mir zu verarbeiten habe.’

Weiter sagte er nichts; er wollte sich die Freiheit seines Handelns vorbehalten;

ihm unbewusst war die klare Einsicht und der kräftige Geist seines Weibes ihm in seiner augenblicklichen Schwäche ein Hindernis, dem er unwillkürlich auswich.

(739)

Hauke denies Elke's help. Elke even reminds him that they always discuss things together when something is wrong, and now he is keeping his thoughts from her. This is a sign of danger according to Storm's marriage ideal. Hauke suddenly perceives his wife's strength as a threat to his pride. Even when Hauke's fears become worse about the problematic spot on the dike, he does not share his thoughts with Elke: "doch seine Hand konnte nicht mehr daran rühren; und niemandem, selbst nicht seinem Weibe, durfte er davon reden" (740). Then Hauke decides to leave his wife and child at home when the biggest storm of their lives rolls in. Hauke tells Elke: "das ist *unser* Kampf" ...ihr seid hier sicher" (745). By using the word "unser" Hauke must be referring to the other dike workers and himself. They, however, have never been a unified whole. That shows itself when Hauke finds the workers trying to put a hole in the new dike to relieve the pressure of the water (749). The workers are making the most rational choice to do so, as the new land that was created by the dike can be lost again without great repercussions. The old dike, however, protects many farms, and it would be a disaster for it to break. Hauke is being selfish and does not want to see his life's work destroyed. Being rational, Elke might have been able to reason with Hauke, but he did not reveal the situation to her. Hauke's pride gets the best of him because he did not give Elke the chance to balance his emotions.

When the old dike does finally break, water comes pouring out over the land. Suddenly Hauke sees that, "eine zweirädrige Karriole kam wie toll gegen den Deich herangefahren; ein Weib, ja auch ein Kind saßen drin" (752). Hauke realizes that his family has come to look for him. He tries to yell to them to go back, but the raging storm swallows the words as they come

out of his mouth: “von ihr zu ihm, von ihm zu ihr waren die Worte all verloren...” (753).

Hauke’s lapse of communication with his wife and abandonment of the only people he loves in a time of crisis contributes heavily to the family’s demise. He throws himself into the water because he realizes that “durch seine Hybris hat Hauke den Tod gerade der Menschen verursacht, die das letzte Bindeglied zwischen ihm und seiner Umwelt waren. Sie allein hatten einen spärlichen Rest von Menschlichkeit in ihm lebendig erhalten; sie allein hatten an ihn geglaubt” (Schuster, *Zeitkritische Dimensionen* 179-80). Hauke breaks the partnership that he and his wife built, and his whole family pays with their lives. In Storm’s last novella, the lapse in communication does not only end the love relationship, it ends in death, emphasizing Storm’s ideal all the more.

3. Conclusion

This analysis has traced the progression of Theodor Storm’s own philosophy of life to the themes found in his novellas. Storm turned to secular humanism as a response to the world in which he lived. He greatly valued all of his relationships, but most of all his marriage. It was in the love relationship that Storm believed he could find true happiness. While Storm’s vision of the perfect marriage was a lofty goal, he still ventured to fulfill it in his personal life, often pushing the people he loved too hard. In his literature, however, his ideas could come into full bloom. This analysis asserts that throughout his career, Storm concentrated the complications of the love relationships in his novellas into a single component: communication. This factor alone determines the ultimate outcomes of the five novellas addressed here. In this study, the point has been made that communication is not merely the passing of information, be it fact or emotion. As seen in Dance’s and Stephen’s articles, communication serves to reduce uncertainty and provides

power to the communicator. This does not only apply to the characters in Storm's novellas, but also to the author himself. Storm's consistent implementation of the repercussions of failed or successful communication in his novellas seems to provide him with a sense of empowerment. For an author who struggled with the realization of his ideals in everyday life, these novellas provided him with alternate worlds where conflicts were resolved in terms he understood and valued. The importance of this topic in his works challenges the popular view of Storm as merely a *Heimatsdichter*.

Given that communication was so important to Storm, this leaves the question of what Storm was trying to communicate with his choice of the name Rudolph or Rudolf in so many of his novellas. Three of the five works discussed here include characters with this name. In *Veronica*, Rudolph is the cousin who attempts to win Veronica over behind her husband's back. He makes use of traditional authoritative power in his assumed role as Veronica's teacher. In *Viola tricolor*, Rudolf is the husband who is grieving for his first wife while having already remarried. This leaves his second wife feeling disempowered. Finally, in *Schweigen*, Rudolph is the young forester who struggles to tell his wife about his past. The support from his wife eventually helps him achieve some sense of self-empowerment, overcoming his upbringing by a domineering mother. The name is also used for characters in Storm's *Späte Rosen* and *Im Schloss*, making Rudolph the most recurrent name in Storm's novellas. The Rudolph in *Späte Rosen* marries a wonderful woman whom he loves, but his thoughts are always buried in his work. Only after reading Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* as a middle-aged man, does he fully realize his passion for his wife. Cousin Rudolph in *Im Schloss*, helps Anna take care of her estate after she returns back to her family's home. He is presented as someone who can effectively help Anna take care of the business in her day to day life, but he is too young to understand her inner

strife. None of the Rudolchs described above are the exact same character. This would suggest that under a character of one name, Storm explored a wide range of aspects of communication. One has to wonder whether Rudolph was an alter ego for the author. To put it in today's terms, Storm's novellas were his Second Life in which he used his avatar Rudolph to explore different roles. As Storm's characters do not differ greatly in status or situation, the novellas with Rudolph characters seem to have served as a way of exploring different types of relationships and the consequences of the communication within them. Whether this was something Storm did for his own benefit or for the benefit of his readership remains open. It seems that one can only be grateful that virtual worlds did not exist at that time, and Storm was in this way forced to create his worlds and relationships on paper for all to see.

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