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*Leuchtende Tinte auf brüchigem Papier: Eine jüdische
Lektüre von Adalbert Stifters "Abdias"* by Daniel Hoffmann
(review)

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Daniel Hoßmann, *Leuchtende Tinte auf brüchigem Papier: Eine jüdische Lektüre von Adalbert Stifters "Abdias."* Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011. 145 pp.

As a fan of Stifter's *Abdias* (1845), I strongly welcome this philo-Semitic critical study. Over the years, when confronted by detractors of Stifter's controversial novella who question why I find it a most sympathetic portrait of the eponymous Jewish outsider, they counter with such dismissive adjectives (pertaining to him) like "misanthropic" and "anchoritic." Hoßmann's highly learned appreciation of Stifter's self-protective protagonist provides a long-needed analysis, as its subtitle indicates, as unalloyed "jüdische Lektüre."

The monograph begins with a useful twenty-page introduction by Dieter Borchmeyer in which the thematic concerns of Stifter are anchored within a context of German-language imaginative writing during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Beginning with Borchmeyer's helpful contrast of Lessing's humanistic tolerance in both *Die Juden* and *Nathan der Weise* with the virulent anti-Semitic themes in such Romantics as Arnim, Brentano, and Haub and in the Grimm fairytale "Der Jude im Dorn," Borchmeyer moves on to Austria for the remaining half of his essay to discuss Grillparzer's neither anti- nor philo-Semitic *Die Jüdin von Toledo*. As Borchmeyer observes, Grillparzer was so steeped in late-eighteenth-century Austrian Enlightenment thought that he spent four decades (1816–1855), on and off, writing this realistic tragedy, highlighted by Esther's powerfully articulated human role in the final act.

Hoßmann's writing throughout is clear and logical. His foreword immediately introduces two key Hebrew terms *tikkun* (restitution) and *mitzvot*

(the commandments of the Jewish law) that serve as hallmarks of Abdias' devout behavior throughout his life. In the novella's second section, Abdias learns how to reestablish himself and his neighbors, both Jews and non-Jews, after the devastating plundering of his home settlement by the forces led by the Bedouin Prince Melek. In the final and longest novella section, which takes place in his new and secluded European home, Abdias shows this act of restitution/rebuilding in his total devotion to his blind daughter, Ditha, which lasts until her death at age sixteen. As Hoßmann explains, Abdias' concreteness of purpose stands in sharp contradistinction to the Christian sense of self-development. As a persecuted Jewish outsider who has had to devote himself to itinerant trading since youth, Abdias has consistently followed the commandments of his faith—a behavior that underscores the practical determination of someone who can think on his feet and act in the moment. In Abdias' case, his strength in providing restitution reveals his moral integrity. In both North Africa and in Europe, Abdias' unflinching stance reveals his empirical belief in God's commandments.

By drawing attention to Abdias' benevolence toward his neighbors after the pillaging of their settlement, Hoßmann focuses on the two-dimensionality of the word *mitzvot*: Abdias not only practices good deeds by providing restitution, he does so in a resolutely giving way. In this manner, he is carrying out the highest of good deeds, that of *zedakah* (charity). It is at this midpoint of the novella that Abdias' earlier self-centered musings of becoming a potentate are rechanneled into the task-centered activity for the betterment not only of his fellow citizens but also of his slaves and animals. Lastly, his thoughts of seeking revenge on Melek will be given increasingly less space in the novella in the European second half of the work, as Abdias has now learned to strive for a positive freedom toward a betterment of Ditha's life in their new home.

Hoßmann begins his analysis of the longest portion of the novella with a discussion of its brief introductory paragraph describing Abdias' arrival in a European port city clasping Ditha tightly to his chest and the startled facial expressions of the Europeans watching them. Presenting two characters as one highlights Ditha as being a gift of a child—a Jewish view of children—and her surprise birth by her dying mother. The Europeans' gawking foreshadows the distance that Abdias will maintain from his neighbors in his obscure domicile—much the same type of secluded home that he had had in North Africa. Hoßmann also emphasizes the role of the rainbow after the lightning storm that causes the eleven-year-old Ditha to see for the first time.

This religious symbol of hope does not only apply to Ditha but also to her close relationship with her father, whose teaching her to see takes up most of his energy in his daughter's last years.

It would be inexcusable not to mention the variety of bonuses that come with this monograph. Throughout his study, Hoßmann makes frequent textual comparisons between the original journal publication of the novella in 1843 and its final book appearance two years later. His comparison of the ghetto story of Karl Emil Franzos, "Der Shylock von Barnow" (1877), with *Abdias* sheds light on the many common thematic strands in their depiction of the key father-daughter relationship in each work. The discussion of how Stifter's depiction of North African Jewish life looks ahead to such twentieth-century writers as Hofmannsthal, Canetti, and Loerke, who, unlike Stifter, actually visited North Africa, shows how purposefully Stifter employed travelogues for his depictions. Finally, Hoßmann's use of the most recent scholarly publications on *Abdias* places his own arguments within the current frame of Stifterian critical inquiry. All of these assets broaden the reader's understanding of the novella's genesis and its stature among nineteenth-century shorter Realist prose fiction works.

Abdias dies thirty years after Ditha, and his blossoming grave underscores his lifelong ability never to complain in the face of hardship. This flowering after his completed life highlights his attempts to find moral integrity in his actions, both with his family and within the community. In sum, according to Hoßmann, the flowering grave testifies to his ultimate goodness and sense of righteousness.

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Peter Michael Braunwarth und Leo A. Lensing, Hrsg.,
Arthur Schnitzler Träume. Das Traumbuch 1875–1931
Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012. 493 S.

Diese kritische Ausgabe von Arthur Schnitzlers Traumschreien bietet ein faszinierendes Psychogramm des legendären Autors der Wiener Moderne, der im Mai 2012 seinen 150. Geburtstag feiert. Der mit Schnitzlers Nachlass bestens vertraute Peter Michael Braunwarth wirkte bereits an der Herausgabe des zehnbändigen Tagebuchs mit, das wie Leo A. Lensing im Nachwort