Bertha von Suttner: A Prototypical European Writer

«Bertha von Suttner: A Prototypical European Writer»

by Johann Georg Lughofer

Source:

The following ad supports maintaining our C.E.E.O.L. service
When it comes to crucial contemporary topics like peace studies and the intercultural intellectual influence on German-language writers, one person must not be forgotten as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War I: Bertha von Suttner. Born in Prague in 1843 as Sophia Felicita Gräfin Kinsky von Chinic and Tettau, Suttner made history as a writer, pacifist, and the first female recipient of the Nobel Prize. 

In the first part, this paper provides an overview of Suttner’s communion with European cultures as well as the influence of European writers and intellectuals on her thought and deeds; it then analyses, on the basis of *Die Waffen nieder!* her novel of purpose (or Tendenzroman), how these influences are expressed in her literature, how Suttner describes the other European cultures and lands she had visited, how she deals strategically with warmongering based on intercultural prejudices, and how her calls for peace develop into a wish for a European confederation of states. In addition, the paper shows the extent to which the Europe-wide success of the *Die Waffen nieder!* and her subsequent international commitment for pacifism confirmed the prominent position of the writer in the European context. But her international views reveal themselves primarily as openness to European culture, rather than openness towards the entire world.

1. THE YOUNG BERTHA VON SUTTNER IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

1.1. A Connoisseur of European Languages and Cultures

Unlike other children of her social standing and time, Bertha Kinsky was not raised in a convent-school; rather, thanks to the good judgement of her mother and guardian she learned already as a youngster in Brno, later in
Klosterneuburg and Vienna, the languages English, French, and Italian from various foreign governesses. Already as a child she had mastered several languages and was, moreover, said to be well-versed in literature. In her memoirs she jocundly describes herself as a ten-year-old *Wunderkind*:


As a teenager she had already read her way well past the most important German literature. She showed – as was typical in that time – a keen interest for Western Europe, especially England and France. In addition, one recognizes a liberal and socially critical tendency in her choice of reading material.

University studies were not to be, since in the Habsburg monarchy women were still forbidden this, even if women in France had been admitted to all faculties except theology since 1863. This possibility lay far in the future in Austria, and not even Gymnasien for girls existed. Yet Bertha Kinsky would not be prevented from attaining widespread knowledge and she privately studied philosophy and the natural sciences alike. Her erudition was well above that of contemporary women. She knew neither international borders nor linguistic barriers, and she kept up with French thinkers and French discussions. So it was that she became intimately familiar with those thinkers, including anti-clerical ones, who were firmly in the Enlightenment tradition.

Bertha began her own writing career at a young age, and already at 16 she had published her first novella, though this was not followed by any great ambitions. Reading literary works, however, remained of key importance to Suttner, and these works continued to influence her:

### 1.2. Travels and Voluntary Exile

As a child and youth, Suttner had already seen much of Europe. Her mother took her along on trips to German spa-towns and holiday centres like Wiesbaden, Baden-Baden, and Bad Homburg, and the family would also spend months – often entire winters – in Rome, Venice, or Paris.
Her knowledge of foreign languages allowed Suttner to establish international acquaintances with illustrious individuals from a young age – such as during her stay in Bad Homburg in 1864, when she met von Ekaterina Dadiani, Princess of Mingrelia, who was surrounded by an international circle in her Paris residence – with a French secretary, a Swiss valet and guests from every imaginable land. From the start Suttner felt attracted to this hybrid lifestyle:

Das Orientalische, Exotische, vermischt mit dem russisch und pariserisch Weltlichen, gewürzt von Romantik und eingerahmt von Reichustumsglanz, das übte einen eigenen Zauber auf mich; ich war wirklich geradezu glücklich über diese Beziehung, sie war mir wie die Erfüllung unbestimmter, lang gehegter Träume. (Suttner 1968: 101)

Music lessons were in French and Italian. Her singing often took her abroad, including for longer study periods in Milan, as well as with period Maître Duprez in Paris. But this did not result in a career as an opera diva. In 1872 Bertha began working as a governess in the homes of Baron Karl von Suttner in both Vienna and Harmannsdorf, teaching languages and music to his four young daughters. It was there that she met and fell in love with Arthur Gundacar von Suttner, the Baron’s youngest brother. His parents were against the alliance: Bertha was seven years older than Arthur and was not from a wealthy family. Despite his parents’ opposition, they married secretly in 1876 and withdrew to Georgia for almost nine years.

1.3. Contact and Correspondence with European Luminaries

Bertha von Suttner was known her entire life as a gifted letter-writer. Already in childhood she and her cousin Elvira were used to illustrious correspondence partners: In her memoirs she recalls Elvira’s family album that was crammed with letters from prominent individuals such as Anastasius Grün, Franz Grillparzer, Friedrich Rückert, Friedrich Hebbel, Richard Wagner, Radetzky and Benedek. As well, international greats such as Victor Hugo, Alessandra Manzoni (whom Goethe revered) and Charles Dickens appeared there. That they received friendly responses from such individuals is evidence of their knack for well-formulated and clever letters inviting correspondence.

She would never lose her skill at correspondence. After the affair between the governess Bertha Kinsky and Arthur became public, his mother

---

1 Mingrelia is the western part of what is today Georgia.
showed Bertha an anonymous job advertisement for a private secretary in Paris – for none other than Alfred Nobel, as it turned out. Here, too, the letter-writer Bertha von Suttner proved convincing: after the exchange of letters – in which there were, not least, literary discussions – Nobel was so interested that in 1876 he picked up his new secretary from the train station and reserved a suite of elegant rooms in the Grand Hotel on the Boulevard des Capucines.

Although the acquaintance with Nobel was to remain a lifelong and mutually influential friendship, Bertha stayed in Paris for less than two weeks. She chose love and returned to Arthur in Austria, where, as mentioned, she married. The two spent a rather extended honeymoon between summer 1876 and May 1885. In the Caucasus both Suttners began to write. Arthur drafted reports on the Russo-Turkish war for the Neue Freie Presse, while Bertha published feuilletons and serial novels for various magazines and newspapers.

The couple’s friends were for the most part international guests. The 100,000 residents of Tbilisi belonged to the most varied of nationalities, and among these were 2000 Germans. Suttner’s liberal and intercultural attitude was strengthened through the colourful multiculturalism in Georgia, which rested on a tradition of tolerance and also expressed itself in a very open relation attitude towards the various religions. Of the 75 places of worship in the capital Tbilisi, 36 were Georgian or Russian Orthodox, 26 Armenian, two Protestant, two Roman Catholic, and there were two mosques, a few temples and various monasteries. (Hamann 2002: 75)

The Suttners occupied themselves then with a transcultural project: the translation of Shota Rustaveli’s national epic The Knight in the Panther’s Skin into French and German. They worked on this with a Georgian journalist, a Hungarian graphic artist, and their Belgian friend Jean Mourier, a researcher into the history and art of the region.

The Suttners energetically established relationships with writers in Western Europe, presenting themselves in their letters as colleagues, relating something about their life, and especially – usually in an original and clever manner – expressing their high regard for the addressee’s work. Almost all of those they contacted responded, and often a lengthy correspondence resulted with distinguished writers and editors. Here, too, the Suttners exchanged let-

---

2 Nobel himself was a fine example of a cosmopolitan: fluent in five language (Swedish, Russian, German, English, and French), he loved especially the works of Shelley and Byron, had set out to travel the world at the tender age of 17, and even as an adult he remained a regular traveller.
ters with international writers like the Danish intellectual Georg Brandes, an anticlerical and enthusiastic Nietzschean.

After returning to Western Europe, the couple spent the winter of 1888 in Paris and was introduced to the famous salon of Juliette Adam, who was the publisher of the literary magazine *La Nouvelle Revue*. Suttner, however, distanced herself from the political commitment of the patriot and *revanchiste*. The Suttners were also received in the salon of the salon run by the Buloz couple, where primarily colleagues from the esteemed monthly *Revue des deux mondes* met. So it was that they met such well-known individuals as Ernest Renan and Max Nordau. The novelist Alphonse Daudet also warmly welcomed them into his house, and it was that they first heard about the existence of an organised peace movement. The search for further information would soon open the way for the Suttners into an international network – the London Peace Bureau of Hodgson Pratt, and the French one under Frédéric Passy. Also in Italy, Denmark, Germany, and especially in the United States there were similar societies that the Suttners would come to know.

### 1.4. The Influence of English and French Thinkers and Writers

From her earliest years Suttner read international newspapers and kept up with the scientific discussions of her time. Her entire oeuvre is imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment, and her circle of friends at that time was composed of liberal politicians and thinkers like Bartolomeus von Carneri, Graf Rudolf Hoyos and Balduin Groller. It is not entirely coincidental that her popular novel *Die Waffen nieder!* appeared exactly one hundred years after the French Revolution. Kant’s famous Enlightenment catchword “*Sapere aude – Habe Mut, dich deines eigenes Verstandes zu bedienen!*” could – alongside “lay down your arms!” – be a second motto for her work as a hole. She considered man a rational, responsible, and free individual. These views often entailed conflict with the conservative opinions in the Austrian Monarchy, particularly those of the Church against which Suttner so determinedly positioned herself. “Da, wo ich Licht sehe, kann ich mich mit aller Gewalt nicht zwingen, es mit offenen Augen nicht zu sehen, und umgekehrt: wo ich nichts sehe, wird keine noch so heftige Anstrengung der Sehnerven mich zum Sehen bringen”. (Suttner 1907a: 320)

In 1885, after a reconciliation with her husband’s family and her return to Austria (into the Suttners’ country villa of Harmannsdorf im Waldviertel), such liberal and anticlerical attitudes resulted in a great deal of controversy
around and a lack of understanding for Suttner. Arthur’s mother allegedly had a book-burning, with the works of Emile Zola – whom the Suttner family considered to be a model – fuelling the fire; (Suttner 1968: 401) later, they corresponded with him, too. The conservative surroundings rendered journeys to Paris or elsewhere all the more enticing.

Particularly during her time in the Caucasus, Suttner’s belief in mankind’s higher development and in the necessity of pacifism became galvanised. At that time, many of the 19th century intellectual streams repudiated today as “grand narratives” à la Lyotard continued to reign. Their firmly-anchored belief in the logical unfolding of history according to Hegelian idealism notwithstanding, the Suttner family’s most inspiring influences came from English science. Departing from Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, Herbert Spencer and Henry Thomas Buckle developed a related evolutionary theory for sociology and history that proved the basis for Suttner’s unwavering optimism and belief that mankind was developing entirely to the better. For Suttner, Darwin’s revolutionary views were more than an academic theory. In one of her novels the most intelligent of protagonists expresses the wish to become a priestess of a Darwin-cult:

Wenn es einen gültigen Darwinismuskult gäbe, so wollte ich dessen Priester sein. Ich glühe für diesen Mann, der mit seiner rastlosen Forschung, mit seiner folgernden Denkkraft den Grund zu seiner Weltanschauung gelegt hat, welche in der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschengeistes die bisher größte Wende bezeichnen wird. (Suttner 1907b: 98)

Again and again in various texts she strikes up a hymn to progress – occasionally in a veritably rhapsodic tone:

dahin gelangten? Was könnte uns zu der Annahme berechtigen, daß irgend etwas auf der höchsten Spitze angelangt sei? (Suttner 1907a: 69)

Mankind’s upward march was to lead to material, but also spiritual and moral perfection. For the last stage of development she coined her own terms, such as “Vollmensch” and “Edelmensch” – words she liked to apply to her husband and herself.

In addition to Enlightenment thought and Darwinism, Realism, which had been a part of Suttner’s reading since childhood, was a decisive influence on her. Her style of writing was realistic with a particular purpose, and often she even found a didactic air appropriate. Her artistic goal was not to please readers. “Glauben Sie wirklich,” says a character in her Schriftsteller-Roman,

daß ein Autor genug getan hat, wenn er – wie etwa eine gelungene Theaterdekoration, oder eine hübsche Damentoillette auf dem Balle – gefallen hat? Er soll nützen, erheben, beglücken – er soll der Wahrheit, der Gerechtigkeit und der Schönheit gedient haben, freudenhemmende Vorurteile wegräumen, Aberglauben und Dunkel zerstören helfen. (Suttner 1907c: 196)

She admitted openly to her fellow writer Irma von Troll-Borostyáni, “daß man gerade durch Romane mehr Chancen hat, seine Ideen einzuschmuggeln”. (Qtd. in Hamann 2002: 100). Her concern with the modern literature of Realism, and in particular with Zola, resulted also in the theoretical article “Wahrheit und Lüge” about the task of modern art. Here she firmly places herself among realists, aggressively rejecting old art as a lie:

Da lügen die Farben auf der Leinwand, die Mienen auf der Bühne, die Worte in den Büchern, ja sogar die Bäume und Blumen in den Gärten; diejenigen, die diese Falschheitsstückchen fertigbringen, brüsten sich, Künstler zu sein; und jene, die sich daran ergötzten, tun sich auf ihren Kunstsinns viel zugute. (Qtd. in Hamann 2002: 79)

And so it is that realistic and autobiographical elements determine her literature, which itself interprets ideas and discussions. The difficulty of commenting as a woman on political, scientific and philosophical themes can be seen in the fact that Suttner opted (as she often had done in the past) for a neutral pseudonym for the essay Das Maschinenzeitalter. Zukunftsvorlesungen über unsere Zeit: “Jemand.” A female writer could not have reached a large audience because precisely in scientific circles intellectual prejudices against
women existed. In her memoirs she writes of a discussion about a book in which she had shown interest but was quickly relegated: “Oh, das ist kein Buch für Damen!” (Suttner 1968: 214)

2. The Representation of European Lands and Cultures in Die Waffen Nieder!

2.1. The Reasons for the Europe-Wide Reception of the Novel

It was not easy to find a publisher for this best-known of pacifist Tendenzromane – until Pierson in Leipzig said he was willing to publish the book in 1889. She wanted to use her book to perform a service for the Peace League by explicitly depicting – through the eyes of a female protagonist – both the horrors of the battlefield and the sufferings of those that stayed home. In this way she could prove a catalyst for discussion of the horrors of war. The novel is narrated in the first person by the Viennese countess Martha Althaus, and it is through her perspective that we read about the deaths of both of her husbands, as well as of her siblings and her father due to the wars waged between 1859 and 1870. Her path towards active pacifism is told with equal realism. Althaus convincingly argues for international understanding and communication, as well as the dismantling of hostile stereotypes of the “enemy.” The incredible international success of the book cannot be attributed merely to Suttner’s having digested European influences, to her clever way of proceeding (which was offensive to none), and to the pan-European thought which, as will be seen presently, formed her background; also the international state of affairs made questioning war acutely relevant, as tensions existed between France and Germany, between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Die Waffen nieder! soon was translated into several languages, including Romansh, the language of some 40 000 Alpine residents, as well as a total of five times into Russian. It was critically acclaimed, even if already back then its artistic merit was not always praised. As one of the most successful books of the 19th century, by 1905 it had reached (according to the socialist Vorwärts edited by Karl Liebknecht) a 37th German edition, including a paperback popular edition in 1896 and countless reprints in newspapers. The book could thus spur discussion in many countries and across many social classes. Peter Rossegger, Alfred Nobel and Leo Tolstoy wrote enthusiastically about the author, the last saying, “Der Abschaffung der Sklaverei ging das berüh-

193
Tolstoy’s comparison with Harriet Beecher-Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has remained popular even today. An international and intercultural ethos was not self-understood only for Bertha von Suttner; the protagonist Martha Althaus also seemed born for the same: she had been instructed in foreign languages and literatures from an early age, and spoke French and English with near perfection. Likewise, her second husband Tilling spoke both languages perfectly. Just how normal the knowledge of foreign languages was for Suttner manifests itself in the fact that this novel, which was meant for the broadest of readerships, assumes an acuity in both English and French. The novel contains conversations in each of these languages, and moreover there are numerous foreign words and expressions from these languages that are used without further explanation.

Enlightenment ideas buttress much of the work’s intellectual tenor: the self-determining and thinking individual rebels against traditions that are resolutely supported by establishment and Church alike. The novel is also indebted to Realism; its descriptions exhibit a trueness to detail, and it refers to fictional diaries and to authentic historical sources. Darwin and Buckle’s theories are also discussed in the novel, though Suttner is diplomatic in not standing all too clearly on the side of Darwin. This even though his opponents in the novel are ignorant militaristic individuals who – something completely un-cosmopolitan for Suttner – speak “in barschem Ton und Wiener Dialekt”:

> Ich hab von der Affeng’schicht auch schon was g’hört. War mir aber zu dumm, um aufzupassen. Wenn man sich immer um alles Geschwätz kümmern sollt, mit dem uns die Sterngucker und Graspflücker und Froschhaxen-Untersucher ein X für ein U vormachen wollen – da müßt einem ja Hören und Sehen vergehen. (Suttner 2006: 64)

### 2.2. Honeymoon Journeys without Foreign Contact and Local Colour

It is curious that despite this *Tendenzroman’s* supra-national attitude of pacifism and the attempt to win people over to the idea of peace, one possible strategy for presenting war as senselessly destructive is ignored: presenting the countries, people and cultures of the respective opponents as positive and amiable. This is surprising, given that in the 19th century travel descriptions
were in full bloom and given that even other novel forms found ample space for them; also, including such descriptions in the novel would have posed no problem for the well-travelled Suttner.

The novel’s Martha Althaus lives between Vienna and Gumnitz, the family estate in Lower Austria. She has travelled little, which does not appear to be unusual for Austrians of the time. During a stay in Paris Suttner has her hero remark, “Landsleute trafen wir nur wenige; der Österreicher ist nicht reiselsüchtig”. (Suttner 2006: 335) Regardless of this paucity of Austrians abroad, after she marries Count Arno Dotzky while still a young woman, she spends her honeymoon in Italy; but no details about this are revealed to the reader. And yet one always notices that Martha’s (honeymoon) journeys always lead her to countries against which Austria will later wage war. Local colour is not at all shown, and Italy, where Martha honeymooned with her first husband, is neither described nor remembered subsequently. Even when the Austrians are preparing for war with their neighbouring country the protagonist has no associations with the time she has just spent there. Politics are not the young countess’s concern, and neither does she reminisce or think of her own experiences in Italy. Suttner leaves it to the reader to establish a relation between the now-enemy country in which Arno loses his life and the happy journey the married couple had experienced there.

On the second honeymoon journey, the newlywed couple travels to prominent German spa towns such as Baden-Baden, Bad Homburg and Wiesbaden; but these places are not further described either, even though it would have been easy for Suttner to have done so, since she had spend a great deal of her childhood and adolescent years here.

It was Suttner’s conscious decision not to have the narrator report on foreign countries, and in this she is constant throughout the novel. Even the bright lights of Paris do not warrant description on the part of the narrator. A further journey to Italy, along with a stay in Switzerland, with her husband and their children does not entail a presentation of the places visited and their cultures, though these experiences mean much to the protagonist: “Im folgenden Frühjahr bereisten wir Italien. Reisen und Weltkennenlernen gehörte ja auch zu unserem neuen Lebensprogramm. Frei und reich waren wir, nichts hinderte uns, es auszuführen”. (Suttner 2006: 341)

Such admissions by the narrator makes the reader wonder why she neglects to describe these fascinating countries; after all, in her later peace-oriented political programme Suttner calls for reciprocal familiarity between nations – when, for example, responding to a sceptical article by Hermann
Bahr on Italian nationalism. In the Neue Freie Presse she defends the idea of a friendship committee with the following goal: “darauf hinzuarbeiten, daß die beiden Nationen einander besser kennenlernen und dadurch die Vorurteile und Antipathien überwinden, die noch aus jener Zeit stammen, wo drüben der Österreicher als der Prototyp unterdrückender Polizeigewalt und bei uns die Italiener als der Prototyp des tückischen ‘Katzelmachers’ galt”. (Qtd. in Hamann 2002: 465)

The traveller Suttner consciously opts against a positive portrayal of the culture of the various countries’ cultures because this would be of no service for the novel of purpose Die Waffen nieder! and the dissemination of the pacifist ideal she desired. The stereotypes and prejudices of the time were so entrenched that any strategy of depicting other cultures in a positive light would have been counter-productive among many readers.

2.3. Prejudices and Negative Stereotypes in Hostile Portrayals of the Enemy

Suttner’s path was to show clearly the popularisation of war through the increased and aggressive use of stereotypes and the creation of negative portrayals of the other. She very acutely perceives language to be an expression of a culture of violence. Before conflicts on the battlefield negative pronouncements are quite distinctly used to saturate the discourse of the time, such that the very names of nations cause curses:

*Der bloße Name des gegnerischen Volkes bekommt zu Kriegszeiten eine ganze Schar von hassenswerten Nebenbedeutungen – es ist nicht mehr der Gattungsname einer momentan bekriegten Nation, es wird synonym mit ‘Feind’ und faßt allen Abscheu in sich, den dieses Wort ausdrückt.*

(Suttner 2006: 281)

Stereotypes, unjustly oversimplified and generalized characteristics of groups of people, can soon change from unconsidered popular sayings into calculated elements within a system of preparation for war — and Suttner makes this evident. Rather than true encounters with foreigners, the narrator precisely shows how, before the battles, there is warmongering as negative prejudices are heaped upon potential enemies. The arguments of the proponents of war mostly emerge from the mouth of General Althaus, Martha’s father. General Althaus is quick to curse potential and real war opponents in his speeches, which are imbued with fantasies of power. On the occasion of
the 1859 war that pitted Piedmont-Sardinia and France against Austria (The Second Italian War of Independence), he speaks of the Italians as a “italienischen Jammerpack”, “welschen Gesindel” and “Katelmacher” (Suttner 2006: 18, 24). After Austria loses this war, his attitude remains unchanged, and he is angry at the “schäbigen Italiener samt ihrem intriganten Louis Napoleon” and the “sardinische Räuberhauptmann samt seinem französischen Henkersbeistand”. (Suttner 2006: 127, 43)

He is not alone in adopting such a line; wars are always called popular and the people are in support of them. The narrator sees that already history classes call for a patriotic and belligerent attitude. Newspapers and orators, meanwhile, prepare for war:

die in loyalstem und patriotisch glühendstem Tone gehaltenen Leitartikel und öffentlichen Reden; dieser ewige Appell an Tugend, Ehre, Pflicht, Mut, Aufopferung; diese sich gegenseitig gemachten Versicherungen, daß man die bekannt unüberwindlichste, tapferste, zu hoher Machtausdehnung bestimmte, beste und edelste Nation sei. (Suttner 2006: 25)

Austrian anti-Prussian stereotypes are of a different variety: Martha’s cousin Conrad describes her husband-to-be Tilling (whom she has not yet met) as cold and devoid of feeling. His mother is a Prussian, whereas he seems to be of Hanover stock. It is precisely in this person that Suttner shows the falsely interpreted backgrounds of national stereotypes: Tilling is in the service of the Austrians, and his “cold” nature soon shows itself to be noble reserve. The narrator Martha plays with these prejudices, such that when it seems that Tilling must go to his lover (as Martha falsely assumes), she observes, “Jetzt nahm mein Gesicht einen kalten Ausdruck an”. (Suttner 2006: 56) Martha explains a possible real background for the negative anti-Prussian stereotypes harboured by the Austrians in a positively manner – the correct use of High German.

It is conspicuous that the northern neighbours are laden with completely different negative stereotypes than those of the Italians. This is surely an accurate assessment of the mood of the time, and even today one hears these generalizations in Austria. Martha’s father curses the Danes and later the Prussians before the German-Danish war in 1864 (The Second Schleswig War) and the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 differently than he curses the Italians. The northerners are cursed as arrogant and impudent.

Because the problem of Schleswig, over which the war against Denmark was waged, cannot be settled, disagreements arise between the victors, Prussia
and Austria. Correspondingly, jingoistic views circulate: a letter from the Christian Aunt Marie to Martha asks about the political situation in Berlin, where Friedrich – “zum Glück ist er nicht so arrogant wie seine Landsleute” – has relatives. For the lovers the stereotype of arrogance remains a joke: Martha asks a question of her husband, ending it with the joking tag of “du minder arroganter Preuße?” Friedrich also employs this stereotype: “Die Schleswig-Holsteiner haben jetzt große Lust, die Preußen – die ‚arroganten’, denn das sind wir jetzt, dem neuesten Schlagwort gemäß – wieder ganz loszuwerden”. (Suttner 2006: 178)

The fatuousness of such generalizations is thus made clear to the reader. The contemporary Austrian anti-Prussian tone becomes increasingly loud the closer the two come to war. Martha’s father looks forward to the war and an increase in territory for the Danube Monarchy, referring haughtily to the “freche[n] Preußen” and “arroganten Windbeutel.” Confident that his side will be victorious, the “arrogante Preuße” has no chance against the 800 000 men of the Austrian forces. (Suttner 2006: 187, 200, 189)

The members of the Prussian people’s army are denounced as “Schneidergesellen” who can only move out against the professional army with “ganze[n] preußische[n] Selbstüberhebung”. (Suttner 2006: 196, 206) The jingoism works: the cousin Conrad Althaus is, accordingly, “von genügend Preußenhaß beseelt”, that he happily marches off to fight. (Suttner 2006: 201)

When the Austrian side loses and a preliminary peace accord is reached in Nikolsburg, the population takes a stand against the approaching Prussians. Panic reigns in Grumnitz: “Die Preußen kommen, die Preußen kommen!” (Suttner 2006: 266) The victors are ambushed; the assassins are then executed. During the cholera epidemic resulting from the war the Gumnitz gravedigger shows little compassion: “Ja, wieder sechs oder sieben ... alle Tage so ein halb’ Dutzend, manchmal auch mehr ... es kommt auch vor, daß einer oder der andere im Wagen drin sich noch ein bissl muckst – aber tut nix – nur ‘nein in die Gruben mit die Preußen!” (Suttner 2006: 299) The narrator does not adhere to the general opinion, instead demonstrating how in times of war common stereotypes are misused to construct a negative image of the other. Suttner shows that stereotypes judge and remain closed to changes. That Suttner deconstructs prejudices against Prussians, while passing without comment over other stereotypes, has to do with her anticipated readership and her hopes for their ability to extrapolate a message. Diplomatically, she portrays northern Germans positively and often praises their language in order that the novel might speak to the German language market as a whole. Even during the Austro-Prussian war Martha says,

In Paris, Althaus experiences anew propaganda for war against Prussia, namely the Franco-German war of 1870/71. In spite of the proximity she senses for the Germans – “Dennoch: Friedrich war preußischer Abkunft, und waren nicht auch mir die Deutschen, deren Sprache ja die meine ist, stammerwanderter als ihre Gegner?” (Suttner 2006: 359) – she cannot adopt a national viewpoint. And still the couple is treated with hostility.

The enthusiastic proclamations of war, army orders and the corresponding manifestoes heap up, the people stands solidly behind the declaration of war, and Paris changes drastically – it finds itself in a battle against “[d]ie Ulanen, die Ulanen”. (Suttner 2006: 267) New anti-German stereotypes are minted, and because these differ from the ones employed by the Austrians, the relative and arbitrary nature of such thinking is underlined all the more – the French consider them barbarians. There are reports of the inhumane horrors committed by the Germans in the battle for Bazaille near Metz. Martha sceptically asks Tillinger: “glaubst du das von den gutmütigen Bayern?” (Suttner 2006: 368)

Because of this aggressive warmongering, the two ask themselves, “Sind wir wieder zu den Rassenkämpfen gekommen?” (Suttner 2006: 362) The animosity sinks to its nadir and an severity not yet seen by the narrator and thus not by the reader: “in das ganze Volk drang der Haß für das ganze gegnerische Volk. Die Feindschaft ward zu einer Institution erhoben, die sich nicht auf die Dauer des Krieges beschränkt, sondern als „Erbfeindschaft‘ ihren Bestand unter kommenden Geschlechtern sichert”. (Suttner 2006: 373) The prognosis turns out to be true: after suffering defeat, the French emperor is deposed and the Republic continues the war. Althaus’ decision – “Fort, fort! [...] wozu unter Leuten leben, die von keinen anderen als Haß- und Rachegedanken erfüllt sind, die uns mit scheelen Blicken und oft mit geballten Fäusten betrachten, wenn sie uns deutsch reden hören?” (Suttner 2006: 377) – comes too late. As a result of a letter from Berlin found in Friedrich’s possession, he is accused of spying and summarily executed. This is a shock for the reader, who can only take a position against blanket prejudices and the warmongering of both the media and other institutions, and general opinion.
2.4. A Necessary Change of Perspective

By means of the various perspectives towards as well as her playing with the explanations of “preußische Arroganz” Suttner highlights both the feebleness of common clichés and prejudices and how they are exploited for war propaganda. She does this without pointing fingers, and she declares the individual people in the novel to be innocent: “Die Menschen, welche die Tat vollbracht, trifft nicht die Schuld. Der allein Schuldige ist der Geist des Krieges, und diesem nur könnte mein – allzuschwaches – Verfolgungswerk gelten”. (Suttner 2006: 390)

Already in less politically-fraught times the young Martha seems capable of seeing through the emptiness of war rhetoric. Even her husband’s statement that he wants to protect family and abode while in Italy has an uncomfortable ring to her:

Ich weiß nicht, warum mir diese Worte, welche ich in ähnlicher Fassung doch schon oft zustimmend gehört und gelesen hatte, diesmal einigermaßen als ‘Phrase’ klangen ... Es war ja kein bedrohter Herd da, keine Barbarenhorden standen vor den Toren – einfach politische Spannungen zwischen zwei Kabinetten ... (Suttner 2006: 15)

Able to question current and common points of view, she sees clearly that labelling particular groups as enemies, as scoundrels, or as freedom fighters hinge upon one’s perspectives and particular interest: “Die Jochabschützungs- und Freiheitsbestrebung lag diesmal nicht auf österreichischer, sondern auf italienischer Seite. Aber auch für diese schüchtern ausgedrückten Skrupel wurde ich niedergedonnert”. (Suttner 2006: 26) The narrator is often critical of language as she hears it employed, and she perceives that Italians can not be seen as freedom fighters in Austria but are dubbed rebels. The narrator resists this fact, and even after the defeats suffered in Montebello and Magenta, as well as after the death of her husband, she adopts the Italian perspective:

ganz Wien war niedergeschlagen. Man hatte zu Anfang so zuversichtlich gehofft, dass ununterbrochene Siegesbotschaften Anlaß zu Häuserbeflaggung und Tedeum-Absingen geben würden; statt dessen wehten die Fahnen und sangen die Priester in Turin [...] Dort hieß es jetzt: Herrgott, wir loben dich, daß du uns geholfen hast, die bösen Tedeschi zu schlagen. (Suttner 2006: 31)

This ability to consider conflict from the other side results in comparisons and parallels: Martha does not so much see and describe the flag-waving
and singing victors as much as she does the suffering mothers, women and children and the fallen children. She does not accept arguments about defending the homeland – Austria’s dead lie far away in Italian earth – and she is equally disgusted by her father’s proud description of a Tyrolean sharpshooter firing at Italians from the safety of a church tower: “Jeder dieser totgeschossenen Italiener, auf die der oben aus sicherer Höhe zielte, hatte eine Mutter und eine Geliebte zu Haus und hing wohl selber an seinem jungen Leben”. (Suttner 2006: 62) The father remains true to his aggressive desires; the daughter opposes him. When he utters his 1866 New Year’s wish for a military expansion of Austria, she counters: “Nein, lieber Vater – für die Italiener und Preußen ist heute auch Neujahr ... da wollen wir ihnen kein Verderben wünschen”. (Suttner 2006: 187)

In the war against Prussia she also thinks of the “Feindesland” – and thus also of the relatives of her husband. As well, she feels sorry for those who live in the areas in which there is fighting: “Von unseren in Böhmen begüterten Verwandten und Bekannten erhalten wir allseitig Jammerepisteln.” (Suttner 2006: 214) This is a perspective that is willfully forgotten as war rages: “In Schlesien soll es, glaubwürdigen Reiseberichten zu Folge, nämlich auch Menschen und Felder und Fechsungen geben”. (Suttner 2006: 215)

In Martha’s experience and outlook the so-called enemy differs completely from the stereotype images: In the war between Prussia and Austria, at the Battle at Sadowa, Friedrich Tilling sees his Cousin Gottfried von Tessow charging at him with a raised weapon, but the cousin recognises him, drops his weapon, and is then killed.

Neither does she regard those Prussians stationed in Austria as evil-doers: “Dann gewahrten sie zu ihrem nicht geringen Erstaunen, daß der ‘Feind’ eigentlich aus lauter gutmütigen, freundlichen und ehrlich zahlenden Mitmenschen bestand.” (Suttner 2006: 281) In the Neuhaus family castle the occupiers, perfect gentlemen with refined manners and social graces, appear: “Das waren also unsere Feinde.” One of Althaus’ sisters even becomes engaged to a Prussian prince.

The wine comparison is a fine image. It shows that one’s experiences with and individual do not, for the most part, alter the entrenched stereotypes about that person’s group, while unsparingly revealing national chauvinism.

Martha is a stranger to any sort of patriotism, and a change of perspective is easy for her. In times of war she wants immediate peace agreements; since increasing one’s territory is of no interest to her, she does not care whether Schleswig belongs to Denmark anywhere else. Friedrich shares her views: “Nein – die Aussicht, auf Dänen schießen und hauen zu dürfen, war ihm keine, gar keine Wettmachung des Leides, mich verlassen zu müssen; im Gegenteil – eher eine Verschärfung: denn Töten und Zerstören widert jeden ‘Edelmenschen’ an.” (Suttner 2006: 137) Although he participates in the war as a soldier, he cannot reduce himself to hating the enemy: “Zu Dänenhaß konnte ich mich nicht aufschwingen – was taten die Braven, indem sie über uns herfielen – Weiter nichts als ihre Pflicht”. (Suttner 2006: 144)

Suttner even includes an interior monologue by Emperor Franz Joseph on All Souls’ Day 1866 in which he expresses mourning at the killing fields of Sadowa. Even before then, he had regretted the national motives for Austria’s war against Prussia: “So ist der unheilvollste Krieg – ein Krieg Deutscher gegen Deutsche – unvermeidlich geworden!” (Suttner 2006: 197) Suttner and her Martha think in terms that are well beyond a sense of nationalism:


2.5. The League of Civilized Powers and Peace as the Novel’s Aims

Exactly in Austria there were significant social classes that were against the idea of nationalism. Among the aristocracy, nationalities were not always attractive conceptually, and the head of the regiment in the Olmütz garrison in which Tilling and his wife are stationed says, “Und überhaupt paßt dieses
ganze Prinzip nicht für Österreich, Böhmen, Ungarn, Deutsche, Kroaten – wo ist da das Nationalitätsband? Wir kennen nur ein Prinzip, das uns vereint, das ist die loyale Liebe zu unserer Dynastie”. (Suttner 2006: 126) Dividing cultures into nationalities may seem intuitive, but it is in fact a very constructed intellectual possibility. Suttner removes herself from such ideas, criticising the use of stereotypes and mentioning only similarity among those belonging to different nations, even when the novel’s mood suffers as a result. Instead, she chooses a variant that is more apropos for her contemporary Austria: emphasising the cultural differences of various social classes. The fictitious Countess Althaus does not present the reader with a world in which there are logical borders between countries and nations. Parallels are highlighted: fighting, suffering and pity are all around. The various prejudices are exposed as warmongering.

That she grew up in a Czech-German family in the Danube Monarchy may have played a role in this, since in Austria the power of nationalism and its destructive potential was more than palpable. Street fighting and hefty discussions drew attention to disruptive mass elements again and again. Near the very beginning of her memoirs she confesses an affinity for the supra-national characteristic of the Danube Monarchy and the necessity of creating a federation.

Multinationalism and internationalism are of key importance for Suttner, and in Die Waffen nieder! she turns against all nationalism, rejecting what could be misleading representations of other cultures, and instead pointing out the mistakes of ossified generalizations and offering possibility for changing perspectives in war.

She also provides a positive image: Martha longs for a European league of nations that would prevent all wars: “warum schließen denn nicht die sämtlichen gesitteten Mächte Europas einen Bund? Das wäre doch das einfachste”. (Suttner 2006: 165) Accordingly, she catalogues in her notes on ensuring peace all attempts to establish European states. With utter confidence, Martha believes in a united Europe and also believes that it is imminent. The author herself constantly underlined the idea of a united Europe as a goal of the peace movement. At the 1892 Peace Convention in Berlin she presented the Italian Moneta and the Englishman Capper with a proposal entitled “European League of Nations,” a proposal that would also be in the interest of business – the ultimate goal of the Peace Association was to have a community of states without tolls and other trade restrictions.
3. SUTTNER’S EUROPE-WIDE PEACE INITIATIVES

*Die Waffen nieder!* made Suttner a prominent figure in the peace movement. The commercial success of the book meant that she and her husband could winter in Venice in 1890/91, which at that time still belonged to Austria. Along with international friends – such as the Italian member of parliament Marquese Benjamino Pandolfi and Felix Moscheles – she helped establish a peace society in the city of canals. Soon the Austrian Peace Society was established (on 30.10.1891), counting 2000 members and with Suttner as President. Her commitment to peace brought her into contact with numerous diplomats, activists and intellectuals from Europe and the world at large.

Suttner’s facility with languages, her aristocratic pedigree, her social commitment, optimism and confidence made her an optimal figurehead for the peace movement. She also put her pen to work, writing innumerable articles for international newspapers, as well as pamphlets and further novels under the banner of peace. With Alfred Hermann Fried, a Vienna-born bookseller in Berlin, she published the magazine *Die Waffen nieder*, later named *Die Friedenswarte*. In her column she commented on the political goings on in the world as she had carefully observed them in her daily reading of Austrian, English and French newspapers.

In 1891, at the Third International Peace Conference in Rome and at the conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union she held her first major public speech in the large council room in the Rome’s Capital – as the very first woman to appear in that space. As a result of the Conference the Bureau international de la Paix was established in Bern in 1892; Suttner was vice-president, meaning that she remained in close contact with the leading figures of the international peace movement, including Frédéric Passy, Hodgson Pratt and Ernesto Teodoro Moneta.

---

3 This Union, which was established in 1889 in Paris, was closely linked to the Peace Movement, and their Conferences were staged at the same time and in the same place. As the seed of a future European Parliament and a World Parliament the Union brought together parliamentarians from the majority of European states. Around 1900, there were approximately 1500 members of parliament who – at least officially – represented the causes of an international court and disarmament in their home parliaments. Although Suttner sometimes lamented the lack of efficiency in national parliaments she always officially underlined the importance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. She constantly encountered arrogance and haughtiness among the Union membership, which was composed entirely of men; for example, at the Berlin Conference of 1908, though already a Noble Prize winner and prominent supporter of the Union, she was given no place of honour and had to hunt for a seat in the audience among the other visitors.
Her attitude was by no means determined by national thoughts, and this is evident in the fact that she was as involved in the establishment of the German Peace Society in Berlin as she was in the unsuccessful attempt to establish one in Prague and in the successful one in Budapest in December 1895. Already the following year there was an International Peace Congress in Budapest. Suttner’s keynote speech at that event attested anew to both her international outlook and to the problematic multi-nationalism of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: she spoke in French because, to her regret, she did not know Hungarian.

Even in her hometown she transcended national borders when she spoke in the Concordia Society in the German House of Prague, quoting the Czech authors Jaroslav Vrchilcký and Svatopluk Čech. In this particular case, though, it made for a temporarily discordant mood: “Es gibt kein Feld, das geeignet wäre für versöhnende Zusammenarbeit zwischen zwei streitenden Nationalitäten als das Feld des übernationalen Pazifismus”. (Suttner 1968: 347)

Her belief in the establishing of an international legal framework was supported in 1894 by Emperor Nikolaus II and the peace manifesto with which he later opened the 1899 Hague Conference. It was in connection with this that Suttner had an audience with the Russian foreign minister Count Murawjow.

Her supra-national stance was not merely theoretical. Even in her later years she travelled an enormous amount. She often went to Monaco, having been invited by Albert I, who had established a Peace Institute with a collection of documents there in 1902. Also in 1902 she was summoned to Lucerne for the opening of the International Museum for War and Peace. In 1903 she played a leading role at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Vienna. President Theodore Roosevelt invited her to the White House during her 1904 lecture tour in the United States. In 1905 she lectured in a number of cities in Germany.

Around the turn of the century she was voted the most important woman of the times in the Berliner Tagblatt. A few years later, in 1905, she was to enter even more firmly into the public consciousness by becoming the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize. It is entirely justified to see her as a prime underpinning of the Prize, as she frequently moved Alfred Nobel to donate to the peace movement – even after his death he continued to provide funds for peace. She received from Henri Dunant, the first Nobel Peace Prize recipient, a letter of thanks in which he professed his support of the peace movement and stated that it was Suttner who had brought Nobel into the movement.

Dunant was indeed correct, since the progressive Nobel clearly stated in his will that his Prize was to be awarded annually to a man or woman who had
done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.

As a consequence of her having received the Nobel Prize in Kristiana (today Oslo), Suttner held a series of lectures in Scandinavia in 1906. Despite her advancing age, Suttner remained active, travelling, for example, to the Second Hague Conference in 1907, the 1908 London Peace Conference, where she was received with a delegation by King Edward VII. Her interest in international culture did not wane. In 1909 she expressed very enthusiastic support of Upton Sinclair and his commitment to socialism after he had sent her his book *The Jungle*.

In 1912 she travelled around the United States on an extended lecture tour, speaking in front of over 20 000 people (Grossi 2007: 161) and also securing the promise of an annuity from the industrialist Andrew Carnegie. She could not benefit from this generosity for long, as she died of stomach cancer on 21.6.1914, not long before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

### 4. More European than Cosmopolitan

Very few people of that time had such a determined international and European attitude: Suttner spoke several languages, knew the literatures and intellectual discussions of various countries, exchanged letters with leading thinkers from other European lands, came to know these, and was inspired in her literature by ideas from France and England. Suttner never wanted to be considered a German and she always resisted the “unseligen Rassentheorie, auf welche sich der Arierhochmut, Germanen- und Lateinerdünkel aufbauten, die mir so in die Seele verhaft sind”. (Suttner 1968: 352)

And yet, to what extent should Suttner be understood cosmopolitan, and to what extent European? In many places it can be seen that her international outlook was directed primarily at Europe and less so the entire world. Her appeals for solidarity and peace are again and again directed at the European “nations of culture.” In her demands for a League of Nations and peace she often emphasizes “civilized” peoples as addressees, thereby excluding many non-European cultures.

Her interests and her attention was concentrated especially on Western Europe, and unlike her husband she never spoke in her novels of her experiences in the Caucasus; only in a few newspaper articles did she concern herself with the people and places she knew there. In her otherwise rather rosy mem-
oirs it is not always in an entirely positive manner that she recalls Kutaisi, Tbilisi and Zugdidi – and she describes Caucasus cultures as primitive. In spite of her voracious reading she did not read much Georgian or Russian literature. Indicative of this is that not until 1888 did she acquaint herself with the works of Tolstoy. She learned little Russian, and no Georgian or Mingrelian. For her, as for many Europeans, 19th century Georgia represented a painful culture shock. Suttner describes in her memoirs the bustling coming and goings of the Europeans at the Mingrelian court:

Die Dienerschaft des prinziösen Paares nahm die Existenz nicht so leicht wie die Herrschaft; da gab es häufig Wechsel und Verdruss; die korrekten englischen Kutscher und Stallmeister, die exquisiten französischen Küchenchefs konnten sich durchaus nicht in diese primitiven, erst werdenden Einrichtungen fügen. In der Wildnis und Unordnung wollten sie nicht bleiben. Bis auf einen langjährigen Kammerdiener und eine ebensolche Jungfer, die sich aber auch als Märtyrer fühlten, rebellierten alle. Dann ließ man wieder neue Küchen- und Stallregemen
ten kommen, denn ohne die feinste französische Küche und ohne sportmäßige englische Pferde-, Wagen- und Jagdeinrichtungen konnte Prinz Achille nicht leben. (Suttner 1968: 185)

She believed in differing stages of development among various societies in the way to progress, thus considering that there were lower cultures which in her eyes had yet to reach the high level of development of the Europeans. This, even though “wir (also die Europäer) auf der Leiter der Wesen auch nicht die denkbar Vollkommensten sind”. (Suttner 1907a: 141)

Her writing can thus be categorized as Eurocentric and at times even chauvinistically pro-European. Europe and its values and norms remain unquestioningly in the forefront of her thinking and evaluating and form the basis of her judging of non-European cultures.

She could, however, also rise above her general disposition, and she viewed it as a crime that China, after it was defeated by Japan, was divided among European states. In 1897, together with Henri Dunant, she launched an appeal “An die Völker im fernen Osten”:

Unsere sogenannte europäische Zivilisation kommt aus dem Orient, Sie sind uns einige Jahrhunderte voraus. Vor allem müssen wir erkennen und mit tiefer Traurigkeit eingestehen, daß unsere Ahnen jahrhundertelang sich allzu oft Ihnen gegenüber wie Barbaren benommen haben. (Qtd. in Hamann 2002: 255)
Even though she was not blindly enthusiastic about European culture, Bertha von Suttner can be regarded in a positive sense – albeit with some chauvinistic elements in her thinking – as a prototypical European. She was more a European than the citizen of the world that she liked to be called.

REFERENCES


Enichlmair, Maria (2005), Abenteurerin Bertha von Suttner: Die unbekannten Georgien-Jahre 1876 bis 1885, Edition Roesner, Maria Enzersdorf

Götz, Christian (1996), Die Rebellin Bertha von Suttner. Botschaften für unsere Zeit, QuaMedia, Dortmund


Hamann, Brigitte (2002), Bertha von Suttner. Ein Leben für den Frieden, Piper, München


Skorupa, Holger (2008), Der Pazifismus der Bertha von Suttner. Quellen, Herkunft und Charakteristika ihrer Friedenspolitik, Grin, Norderstedt

Steffahn, Harald (1998), Bertha von Suttner, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg

Suttner, Bertha von (1889), Das Maschinenzeitalter. Zukunftsvorlesungen über unsere Zeit, Zwiebelzwerg, Düsseldorf

Suttner, Bertha von (1906a), Es Löwos. Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 1, Pierson, Dresden

Suttner, Bertha von (1906b), High Life. Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 2, Pierson, Dresden

Suttner, Bertha von (1907a), Inventarium einer Seele. Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 6, Pierson, Dresden

Suttner, Bertha von (1907b), Daniela Dormes. Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 7, Pierson, Dresden

Suttner, Bertha von (1907c), Schriftsteller-Roman, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 8, Pierson, Dresden

Suttner, Bertha von (1968), Lebenserinnerungen, Verlag der Nation, Berlin [zuerst: 1909, Memoiren, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart et al.]


BERTHA VON SUITZNER:
PROTOTIPSKI EVROPSKI PISAC

Sažetak

U ovom članku autor podsjeća na značaj spisateljice Berthe von Suttner, koju bi posebno s približavanjem godišnjice Prvog svjetskog rata trebalo otrgnuti iz zaborava u koji je upala. Iako je Berha von Suttner svojim pacifističkim angažmanom dobila Nobelovu nagradu za mir, njezinom djelu nikada nije data pažnja koju zaslužuje. Autor članka analizira u čemu se sastoji važnost ovog opusa, te rekonstruira njegovu aktualnost, između ostalog, i za interkulturalne i mirovne studije.