

In my thesis, I focused on Adalbert Stifter's concept of nature and explored how he develops it, from his early collection of short stories *Studies* (*Studien*) to his later collection *Colorful Stones* (*Bunte Steine*) and finally in his novel entitled *Indian Summer* (*Der Nachsommer*). I also worked on identifying to what degree it was influenced by "the gentle law" (*das sanfte Gesetz*), formulated in the Preface (*Vorrede*) to *Colorful Stones*.

In my introduction, I attempted a summary of the Biedermeier characteristics present in Stifter's work. In addition, I touched on the traits of previous or emerging literary movements that heavily influenced Stifter, whose work is generally considered as typical of the Biedermeier movement.

In order to forge links between "the gentle law" and the prose chosen for analysis, I also addressed the Preface to *Colorful Stones*, where "the gentle law" is conceptualised. Using the examples "big" (*groß*), "small" (*klein*) and "gentle" (*sanft*), I established that there is already an anticipation of "the gentle law" in *Studies* and that the principles of "the gentle law" can also be found in his later novel, *Indian Summer*.

The chapter in which I follow the development of Stifter's nature concept constitutes the principal part of my thesis. I distinguish between five concepts of nature, so as to create a visual picture of the gradual transformation of the author's understanding of it. His concept of nature seems to conform increasingly to the "the gentle law" over time. The first concept does not relate to "the gentle law", the second one can be understood as an attempt at a harmonisation with the law; the last three concepts seem to correspond with "the gentle law" most. The next chapter draws attention to the text segments which infringe "the gentle law" in the area of nature. I call these text segments "breaches" (*Brüche*).

The research implies the conclusion that there are two antagonistic tendencies regarding the nature concept: on the one hand, the pursuit of a nature which corresponds with "the gentle law"; on the other, the rupture of the "gentle" relationship between man and nature, which is revealed in the aforementioned "breaches". The cause of the numerous detailed descriptions or short references to these "breaches" cannot be unambiguously postulated.