

**FROM PRUSSIANISM TO MENNONITISM:
REALITY AND IDEALS IN
THEODOR FONTANE'S NOVEL QUITT***

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Critics of Theodor Fontane's novel *Quitt* (1890)¹ have repeatedly referred to "artistic weaknesses" in the work, especially in the second part of the novel where the action takes place in the United States of America.² According to critics, the contrast between the two parts of the book is most jarring: the realistic description of Silesian topography and life in chapters 1 to 16, gives way to an unrealistic, hence unconvincing, portrayal of an imaginary American landscape and conditions in chapters 17 to 37.³ Indeed, when one compares Fontane's vivid portrayal of the Silesian countryside in the first part of the novel with the nebulous description of the geography and life of the so-called "Indian Territory"⁴ of the second, there is no doubt that the first part is of greater literary value than the second. In describing the Silesian forests and social customs, Fontane was on familiar ground, having visited the area repeatedly. The first part of the novel thus rings true and includes memorable scenes of action and local color. But for his portrayal of the Indian Territory and its Mennonite missionary community, Fontane, who had never been in America, had to rely on travel accounts, various pamphlets, and other reading material.⁵ It has been pointed out that portraying imaginary situations and scenes was not Fontane's strength.⁶

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While readers of *Quitt* have generally been critical of the novel as a work of art, some Mennonite critics have objected to Fontane's portrayal of the American Mennonites.⁷ It is felt that Fontane not only misrepresents certain Mennonite beliefs and practices, but that he also portrays the practical and devout religionists too idealistically, hence falsely. It is argued especially that American Mennonites did not believe as strongly in fate as the Mennonite leader in the novel does, and that the theme of crime and atonement does not only fail to convince but that it is also contrary to Mennonite theology.⁸

The critics are of course correct in their judgement that the novel *Quitt* does not belong to Fontane's great works. It seems to me, however, that critics—notably Mennonite critics—fail, for some reason, to appreciate Fontane's intention in writing this novel and to understand his unique narrative art in *Quitt*. It must be understood that Fontane in this novel tells the story of a man who for good reasons rebels against a rigid Prussian system and then leaves that system for freedom and justice in America where the ideals he longed for cannot be fully realized. It is thus in the very nature of the novel's theme that the two parts not only take place in two different localities, but also deal with two related yet distinct realities, the one more real than the other. It is thus the purpose of this paper to analyze the real and the idealistic aspects of life with regard to the political and social systems in the novel, to comment on how Fontane's narrative technique combines and integrates the two levels of reality, and to point out that like the novel *Der Stechlin*,⁹ *Quitt* is truly a "political" novel in which Fontane criticizes the old order but fails to suggest a convincing alternative.

A brief summary of the plot of the novel will contribute to a better understanding of the subject of this paper. Lehnert Menz, the hero of the novel, who served with distinction in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71), was denied a medal of honour because of the direct intervention of Opitz, the district gamekeeper. Lehnert's subsequent poaching in the forests of Silesia is thus a revenge against his personal enemy and a war against the representative of Prus-

sian law and order, which Lehnert considers unjust. Despite the efforts of the local pastor to bring about peace and reconciliation between the two men, Lehnert in a duel-like encounter with Opitz kills the forester and then flees to America. In a Mennonite community located in the south-central United States, in what today is Oklahoma, Lehnert finds a haven of refuge as well as acceptance and love. The Mennonite society, like the Prussian system, adheres to strict standards of behaviour, but these standards are the result of human values and good-will rather than of rigidity and arbitrariness as under the Prussian system. The communal peace among the Mennonites, however, fails to quieten the guilty conscience of Lehnert the murderer. In an attempt to find his lost friend Toby in the nearby wilds, the hero accidentally falls down a precipice, and after a prolonged suffering dies similar to Opitz. He accepts his fate as an atonement for his past crime.

Lehnert Menz is not a rebel against 19th-century Prussian law and order as such, but against a system which allows the representatives of political and social justice to impose their will arbitrarily upon their society and individuals. Lehnert summarizes his basic attitude toward law and order in society to Pastor Siebenhaar as follows:

Ich war bei den Soldaten und weiß, was Gehorchen heißt, und ist gar kein vernünftiger Mensch, der gegen's Gehorchen ist. Denn das hält alles zusammen. Und so muß auch das Gesetz sein.... Aber auf die, die den Befehl haben, auf *die* kommt es an.... Und was mich angeht, Herr Prediger, ich bin nicht gegen das Gesetz, auch wenn ich's nicht immer halte, — ich bin bloß gegen den Opitz, diesen Schuft und Schelm, diesen Saufaus und Menschenschinder (12-13).

Gamekeeper Opitz symbolizes *that* in Prussian society which Lehnert hates and fights. Opitz reminds everyone around him that there are and must be superiors in a state, and that the will of the officials must not be questioned: "Alles andere gilt nicht, und wenn es gelten will, ist es Hochmut und Unsinn" (24). "Unterschiede müssen sein," he tells Christine, his maid, "Unterschiede sind Gottes Ordnungen" (28). And to his wife Opitz remarks emphati-

cally about the Prussian state: "Ich sage dir, *hier* ist es am besten, hier, weil wir Ordnung haben und einen König und eine Armee und Bismarcken" (29).

But the representative of the Prussian system is inconsistent and arbitrary with regard to the nature of law and order and its application. His wife tells Christine: "Er redet immer von Ordnung, aber jeden Tag hat er eine andere" (25). This inconsistency is reflected in Opitz's annoyance concerning his wife's objection to his irregularity when it comes to meal times:

Ich will Ordnung und Stunde halten, so soll's sein, und wenn ich die Stunde *nicht* halte, weil ich sie mal nicht halten will, nun dann will ich sie nicht halten und will nicht dran erinnert sein, am wenigsten durch deinen Schmorbraten und dein Jammergesicht, in dem immer so was liegt, was mich ärgert... (24-25).

Lehnert's mother, who according to her son is still from the old despicable "Kriechezeit" (8), is both hypocritical and a slave to the system. On the one hand she supports her son in his poaching because this provides her with food and some income; but on the other hand she believes that the political powers were instituted by God. "Der Förster ist doch eine Obrigkeit," she flatters her pastor, "und die Obrigkeit ist von Gott. Ja, das haben Sie gepredigt, Herr Prediger, und das vergeß ich nicht wieder" (45). On one occasion Lehnert expresses anger when his mother submissively stands up and bows before officials like Förster Opitz: "Was bleibst du nicht sitzen, Mutter? ... Aber das ist immer die alte Geschichte mit dir. Du hast nur zwei Gedanken: Angst und Vorteil, und hast keinen Stolz und keine Ehre" (8).

Because Lehnert perceives Prussia to be a "land of slaves" (65), he reads and dreams concerning republican freedom and a "happy America" (11). Venting his frustration at the political and social conditions in Prussia, he says to his mother:

Übers Meer will ich. Es ist mir alles so klein und eng hier, ein Polizeistaat, ein Land mit ein paar Herren und Grafen ... und sonst mit lauter Knechten und Bedienten Eine jämmerliche

Welt hier ... ich möchte ... für mein Leben gern nach Amerika, wo's anders aussieht und wo, wenn ich mein Gewehr abschieße, niemand es hört als Wald und Berg und auf zehn Meilen in der Runde kein menschlich Ohr ist (49-50).

But it is not easy for Lehnert to leave his home, "seine Schlesierland, seine Berge, seine Koppe" (65) and seek freedom across the Atlantic Ocean. In his unsettled state of mind he turns to his church's pastor for help. In a conversation with Siebenhaar Lehnert agrees that he may be wrong in his feelings toward Opitz and promises to submit again to the gamekeeper for the sake of peace and reconciliation. But Lehnert finds that however much he may try to acknowledge the superiority of Opitz, there will never be peace between the two men and their different concepts of law and justice. What is more, Lehnert begins to feel that Pastor Siebenhaar, as an official of the state, favours Opitz and his case.

The Prussian alliance between church and state¹⁰ is symbolically and ironically expressed in the description of the pastor's room in which Lehnert had learned the Catechism as a youth. The sinister nature of the collusion between the Christian religion and the Prussian state is aptly expressed in the slanted picture of Christ, which is flanked on either side by Prussian royalty: "Das Christusbild, mit Friedrich Wilhelm III. und dem Kronprinzen zur Linken und Rechten, hing noch gerade so schief wie vor vierzehn Jahren, als er hier, wöchentlich zweimal, auf einer wackligen Konfirmandenbank gesessen hatte" (10). Lehnert is thus a rebel against a long-standing tradition and he has but two choices: Either to fight this tradition in the person of the local tyrant, or to leave for a land of freedom abroad. He decides eventually to confront Opitz in a kind of duel and leave the outcome to God. In this encounter between the two enemies, Fontane is emphasizing that Lehnert is fighting Opitz as an equal and not as a criminal. This is what Fontane meant when he wrote to Martha Fontane in a letter of June 17, 1885:

Förster und Wilddieb leben in einem Kampf und stehen sich bewaffnet, Mann gegen Mann, gegenüber; der ganze Unterschied ist, daß der eine auf d. Boden des Gesetzes steht, der

andre nicht, aber dafür wird der eine bestraft, der andre belohnt, von "Mord" kann in einem ebenbürtigen Kampf keine Rede sein.¹¹

But there is no doubt that in this "equal struggle" between the two men, Fontane's sympathy lay wholly on the side of Lehnert, the victim of an unjust system.

The conflict between Lehnert and Opitz comes to a climax when the gamekeeper decides to make an "Exempel" of the poacher, "damit das Volk mal wieder sähe, daß noch Ordnung und Gesetz und ein Herr im Lande sei" (65). Lehnert appeals to the judgement of God and resigns himself to his fate. He confronts his enemy in the forest, waiting for Opitz to pull the trigger first. The forester tries to kill the "poacher" but the gun fails. Lehnert then shoots and mortally wounds Opitz. Satisfied that God has decided in favour of him, Lehnert leaves his enemy to die a slow and agonizing death. When the body of Opitz is found, all evidence points in the direction of Lehnert as the probable killer. But before he can be apprehended, Lehnert leaves his home and Prussia forever.

The first part of *Quitt* is realistically conceived and full of action. The Silesian hills, valleys, streams, and forests come alive. The inter-personal relationships are well motivated; the individual characters, notably the hero, his mother, Opitz, and Pastor Siebenhaar, are flesh and blood individuals. And the author's criticism of Prussian law and order is both subtle and severe. In reading the first part of the novel, the reader is under the illusion that he is part of the dramatic action and that he witnesses a physical, psychological and political struggle which also concerns him. In following Lehnert's tragic story the reader is held in suspense, hopes that the protagonist might outwit the oppressive system, and feels a sense of relief when the hero is able to escape from the rigid Prussian environment. But the reader also feels pity for Opitz who dies a protracted and painful death. Fontane the realist thus shows deep psychological insight in presenting the oppressor and the oppressed as suffering human beings. This sense of reality in the first part of the novel is both vivid and highly entertaining.

In the second part of the novel Lehnert's story is taken up six years after his disappearance. The protagonist is now in his mid-thirties. After working in the gold mines of California and losing his fortune, he now finds himself south of Kansas, in the so-called "Indian Territory," where the Mennonites have established a farming and missionary community called Nogat-Ehre,¹² named after their ancestral home in West-Prussia. This Mennonite community which welcomes Lehnert Menz, is somewhat unreal and certainly idealistic compared to the "real" world of Prussia in the first part. The community is governed not by a rigid governmental system as in Prussia, but by the faith and love of the pacifistic Mennonites and the experiences and wisdom of its elder Obadja Hornbostel. The remarkable fact about these American Mennonites is that although they include individuals and groups of people with different and varying backgrounds, they are able to maintain not only law and order, but also peace and good will among their members. Lehnert is surprised at how the Mennonite community and the various non-Mennonites in Obadja's house are held together: "...nicht einmal durch das Band gemeinsamer kirchlicher Anschauungen" (126), Lehnert reflects. There is for example the atheistic Frenchman L'Hermite, who like Lehnert has a capital crime on his conscience; there are Mr. and Mrs. Kaulbars, the Prussians, who think that the Prussian discipline and ways are superior to American democracy and even to Mennonite brotherhood; there are Indians who live at peace with the Mennonites and are drawn to the Mennonite faith and way of life; and there are the Mennonite missionaries who preach, teach, and live the Christian gospel in such a way that all are attracted to the message and life of the Mennonites, although not without some reluctance and scepticism on the part of some.¹³ Upon reflection, Lehnert comes to the conclusion that Elder Obadja more than anyone or anything else, is the secret to the Mennonite success in Nogat-Ehre. Obadja not only preaches the gospel of peace, according to Lehnert, but "in reiner Erscheinung und in reinem Tun" he also personifies it (126). This Mennonite community is indeed a "happy family", as Lehnert calls it (126).

In this utopian world Lehnert submits readily to Obadja Hornbostel, the virtual Mennonite dictator. "Wo Verstand befiehlt," Lehnert says about the Mennonite elder, "ist der Gehorsam leicht. Bloß der Befehl rein als Befehl, bloß hart und grausam, da kann ich nicht mit, das kann ich nicht aushalten" (110). When Lehnert out of a long German tradition and usage responds with "zu Befehl" to Obadja's order, the Mennonite elder smiles, recalling this "Prussian-militaristic form of affirmation" (117) from the past. In the idealistic world of the pacifistic Mennonites this Prussian military language has no place.

Obadja, however, is not a blind admirer of American democracy and freedom. He speaks of an American "despotism of the masses," praises what he calls the "stable forces" in Prussia, and commends the spirit of "order and work" among the German people (118-119). But the ideal life is not found in either America or Prussia, according to Obadja, but in the imaginary world of Pestalozzi's novel *Lienhardt und Gertrud*.¹⁴ What Obadja calls "the republican spirit," is truly alive in this work:

...Über allen deutschen und namentlich über allen preußischen Büchern, auch wenn die sich von aller Politik fernhalten, weht ein königlich preußischer Geist, eine königlich preußische privilegierte Luft; etwas Mittelalterliches spukt auch in den besten und freiesten noch, und von der Gleichheit der Menschen oder auch nur von der Erziehung des Menschen zum Freiheitsideal statt zum Untertan und Soldaten ist wenig die Rede. Darin ist die schweizerische Literatur, weil sie die Republik hat, der deutschen überlegen, und alle Deutsche, die, wie wir, das Glück haben, Amerikaner zu sein, haben Grund, sich dieses republikanischen Zuges zu freuen (163).

All except L'Hermite, the atheist, nod in agreement with Obadja's moralizing. The Frenchman knows from experience the "Halbheitszustände" of that which is called "republic" (163). Obadja's long speech concerning Pestalozzi's *Lienhardt and Gertrud* and in praise of republicanism, and L'Hermite's response to this speech, are no doubt ironic. Through this irony Fontane the realist seems to imply that a world of freedom, equality, and goodness can exist in books only, and perhaps in a land like the American "Indian Terri-

tory" which lies outside the politically organized United States, or, for that matter, outside any political state and order.

Lehnert gradually realizes that even such ideal conditions as found in the Mennonite community cannot remove him from the tragic reality of the old world and absolve him from his guilt. He finds acceptance and religious peace among the Mennonites, to be sure, but he cannot forget or leave behind the world of his past. In an attempt to embrace the ideal world around him and become part of an idealistic community, Lehnert loves and hopes to marry Ruth Hornbostel, Obadja's daughter, but the Mennonite elder is both reluctant and slow to grant him his heart's desire. Lehnert struggles heroically against his fate and feelings of guilt, but as L'Hermite tells him, his past will ever be with him and "unatoned blood" will pursue him to the very end (123). L'Hermite's significant words to Lehnert may be in part an expression of Fontane's own pessimism with regard to the order of the world:

Gebt Ruth auf. Ihr kriegt sie nicht...ich sage Euch, Lehnert, Ihr kriegt sie doch nicht Glaub mir, es soll nicht sein. Es ist da so was Merkwürdiges in der Weltordnung, und Leute wie wir — pardon, ich sage mit Vorbedacht wie *wir* —, die nimmt das Schicksal, der große Jagernaut, unter die Räder seines Wagens und zermalmt sie, wenn sie glücklicher sein wollen, als sie noch dürfen (201).

L'Hermite's talk about the inevitability of fate may not be the language of pious Mennonites, but it expresses, at least in part, Fontane's own view, and it is a secular version of the Mennonite belief in divine providence, a belief that God directs the lives and ways of Christians and that however God leads, it is for the best (209). Lehnert, who in the utopian community has become a Mennonite, takes L'Hermite's words seriously; he merely hears from L'Hermite's lips "was ihm eine innere Stimme selber schon zugerufen hatte" (201). Not even thoughts of Christ can absolve Lehnert from his guilt (202). And because his past crime has not been atoned for, there can be no earthly happiness and no union with Ruth:

Es half nicht Reue, nicht Beichte; was geschehen war, war geschehen, und im selben Augenblicke, wo nur noch ein Schritt, ein einziger, ihm von seinem Glücke zu trennen schien, sah er, daß dieser Schritt ein Abgrund war (201).

Obadja's sermons and speeches state time and again that his house is a place of peace (160), that his church is to be a "Herberge" (188) for weary travelers, and that the Mennonite spirit is "ein Geist des Ausgleichs und der Versöhnung, ein Quell, der *jeden* labe, der da durstig sei" (160). But Lehnert feels increasingly that he is an intruder in this paradise. The Mennonites of Nogat-Ehre are pious people, he thinks, "fromm und fleißig und wahrheitsliebend und Feinde von Eid und Krieg. Und in solche Friedensstätte wollt er einbrechen?" (112). As a man with a violent past, he does not belong into this world of tranquility and peace: "... er gehörte nicht dahin, er war eine Störung..." (112).

But just as the reality of fate is operative in human lives, so is the ideal of forgiveness and grace capable of counteracting the effects of past actions and guilt. As Obadja observes: "Schon die Wege des Lebens seien wunderbar, aber am wunderbarsten seien die Gnadenwege. Wer die Gnade habe, der mühe sich umsonst, sie zu verscherzen" (187). Lehnert in the end experiences the two dimensions of reality: the real and the ideal:

Er [Lehnert] wisse wohl, daß er ein schlechter Mensch und des Glückes, das er begehre, durchaus unwürdig sei. Wen Gott erwählt habe, das seien Obadjas eigene Worte, der könne straucheln und fallen; aber er falle nur, um durch Gott selbst wieder aufgerichtet zu werden. Er hoffe, daß dies auch *sein* Los sein werde (192).

The opportunity to go and search for Toby Hornbostel, who is lost in the wilds of the Territory, comes as a sense of relief for Lehnert. When the practical Obadja suggests that in addition to prayer one must also act, the guilt-ridden Lehnert feels that this is his chance to atone for his crime: "Und über Lehnerts Züge flog es wie ein Glanz von Glück, und er fühlte deutlich, der Tag, der über ihn entscheiden müsse, sei nun gekommen" (205). In an attempt to find his friend, he accidentally falls and like Opitz before

him dies a slow and painful death. On his body is found a piece of paper on which the following words are written in blood:

Vater unser, der du bist im Himmel... Und vergib uns unsere Schuld ... Und du, Sohn und Heiland, der du für uns gestorben bist, tritt ein für mich und rette mich ... Und vergib uns unsere Schuld ... Ich hoffe: *Quitt* (213).

At the end of the novel there seems to be a symbolic attempt by the *ideal* world to reach out to the *real* world of Prussia. Obadja writes a letter to the church council of Lehnert's former home village, informing them of Lehnert's life in America, his conversion, and the manner of his death. The letter concludes with the words: "... sei es gestattet, hinzuzufügen, daß ich der Überzeugung lebe, seine Buße habe seine Schuld gesühnt: 'Hoffnung laßt nicht zuschanden werden'" (216). The rigid system of Prussia, however, will not yield to the ideals of the Mennonite community and its plea for understanding and humanity. Privy councillor Espe, after reading the letter, insists that Lehnert should have been returned to Germany for prosecution and trial: "Soviel ich weiß, haben wir, wie mit anderen zivilisierten Staaten, auch mit Amerika Kartellverträge. Daraufhin mußte die Spur dieses Lehnert Menz verfolgt und auf seine Auslieferung bestanden werden. Er gehörte vor die Geschworenen" (220).

Espe does not share the view that Lehnert's death has atoned for his past crime. Speaking to his family, he insists:

Was heißt *quitt*? Wer das Schwert nimmt, soll durch das Schwert umkommen; *das* ist 'quitt'. Der Staat, wenn ich mich so ausdrücken darf, ist in diesem Fall in seinem Recht leer ausgegangen, und die Justiz hat das Nachsehen. Und das *soll* nicht sein und *darf* nicht sein. Ordnung, Anstand, Manier. Ich bin ein Todfeind aller ungezügelter Leidenschaften (220).

In the conclusion of the novel Fontane expresses both pessimism and a note of sadness. The real and the ideal worlds, portrayed in the two parts of the story, seemingly cannot be bridged. Like Grimmelshausen's Anabaptists in *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (1669),¹⁵ Fontane's Mennonites are an ideal community, a community which contrasts markedly with the real everyday world of Silesia and

Prussia. It is to this ideal world that the protagonist flees, hoping to find there justice and peace. In this idealistic world of the American Mennonites, Lehnert Menz does indeed find justice and love, but he cannot achieve complete peace because the real world of the past cannot be forgotten nor entirely left behind.

It is no doubt Fontane's artistic achievement to combine in the person of his hero the real Prussian world and the idealistic community of America. Moreover, in juxtaposing the two levels of reality in the two parts of the novel, Fontane succeeds in both contrasting the real and the ideal worlds and in severely criticizing the old Prussian order. But Fontane's sense of realism and pessimism not only prevented him from concluding the novel more optimistically, but also from portraying a believable idealistic community. His utopian Mennonite world betrays the author's view that in real life there is seldom, if ever, a truly "happy family." The Mennonite community in the novel remains a fantasy world of which it is possible to dream and whose ideals are worthy of admiration and even emulation, but it remains far removed from concrete social and political reality and orders. Significantly, the novel's Mennonite community exists outside of an organized political state, far removed from the real world in some nebulous territory. Lehnert's tragedy seems to be the tragedy of an idealist who naively believes in the existence of an idealistic order and that that ideal state, once realized, can obliterate the old and past experiences of the human condition. He dies, to be sure, in peace and harmony with himself and society around him, but he dies, nevertheless, as a victim of a system which will not change for the better, at least not soon, in the real world. The novel *Quitt*, like the novel *Der Stechlin*, is thus a political novel in which Fontane portrays proponents of the old and new orders. As in *Der Stechlin*, the idealized figures and the utopian world are not wholly convincing.¹⁶ The Mennonite characters who seem to have realized their ideals in a Christian community are somewhat pale and unreal in comparison with the figures in the Silesian world of the first part of the novel. The old world of Prussia Fontane knew well; he both loved and censured it.

The new order of the utopian Mennonites remained for Fontane a vision, a vision which in the real world must remain but a dream.

NOTES

1. All references to, and quotations from, this novel are from Theodor Fontane's *Sämtliche Werke*, Band VI (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1959). In the text of the paper the numbers in parentheses refer to the pages of this edition of *Quitt*.

2. Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Romane, Erzählungen, Gedichte, Nachgelassenes*. Herausgegeben von Walter Keitel und Helmuth Nürnberger. Band 14 (München: Carl Hanser Verlag — Ullstein Buch Nr. 4521-, 1970), p. 254. It has been observed that Fontane in contrast to Gottfried Keller is not precise and concrete in his description of characters, scenes, and situations. Heiko Streich points out: "Man kann mit gutem Recht Gottfried Keller als den poetischen Realisten bezeichnen, der am schärfsten *sieht* ... Nicht so Fontane. Er *hört* am besten. Er gibt nicht Äusserungen wieder ... er gibt psychologische Details ... gibt die Gesinnung einer Person; wenn überhaupt, skizziert er ihr Äusseres, malt es nie aus." *Theodor Fontane: Die Synthese von Alt und Neu* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1970), p. 46. Fontane's publisher was not as happy with the second part of the novel as with the first. On May 2, 1890, Fontane wrote to Georg Friedländer: "In der ersten Hälfte, bis zu dem Moment also, wo Lehnert plötzlich aus seinem Hause verschwunden ist, hat die Redaktion ... wahrscheinlich nichts oder nur sehr wenig geändert, desto mehr in der zweiten Hälfte. Hier ist kaum mehr als die Hälfte gegeben" Kurt Schreinert (ed.), *Theodor Fontane. Briefe an Georg Friedländer* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1954), p. 333.

3. The following comment is typical of some of the more negative criticisms of the novel: "... the 'Tendenzroman' *Quitt* (1891), cannot claim to be anything other than a minor work, despite its length The first sixteen chapters are set in Silesia, near Krummhübel in the Riesengebirge, an area which Fontane knew intimately from repeated holidays. The following twenty-one take place in the United States, a country not visited by the author. The result is that, while chapters 1 to 16 sparkle with life, all the zest goes out of the story thereafter and it drags its slow, colourless way through another 117 pages without retaining the reader's emotional participation." A. R. Robinson, *Theodor Fontane. An Introduction to the Man and his Work* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 126. A more serious and sympathetic interpretation of *Quitt* is that of Peter Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane—Kritische Untersuchungen* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag—Ullstein Buch Nr. 2983—, 1964), pp. 87-98.

4. "Indian Territory" refers to the former Indian country which, in 1907, was admitted to the United States as the 46th State, called Oklahoma. The Mennonites in this "Territory" came from the Vistula and Nogat delta in Prussia, where many Mennonites had found a haven of refuge as early as the sixteenth century.

5. For Fontane's sources for the "Indian Territory" in the United States and the Mennonite missionary community, see the following: Theodor Fontane, *Briefe I* (Briefe an den Vater, die Mutter und die Frau). Herausgegeben von Kurt Schreinert (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1968), p. 297-298; A. J. F. Zieglschmid, "Truth and

Fiction and Mennonites in the Second Part of Theodor Fontane's Novel 'Quitt': The Indian Territory," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XVI: 4 (October, 1942), pp. 240-246; Demetz, *Formen des Realismus*, p. 93.

6. Fontane, *Sämtliche Romane*, "Zur Entstehung," p. 254.

7. See especially Elizabeth Horsch Bender and the critics she cites in *The Mennonites in German Literature* (Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1944), pp. 116-126. Erwin Enns writes: "Er [Fontane] hat sie freilich nie gesehen, diese Mennoniten... so ist ein großer Erzähler das Opfer seiner unzulänglichen Vorstellungen und einer ungereimten Phantasie geworden." "'Quitt' oder: Wie man auch Mennonit werden kann. Anmerkungen zu einem Fontane — Roman," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1979*. Herausgegeben von der Konferenz der Süddeutschen Mennonitengemeinden e.V. (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1979), p. 68. Erwin Enns seems to have misunderstood Fontane's novel. A more positive response to the portrayal of the Mennonites in the novel comes from Ernst Correll: "Only occasionally does a line not ring true, as for example, when Obadiah on one occasion is made to confess to the doctrine of predestination; but the total picture of this group of Mennonites is quite accurate." "Theodor Fontane's 'Quitt'," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XVI:4 (October, 1942), p. 222.

8. Bender, *The Mennonites in German Literature*, pp. 124-126.

9. See Harry E. Cartland's penetrating study, "The 'Old' and the 'New' in Fontane's *Stechlin*," *The Germanic Review*, LIV:1 (Winter, 1979), pp. 21-28.

10. The state-church of Prussia in this novel is in sharp contrast to the "free" church of the Mennonites, who traditionally upheld a strict separation of church and state. On Fontane's attitude toward Prussian royalty and aristocracy, see D. Barlow, "Fontane and the Aristocracy," *German Life and Letters*, 8 (1954-55), pp. 182-191, and Willy Schumann, "Wo ist der Kaiser? Theodor Fontane über Kaiser Wilhelm II," *Monatshefte*, LXXI: 2 (Summer 1979), pp. 161-171.

11. Fontane, *Briefe II* (Briefe an die Tochter und an die Schwester), p. 76.

12. While "Nogat" was derived from the name of the river in Prussia, "Ehre," the other half of the name, was invented by Fontane.

13. Fontane was no doubt ironic in describing this "ideal" world of the Mennonites. However, he held this world up as a possible visionary alternative to the Prussian system which he viewed with misgivings. Other works, such as *Der Stechlin*, seem to bear this out. See Cartland, "The 'Old' and the 'New' in Fontane's *Stechlin*," p. 27.

14. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Lienhardt und Gertrud* (first version: 1781-87; second version: 1790-92; third version: 1819-20). Lehnert's name was suggested to Fontane by the hero of this novel. On what Pestalozzi's contemporaries and later writers thought of *Lienhardt und Gertrud*, see H. J. Schueler, "Figurative Language and its Relation to Pestalozzi's Pedagogic Intentions in 'Lienhardt und Gertrud'," *German Life and Letters*, New Series, XXIX:3 (April, 1976), pp. 273-282.

15. In Book V, chapter 19, Grimmelshausen portrays an exemplary Anabaptist community and holds it up as a model for all Christians to follow. The historical seventeenth-century Anabaptists were not as "perfect" as Grimmelshausen's group. See A. J. F. Zieglschmid, "Die ungarischen Wiedertäufer bei Grimmelshausen," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LIX,3/4, pp. 352-87.

16. Cartland observes: "Fontane's *Stechlin* is perhaps more a hope than a legacy. The figures which are to present the future are not wholly convincing. This apparent lack of verisimilitude may be seen positively as a correlative of the difficulty of seeing the future with any precision." "The 'Old' and the 'New,'" p. 27. This observation applies to a large extent to *Quitt* as well.