

To get *Theodor Storm: Am Grauen Meer* to sit right, I had to keep the book open on *Monch am Meer*. This wasn't my first pick of the volume's reproductions, as Nolde's windmills reminded me of palm trees, and there was a familiar tropical dread in Karl Hagemeister's *Brandende See bei Rügen*.

You see, I was hoping to reconcile the Postcolonial Theory of my undergraduate English Literature courses with my new status as a Masters of Fine Art student in a Painting Class in Germany. These paintings should have helped me do that.



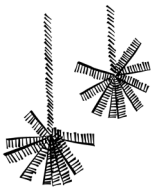
At the Vernissage, David S. said, "I never cared for Caspar David Friedrich."

After the semester ended, I left the installation out in the foyer of my studio. Because I thought it was beautiful, powerful. Absolutely spectacular and sacred, of course. It was on its white Sockel!

Over the summer, this foyer became a dusty, grimy kind of half-kitchen. Some of the books were stolen – I was especially sad about the Earl Lovelace, and the *Mumins*, as it wasn't my own copy. No one touched Theodor Storm, except to close the book, and set it aside.

By the end of the summer, the sculptor next door was using my Sockel in her workshop for refugees – its perfect 90° edges had been sawed into, its cheap, fragile MDF corners were smashed, and it was covered in dark smears.

I think that I left it in the building when I moved studios, and it was eventually destroyed.



A couple years later, Elvira found *Salt* on the street outside of Katharina's apartment. Miriam found *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and returned it to me.

2015 brought my first art school woodworking project, a Sockel made out of MDF board and painted Alpine white. The Sockel was for an installation in which one hardcover volume – an anthology called *Theodor Storm: Am Grauen Meer* – was clapped open atop a pile of some other, important fictional works.

To different degrees, the books under *Am Grauen Meer* connected me to my homes across the Atlantic; a friend's copy of *Mumin's Wundersame Inselabenteuer*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*, *A Bend in the River* from V.S. Naipaul, Earl Lovelace's *Salt*, and *Omeros* from Derek Walcott.

Theodor Storm's weighty anthology was without its paper dust cover, its fabric binding adorned with a beautiful print of an oil painting: a woman standing in a tired pose, her clothing puffed out in the wind, before a golden field where women in similar dress bent over crops, weeding or harvesting.



On glossy pages which interrupted the creamy matte of *Der Schimmelreiter*, *Aquis Submersus* and co., the volume included several relatively high-quality prints of artworks from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their painterly atmospheres related to Storm's texts.

These paintings included Emil Nolde's *Windmühlen an der Marsch*, Caspar David Friedrich's *Monch am Meer* (which I had just seen in Berlin), and Max Beckmann's *Leute nach der Arbeit am Meer (Am Strand von Wangerooge)*.



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