

Storytelling Tricksters:  
A Reader's Coming-of-Age in Young Adult Fantasy Fiction in Germany

by

Chorong Kim  
B.A., University of Victoria, 2018

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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In this thesis, I examine three works of modern German fantasy fiction for young adults, their common grounding in the Romantic aesthetic framework and in particular the Romantic notion of creativity, and the implication of their unique fantasy fiction paradigm in our modern day. The novels are Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* (1979), *Inkheart* (2003) by Cornelia Funke and *The City of Dreaming Books* (2006) by Walter Moers. They represent a Germany-specific narrative paradigm which can be seen in the protagonist readers' transformation from mere readers into storymakers/storytellers, and in the conflict between a book-loving hero and antagonists who are against literature. The protagonists embody the Romantic notion of creativity that involves the sublimation of a poet's crisis into an exploration of the self. The mundane is infused with fantasy, thereby elevating reality to an idealised state. These Romantic storytelling readers act as tricksters, a fairy tale archetype that shares similarities with the figure of the Romantic poet. I employ the theoretical frameworks of German Romanticism, Frankfurt School critical theory, and postmodern models, including those by Deleuze and Guattari. I argue for a modern version of the trickster archetype which explains how a complacent, passive reader becomes an active storyteller.

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## Introduction

*... to give a thing a name, a label, a handle; to rescue it from anonymity to pluck it out of the Place of Namelessness, in short to identify it—well, that's a way of bringing the said thing into being (Rushdie 63).*

Fairy tales and fantasy fiction are indispensable cultural elements in the lives of today's children worldwide. The experience of reading these stories provides the readers with an easy retreat from the confines of reality through identification with the hero. Throughout the perpetual reproduction and reincarnation of fairy tales in our modern world, the question of what enables a protagonist to become a hero is often met with a consistent answer: his or her possession of an enchanted instrument or an innate magical ability. This assumption heavily relies on popular Anglo-American fantasy fiction. Interestingly, and in contrast to Anglo-American fantasy fiction, the major works of modern German fantasy fiction for young adults seem to respond to the question "What does it take to be a hero?" with something that we may not necessarily associate with typical heroic virtues: storytelling. The unique narrative paradigm for the German fantasy heroes is their transition from mere readers to storytellers. Using their appreciative joy in reading and creating new stories, they shape the reality of the fantasy text through their interventions as readers. But in intervening in the fantasy world, they also shape their own reality. The protagonists become tricksters who navigate between reality and fantasy and bring the two worlds closer together.

In order to demonstrate the presence of the paradigm of a trickster-storyteller hero in German fantasy fiction, I examine three works of German young adult fantasy fiction: *Die Unendliche Geschichte* [The Neverending Story] (1979) by Michael Ende,

*Tintenherz* [Inkheart] (2003) by Cornelia Funke, and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* [The City of Dreaming Books] (2006) by Walter Moers. With a modern-day German Romantic hero who intervenes and transforms the narrated worlds, these three novels, which bring such an unusual protagonist to modern fantasy fiction, best demonstrate the distinctness of a character's unusual journey from a reader to a storyteller.

Beyond the comparative literary analysis of the protagonist's journey and transformation, the purpose of my thesis is to develop the analytic framework to approach specifically the German fantasy paradigm. Therefore, each chapter of the thesis builds a layer of the analytical framework, and the layers from the three chapters together constitute a unique analytic model for the three fantasy novels.

In Chapter One, I argue that the three fantasy protagonists, who intervene in a world that they initially encountered as naïve readers, derive from the figure of the German Romantic poet. In order to define the Romantic conception of creativity and to illustrate how it is embodied in the character of a Romantic poet, I use Novalis's philosophical fragments and his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Chapter Two introduces this new kind of modern-day Romantic poet-as-trickster. Based on the previously discussed Romantic aesthetic framework, I develop my own definition of a trickster within the context of the novels in this chapter. A close reading of the three novels examines how the heroes develop into tricksters. Chapter Three addresses the implications of the fantasy protagonists being Romantic-poets-as-tricksters, by analyzing how the antagonists motivate the actions of the heroes. The antagonists' key aspirations link to extreme materialism and consumerism, and their means of achieving their goals encourages an instrumental way of thinking and reading in modern reality. Through the

modernised narrative of a German Romantic hero, these novels suggest that protagonists must be able to confront the culture industry to transition from a passive consumer of literature into a creative writer and saviour. The chapter also discusses the significance of all three novels in the cultural and historical context of their times.

Before continuing further, it is crucial to distinguish certain activities that the protagonists of these books display. In this thesis, the term “author” is attributed to the characters who wrote the text that features as a central object in the novels’ narratives. It does not denote the actual writers such as Michael Ende, since I will be using their names. In the context of my thesis, “author” specifically implies that the character has crafted and made the story available to be read by other characters as a physical medium, such as books, manuscripts, or written notes. The word “storyteller” is different from “author,” as it describes a person who creates and decides to tell the story to an audience. Initially, the storyteller is also the reader and bystander to the events relating to the fantastical world. In addition, the thesis differentiates the fantastical world and the world where the protagonist comes from. The latter will be mostly referred to as the “real world,” for the protagonists’ world, and the former will either be called by its own unique name (e.g., Phantásien, Tintenwelt, and Zamonien) or the “fantastical world.” Unless explicitly characterized as “instrumental reading,” the act of “reading” within the context of the thesis generally refers to reading a literary text, as opposed to materials such as textbooks or instructions. The readers in the novels are highly imaginative, which lets them easily depart from their dreary reality momentarily. They are fully capable of comprehending the written material, and they find joy in the activity of reading. The terms “imagination” and “creativity” will be used in relation to the act of creating stories



and is distinguished from the concept of “fantasy.” Fantasy exists as a product of “the transformative capacity of the imagination” (Zipes *Relentless* 51), that is, fantasy is the product of the reader’s creative imagination in the act of reading. To quote J. R. R. Tolkien on the definition of fantasy literature, imagination is “the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency of reality” (138), which is giving the “ideal creations,” that is fantasy, details and plausibility so that they can stand as distinct “worlds.” I will address these “worlds” and Tolkien’s musings about them in detail below. Unless noted as being verbal, “storytelling” indicates that an original story is being created by the protagonists who use their imagination. Storytelling specifically refers to the ability to alter or invent new narratives by the protagonists’ creativity. Unless otherwise specified, the stories can be told both in a written medium and oral; however, due to the socially estranged status of the protagonists, the stories initially lack readers or an audience.

Of the three novels that are being examined here, *Die unendliche Geschichte* [*The Neverending Story*], written in two parts published originally in 1979, is the most explicit and extensive adaptation of Romanticism to the genre of fantasy fiction. It introduces its unlikely hero as a young boy named Bastian Balthazar Bux, who is a fat, socially awkward schoolboy. Bastian is introduced as a voracious reader and an inventor of fantastical, adventurous stories in his daydreams. In spite of his talent and passion for storytelling, his recent unfortunate circumstances discourage him from exercising his creativity. He suffers from the grief of having lost his mother, lack of academic success in a suffocating school system and a constant fear of bullies. His father has withdrawn emotionally since the death of his wife and is unable to offer Bastian any comfort.

Reading and thinking up stories are the only activities that comfort Bastian, but no audience listens to him. He finds an escape from his reality when he stumbles upon a book named *Die unendliche Geschichte* in a bookstore. Lured by the title's promise of an endless fantasy, he steals the book to read in his school's attic, only to discover that he simultaneously reads and creates its narrative. Bastian is initially fascinated by the book's story: the quest of the intrepid hero Atréju to save his fantastical world Phantásien and its ailing ruler die Kindliche Kaiserin [the Childlike Empress] from being engulfed by a formless void called das Nichts [the Nothing]. For the Phantásien residents, entering the Nothing implies that they become a product of delusion and lies because the Nothing stems from people's waning creative imagination and causes the illness of the Childlike Empress. To restore Phantásien, one must bestow upon the Childlike Empress a new name. Bastian discovers that the book, in fact, selects him as the saviour of the reality within the book and that he should no longer dismiss the connection between the fantastic and the real. He uses his gift of storytelling to restore the kingdom and is hailed as a saviour. The journey divides into two parts, before and after Bastian's entrance into Phantásien. In the second part, the Childlike Empress disappears after giving Bastian her amulet AURYN. Bastian finds himself physically transformed into a handsome hero and becomes infatuated with his new identity. He indulges in his power to create completely new worlds or reshape the existing history in Phantásien. However, consumed by his new identity as a saviour endowed with the ultimate creative power, he becomes a tyrant who exerts a ruthless unity upon the kingdom and isolates himself from all surroundings once again. Each time he exerts his power, he trades his memories from the real world with a power to fulfill his own wishes in the fantastic world. However, he lets himself slowly

lose his memories, plunges into a state of denial of his origins, and forgets the very reason why Phantásien exists. After wandering through Phantásien, Bastian is rescued from his state of amnesia when he surrenders AURYN to Atréju and Fuchur the Luck Dragon. Bastian returns to his world as a braver, more hopeful youth who restores the love and life in his father with *das Wasser des Lebens* [the Water of Life].

*Die unendliche Geschichte* introduces a new paradigm for the German young adult fantasy landscape, with *Tintenherz* [Inkheart] and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* [The City of Dreaming Books] as its contemporary variations. Moving away from a formless antagonist, that is the Nothing, the new antagonists in the two books are physical entities that the main characters can resist. These antagonists attempt to exercise an authoritative rule on the real world by methods aimed at eliminating the creative imagination.

*Tintenherz* by Cornelia Funke was published in 2003, more than two decades after *Die unendliche Geschichte*. The twelve-year-old protagonist Meggie is as voracious a reader as Bastian. This child protagonist lives with her father Mo whose occupation is to handle and restore old, damaged books. Mo conceals from his daughter his magical power of being able to summon characters and objects out of a book by reading out loud. Nine years before the events in *Tintenherz*, he had inadvertently summoned three ruffians named Staubfinger [Dustfinger], Capricorn and Basta from the hypodiegetic reality in the book *Tintenherz* and in exchange sent Meggie's mother, Resa, into the novel, the "Tintenwelt" [Inkworld]. In the present day, Capricorn, who was the original villain in *Tintenherz*, tracks down Mo to exploit his talent. He wants to release der Schatten [the Shadow], his demonic hound made of ashes, from *Tintenherz*. He also orders his

henchmen to collect any copy of *Tintenherz*, so that he can eliminate any possibility of being unwillingly sent back into *Tintenwelt* by Mo. The father and daughter have been on the run ever since the three characters emerged from *Tintenherz*. When the villains manage to kidnap Mo, Meggie embarks upon a journey to find him. During her adventures, Meggie visits Fenoglio, the author of *Tintenherz*. He provides her with the key to resolve the conflicts with the villains from his book, by writing an alternate fate for Capricorn. Meggie discovers that she inherited the magical ability from Mo, and successfully defeats Capricorn and his men by reading Fenoglio's new ending. The influence of Ende is evident: as in *The Neverending Story*, here too, the titular book summons readers to engage with its fantastical universe and figures. Additionally, the main character affects the fantastical world in the act of reading.

*Die unendliche Geschichte* deals with an outsider's visit to the fantastical realm while in *Tintenherz* the residents of the fantastical realm enter the real world. In *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*, where the action takes place in a non-human world, the fantastic resides in the archaic past that exists as a myth apart from the novel's real world. *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*, published in 2007, was written and illustrated by Walter Moers, who claims that he merely acts as a translator of the fragments by the legendary literary figure and dinosaur Hildegunst von Mythenmetz. The book focalizes through Mythenmetz when he was still a juvenile dinosaur in the fictional realm of Zamonien [Zamonia]. Mythenmetz comes from Lindwurmefeste [Lindworm Castle], an ancient fort inhabited by intellectual dinosaurs named die Lindwürmer [the Lindworms]. In his deathbed, Mythenmetz's godfather Dancelot von Silbendrexler [Dancelot Wordwright] bequeaths him the perfectly written manuscript fragment written by an

unknown genius. The mysterious author, who was an admirer of Dancelot, sent him the manuscript for commentary. Dancelot had written a reply to urge the author to go to Buchheim [Bookholm] at once but later deeply regretted this advice as he never heard from the author again. Thus, upon Dancelot's death, Mythenmetz bounds for the city of Buchheim in search of the missing writer. While he immerses himself in the city's heightened fascination for literature, he encounters an amiable antiquarian, Phistomefel Smeik [Pfistomel Smyke]. His name is an anagram that clearly alludes to the character of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*. Like Goethe's Mephistopheles, Smeik is an embodiment of the demonic. He maintains a great amount of disdain towards "artists," especially the extremely talented ones, because of the potential chaos they can bring about with their work. Therefore, he attempts to abolish literature itself in order to obtain absolute control over the literary with no unexpected interferences. Upon discovering the manuscript and recognizing its potential danger to cause a significant tumult in the world, Smeik throws Mythenmetz into the depths of the catacombs that exist beneath the city as a vast labyrinthine, rhizomatic topography. Under the city lies a cruel, intricate system of a moving maze, constructed with ancient bookshelves that are filled with rare, original editions of the most famous classics.

In his futile attempts to escape, Mythenmetz wanders deeper and deeper into the catacombs. There he encounters abominable, ancient creatures that destroy the structures under Buchheim, yet they are not the only monsters that lurk underground. The catacombs also serve as a lucrative looting ground for die Bücherjäger [the Bookhunters]. As the name suggests, they are a clan of bounty hunters and scavengers who search for the rarest books for the highest bidders, and these ruthless, obtuse hunters slaughter

anything that interferes with their activities. In many of the deadly incidents that are caused by the threats above, Mythenmetz is helped by a mysterious guardian who leaves a trail of small pieces of paper behind. Following the paper trace, Mythenmetz is greeted by a community of one-eyed gnomes, the so-called Buchlinge [Booklings], who form an elusive and highly intellectual underground community dedicated to the study and celebration of all renowned authors in Zamonia. Mythenmetz eventually discovers the enigmatic helper is Zamonien's mythical monster, der Schattenkönig [the Shadow King]. Calling himself Homunkoloss,<sup>1</sup> he reveals himself as the author of the manuscript. Once a young, curious human being, he was banished to the catacombs by Smeik, who feared that his works would bring about a chaos that might overturn his authority. Reminiscent of Frankenstein's Monster, Homunkoloss was the result of a brutal experiment by Smeik. He is covered with pages of ancient books that catch on fire when in contact with sunlight, thus forcing him to stay under the city for his survival. Homunkoloss tells Mythenmetz he used to admire Mythenmetz's godfather, and that he wishes to be his mentor and educate him as a professional author. Mythenmetz agrees, and transforms into a mature author while looking for ways of escaping from the dreaded catacombs. He and Homunkoloss escape from the catacombs, yet Mythenmetz witnesses the flames from his mentor engulfing himself, Smeik and the entire city.

The three novels are tied together by the themes of a modernised German Romantic hero's journey; an underdog protagonist whose primary interest lies in imaginative reading and storytelling to escape from their unappealing realities; the

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<sup>1</sup> The name "Homunkoloss" is both another reference to Goethe's Faust as well as a reference to alchemy where it represents the striving for pure spirit.

protagonist's entrance into the fantastical realm and an encounter with villains who have no regard for an aesthetic pleasure from books and threaten an autonomous exercise of creativity; and the salvation of the real and the fantastical world by the protagonist's creative intervention.<sup>2</sup> In recent decades, studies were published on each of the three novels, but very few conduct an in-depth comparative analysis of the books. The majority of the studies focus on Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte* and Funke's *Tintenwelt* Trilogy. Poushali Bhadury compares *Die unendliche Geschichte* with the *Tintenwelt* Trilogy, arguing that the self-reflexive nature of the two books "mimic certain interactive user-text dynamics inherent within other (new) media forms, such as electronic literature or hypertext fiction" (301). In her comparison of *Tintenherz* and *Die unendliche Geschichte*, Margaret Hiley uses Tolkien's concept of "sub-creation" of secondary worlds in fantasy fiction to examine the author-reader exchange (Hiley 129). In her discussion of "die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur"<sup>3</sup> (KJL), Sonja Klimek mentions the emergence of a hybrid genre of KJL and literature for adults. She compares how the modern works of literature from this hybrid genre, the examples being chooses the *Tintenwelt* trilogy and *Harry Potter* series, differ from the old KJL such as *Die unendliche Geschichte*. Some researchers mention *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Tintenherz* together. Fanfan Chen mentions Ende and Funke in her discussion of

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<sup>2</sup> Both *Tintenherz* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* are the first of a multi-volume series, thus I will restrict myself only to the first book for the purpose of this thesis. Michael Ende did not write any sequels to *Die Unendliche Geschichte*, but the other two authors have written sequels to their novels. Of Cornelia Funke's *Tintenwelt* [Inkworld] trilogy that consists of *Tintenherz*, *Tintenblut* [Inkspell] and *Tintentod* [Inkblood], the thesis only addresses the first book. Likewise, this thesis solely focuses on *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* and excludes its sequel *Das Labyrinth der Träumenden Bücher* [The Labyrinth of Dreaming Books] and Moers' other Zamonia books that mention the protagonist. Lastly, I do not mention their adaptations into visual media such as films, television series and plays.

<sup>3</sup> "literature for children and young adults" (my trans.).

metalepsis as a narrative strategy. Claudia Nelson presents the two novels as examples of children's metafiction, in order to explore the "reading children" in fantasy fiction (225).

Although there are a number of comparative studies between *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Tintenherz*, few studies connect *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* with *Die unendliche Geschichte* or *Tintenherz*. Yvonne Joeres looks at Jorge Luis Borges's "The Library of Babel," *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* and *Die unendliche Geschichte* and examines how these self-referential books use their portrayal of produced artificial novels to fathom the complexity of literature. Virginie Vökler compares *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*, *Tintenherz* and Wolfgang and Heike Hohlbein's *Das Buch*, to investigate the various aspects of "evil" in the worlds of books inside the German contemporary fantasy literature: how it manifests itself, how it influences the characters, and how it utilizes books as instruments of power.

The above studies offer valuable insights into the connections between the novels, their similarities and social implications. However, these studies tend to emphasize specific narrative aspects rather than applying an overarching paradigm to the novels. The studies that note some similarities between the novels do so only briefly and as part of a broader examination of topics such as children's literacy and metalepsis, for which these novels are referenced as examples. Finally, none of the studies recognize German Romanticism as a major literary influence on these fantasy novels and its significance as an analytical framework through which to approach them.

My examination of the three novels identifies and highlights the unique, Germany-specific literary paradigm, and will contribute to the scholarship on modern German fantasy literature. An exploration of German fantasy fiction from the late 20th to



early 21st century through the lens of German Romanticism is significant because it identifies the core Romantic ideals that made their way into contemporary popular fiction. There is, in other words, a lineage from German Romanticism to contemporary fantasy. The present study develops a mode of reading that enables us to recognize the influence of a culturally significant literary paradigm on other works of young adult fantasy fiction outside Germany. The themes of reading and storytelling in the three works of German fantasy fiction provide a unique framework through which to view coming-of-age narratives in fantasy literature in a modern society that devalues reading. This paradigm provides a helpful insight to differentiate the German fantasy novels from modern Anglo-American fantasy fiction.

The narrative model of protagonists growing from passive readers into storytelling tricksters who can change their world by means of their creative imagination is a distinct aspect of these German works of fantasy fiction. The readers are considered passive early in the novels due to the fact that they initially regard books as means of escaping from their reality. This reader-to-storyteller model stands in sharp contrast to Tolkien's well-known definition of fantasy, for he considers "escape" as one of the significant functions of fantasy stories (Tolkien 154). He also claims that the real, "primary" world is distinct from the created, "secondary" world (132). Tolkien thus clearly establishes a divide between the fantastical and the real world and regards the former as a place of escape, which is a common practice in many Anglo-American fantasy novels. The initial connection between a fantastical realm and mundane reality usually results in a permanent closure of the bridge between the two worlds. C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* is a good example. The majority of the books in the series begins

with the protagonists' visit to the magical realm of Narnia in its time of need and ends with their return to their world where time has not passed since they left. Returning to their ordinary lives, the protagonists act in their world as if their journey never occurred. By the end of the series when the protagonists are finally summoned to live inside Narnia, we realize that they all died from a train accident in the real world. This implies that only death enables people to be fully immersed in fantasy. But *Die Unendliche Geschichte*, *Tintenherz* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* contradict Tolkien's notion of escapism through fantasy, as well as the model driving most Anglo-American fantasy novels, because these narratives address the reconciliation between the reality and fantasy and the resulting enrichment of both worlds.

Across *Die Unendliche Geschichte*, *Tintenherz* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*, we see how youthful protagonists gain an aesthetic pleasure from books. The authors of these books devote multiple passages to describe the protagonists' keen interest in books. The protagonists' initiation into the fantastical world begins with their mysterious attraction to books: Bastian is lured by the exterior of the book *Die Unendliche Geschichte*; Meggie is enthralled by the details inside *Tintenherz* yet feels intimidated by what the story might entail; and Mythenmetz cannot resist his curiosity about the manuscript that his godfather praised on his deathbed. To the protagonists, the antagonists are characters or forces that threaten the enjoyment and aesthetic appreciation of reading. Materialistic, power-hungry and greedy villains are common in fantasy fiction, and the villains in the German young adult fantasy fiction do display those features as well. But they differ from Anglo-American fantasy villains in that their fates are also closely linked to the narratives within the books. The Nothing comes from the

disappearance of children's imagination and the increasing lack of appreciation for the intrinsic value of books. Some villains from these books are even appreciative of the values in books. However, their instrumental use of books for the purposes of achieving power or wealth clashes with the protagonists' aesthetic appreciation of books. For instance, Capricorn's inventory of books contains fantasy and adventure stories, only because they contain passages about wealth and treasures. Smeik is a respected antiquarian and owner of an enormous underground private library, yet he only treats books as commodities. Therefore, even the lives and actions of antagonists in the novels are heavily affected by stories and books. They may show a disdain towards the enjoyment of reading, but they consider it useful for their purposes. The way the novels' protagonists and antagonists decide to treat books is one of the features that decisively establishes a clear distinction between Anglo-American and German fantasy fiction.

In Anglo-American fantasy fiction inherent supernatural abilities, magical objects, and traditional combat techniques determine the destiny of the protagonists. Thus, both the protagonists and the villains lack any aesthetic appreciation for reading. In J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, which dominates the English-speaking young adult fantasy market, the protagonists survive and defeat the antagonists normally through their training in the use of magical abilities or objects such as wands. Well-known bookish characters in Anglo-American fantasy fiction typically treat reading as means of acquiring factual knowledge, which is used for instrumental purposes, such as learning magic spells, rather than for an immersion into a narrative. Hermione Granger from the *Harry Potter* series, for instance, is a model student whose reading is purely instrumental. Hermione may show excitement over her acquisition of new knowledge through books

but she does not gain aesthetic pleasure from reading. She utterly devotes herself to studying and uses her books as the source of historical, factual knowledge and as a way to enhance her own intelligence and sorcery skill. The series demonstrates multiple times that avid reading is undesirable, as Hermione's compulsive study of books isolates her from her friends on many occasions. Books *have* played a significant role in the *Harry Potter* series to be sure, such as the cursed diary in *The Chamber of Secrets*, the potions textbook in *The Half-Blood Prince*, and the children's storybook for wizards in *The Deathly Hallows*. However, the characters do not derive aesthetic pleasure from these books, nor do the books stimulate their creative imagination. Antagonists in the series also do not demonstrate a significant affinity towards the activity of reading. We do not remember Voldemort as a keen bibliophile.

Similarly, in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* the protagonist's love for books is not essential to resolving the conflicts. The title-hero Matilda initially shows a profound understanding of literature and a love for reading; however, her interest in books is used as a narrative device to illustrate her sensibility and intelligence. The focus then shifts to how she channels the power of her brain and her cleverness to develop her telekinetic powers. Antagonists, represented by her parents, show an absolute disdain towards reading, as we can see from Matilda's mother:

"I said you chose books and I chose looks," Mrs. Wormwood said. "And who's finished up the better off? Me, of course. I'm sitting pretty in a nice house with a successful businessman and you're left slaving away teaching a lot of nasty little children the ABC" (Dahl 98).

It is Matilda's telekinesis, and not her enjoyment of reading, that eventually frees her from the suffocating reality of having to live with her abusive parents. The leading characters' bookishness in Anglo-American fantasy fiction is more oriented towards instrumental reason, which Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer define as, "the organ of calculation, of planning; it is neutral in regard to ends; its element is coordination" (69). It is notable that the advocates for the instrumentalization of books differ between the German and Anglo-American novels. In the novels that I selected for this thesis, it is the antagonistic figures that embody the instrumental reason, as they are "endangering human imagination in general and storytelling in particular" (Petzold 102). I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3.

Two notable exceptions to the Anglo-American fantasy novels should be mentioned here. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie (1990) chooses the theme of storytelling and "its critical link to cultural emancipation" (Ellerby 112) by narrating Haroun's journey across a fantastical realm to restore the lost gift of his father, the masterful storyteller Rhashid Khalifa. However, I should point out that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* stands as a non-German exception only because Michael Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte* is widely recognized as a major influence for Rushdie's novel (Petzold 92). The second example is *The Book of Lost Things* by John Connolly (2006). The book bears a striking resemblance to *Die unendliche Geschichte* as well, as it narrates the adventures of a young, book-loving boy named David who suffers from the grief of having lost his mother recently. Lured by his dead mother's voice, David enters a lawless, fantastical world and attempts to find his way back home. David learns that a book named "The Book of Lost Things" owned by the realm's king might help him find

his way home. Despite the striking similarities with Michael Ende's novel, there is a considerable lack of studies concerning *The Book of Lost Things*, and there are no comparative studies linking it to *Die unendliche Geschichte*. Interestingly, Connolly has acknowledged that the Brothers Grimm were his influence, because "the novel was an attempt to explore different interpretations of these stories by filtering them through David's imagination" (Wilda Williams 39).

The three German fantasy novels represent a hopeful suggestion for passive readers not to be purely subsumed by books as a means of escape or acquiring information, but to be active storytellers who can bring about change in their world. This unconventional, Germany-specific archetype of the hero as a storytelling trickster evolved from the prototypical poet figure in German Romantic narrative fiction. A defining trait of Romantic literary fiction is its protagonist, who is a threshold character that opens up the dimension of the fantastic or enables the fantastic to spill into mundane reality. German Romantic fiction had a significant impact on future fantastical novels, which we will discuss in depth in the following chapter. The protagonists in the three novels are capable of intervening creatively in the narrated worlds that they read. What makes them heroes is their ability to intervene as authors in the worlds that they encounter as readers.

## Chapter 1: On the Origin of a German Romantic Hero

“Soviel ich weiß, ist es ein Roman von den wunderbaren Schicksalen eines Dichters, worin die Dichtkunst in ihren mannigfachen Verhältnissen dargestellt und gepriesen wird” (1:265).<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1. The Romantic Notion of Creativity

Before exploring how the three novels belong to the modern lineage of German Romanticism and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, a clarification of the core thoughts of the German Romantic movement is needed. In this subsection that precedes the analysis of the three novels, I describe the motivation behind the Romantics’ literary works, the key terms that are relevant to this chapter and how Novalis reflected them in his novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. This explanation will help to situate *Die unendliche Geschichte* in the context of German Romanticism and show its fundamental affinities with *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. I then look at how Ende closely follows the core structural elements of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, as well as how the other two novels follow Ende’s paradigm.

During the late eighteenth century, a sense of crisis resonated throughout the minds of Romantics in German society because of ongoing social, moral and philosophical upheavals. Due to the “reconfiguration of social and moral norms in the wake of the emerging bourgeoisie,” they felt a crisis “of a loss of origins, of unity of self, of oneness with nature, and of a language capable of constructing unequivocal and

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<sup>4</sup> “As far as I recollect, it is a romance, relating the wonderful fortune of a poet’s life, wherein the art of poesy is represented and extolled in all its various relations” (Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen* 101-102).

universal meaning” (Pnevmonidou "Veiled Narratives" 24). Much of the early Romantics’ response to this was an aesthetic sublimation.

Despite the sense of a crisis, the early Romantics were intensely euphoric. They saw the crisis as an opportunity to develop an aesthetic framework that could promise release from the modern malaise while also embracing modernity (Pnevmonidou "Veiled Narratives" 24).

The aesthetic framework for the works of early Romantics stemmed from their pursuit of a constant creative process regardless of its completion, i.e., the notion of infinite perfectibility in poetry. Romantic poetry is something that is “still in the state of becoming: that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never perfected” (Schlegel *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* 2:138; Wellbery 197). Simply put, a Romantic conception of poetry is the unending immersion in the creative process. The Romantics’ newly-developed aesthetic view diverged from the existing “dominant classicist understanding of aesthetics and poetics” (Behler 1). The previous aesthetic models “stressed the unchangeable norms for art, codified a hierarchical system of immutable genres, bound artistic production to an imitation of nature and an adherence to verisimilitude” (1). By unfettering itself from this rigid state, poetry embodied “new ways to engage with the meaning and purpose of a life” (Phelan 49). In one of his 114 philosophical fragments titled *Blütenstaub* [Pollen], Novalis explains how one would enable a never-ending creative process:

Alle Zufälle unsers Lebens sind Materialien, aus denen wir machen können, was wir wollen. Wer viel Geist hat, macht viel aus seinem Leben. Jede Bekanntschaft,



jeder Vorfall, wäre für den durchaus Geistigen erstes Glied einer unendlichen Reihe, Anfang eines unendlichen Romans (2:437-438).<sup>5</sup>

From this, we observe that Novalis believed in “the ubiquitous presence of poetry on earth for those attuned to it” (Littlejohns 69). An imaginative, aesthetically keen poet initiates the Romanticization of the world. A poet’s creation of an artwork becomes merely one contribution to an infinite chain of creation. The above fragment is also an indirect acknowledgement that the poet is a trickster. By making use of the incidents from a life that others might find mundane and immersing himself in a creative process, the poet transverses between reality and fantasy. Thus, the poet distinguishes himself among others and becomes a trickster.

Due to the underlying notion of infinite perfectibility, the Romantics also maintained a “scepticism towards any achievable final goal and belief in the pursuit of such a goal” (Behler 70-71). This suspicion led to the concept of *Transzendentalpoesie* [transcendental poetry], that is, a creative process that overtly acknowledges the “self-reflexive nature of language” (Pnevmonidou "Veiled Narratives" 25). As Friedrich Schlegel writes, Romantic poetry presents “the producer along with the product” and should simultaneously be “poetry and the poetry of poetry” (*Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* 2:204; *Lucinde and the Fragments* 195). Wellbery describes the rhetoric of Romantic poetry as follows:

With Romanticism, the poetic work is reconceived as a transcendental rhetoric,

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<sup>5</sup> “All incidents of our life are materials out of which we can make whatever we like. Whoever has much intelligence will make much of his life. Every acquaintance, every incident might, for a thoroughly intellectual person, become the first link of an infinite series, the beginning of an unending novel” (*Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings* 68). The words “intelligence” and “intellectual” can also be interpreted as “spirit” and “spiritual.” For the future discussions, I choose the latter meanings.

as a mode of language use that simultaneously produces rhetorical objectifications of self and world and critically reflects on, and thus transcends, those objectifications (Wellbery 197).

Thus, the structure of *Transzendentalpoesie* can be understood as two different levels of narrative that take place simultaneously or unfold alongside each other. The first level is that of the characters, and specifically their coming to being as poets and how that process unfolds. The second level is that of the narrator who reflects on the narrative processes as they happen. The poet becomes both “the *Ich* of a text and the *Ich des Ichs* that on a meta-level reflects on the creative process and relativizes any constructs or claims made in the text” (Pnevmonidou "Otilie Von Goethe" 247). This meta-level process of a character's coming to be a poet unfolds in parallel with the process of the novel coming to be a novel, and is captured by Novalis' concept of Romanticization because it continuously pushes the limits of the creative process. This is the German Romantic aesthetic framework found in German Romantic works of fiction and it keeps resurfacing in modern German fantasy fiction. The three German fantasy novels with this self-reflexive narrative have been referred to as works of metafiction. But where did this specific narrative and aesthetic framework emerge from?

The key motivator for the German Romantic works of fiction came from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. *Wilhelm Meister* was not a Romantic work of fiction but a *Bildungsroman*, which is “a novel of itinerant personal development” (Littlejohns 68). Yet it intrigued Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and their contemporaries with its narrative techniques. Goethe's novel “diverged radically from the novels of the eighteenth century” (Behler 165). The Romantics needed *Wilhelm Meister*,

for it was the first novel that is shaped by the transcendental narrative structure described above. It built itself in the creative process and demonstrated a self-reflexive narrative. Nevertheless, *Wilhelm Meisters* ultimately provoked the Romantics' reaction *against* it (Behler 165; Phelan 41; Zipes *The Great Refusal* 122). They were dissatisfied with its conclusion where Wilhelm abandons his artistic potential and aspirations to become a poet and opts for the real world. He chooses a bourgeois life over an artist's life. Nevertheless, Goethe's novel served as a foundation for the Romantics, on which they could build their own creative model. Wishing to create an anti-*Wilhelm Meister* (Hoffmeister 86) and a new mythology to surpass it, Novalis reversed the narrative process and conclusion with his Romantic Bildungsroman, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

Even though *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* was not the only "anti-Wilhelm Meister" written during the German Romantic period, it distinguishes itself from all other German Romantic works written after 1801 due to its euphoria and optimism about the Romantic notion of creativity: *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is a novel about a character who is destined to be a poet and actually *becomes one* (Hoffmeister 85). Novalis specifically notes that "Henrich war von Natur zum Dichter geboren" (267).<sup>6</sup> *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the only novel where a youth becomes a poet without any tragic outcomes. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the prototypical early Romantic novel, and its optimistic narrative contrasts with later works of German Romanticism that feature gothic narratives in which the protagonist's poetic aspirations end tragically (Behler 179). The authors in later phases of German Romanticism show a propensity for a pessimistic outlook for their protagonists. The heroes' tragic destinies include an abandonment of artistic ambitions

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<sup>6</sup> "Henry was a poet by nature" (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 105).

and achievements, perpetual internal struggle, isolation from society, insanity and even an untimely demise. The title-hero of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, on the other hand, is a special protagonist who, in fact, is the point of connection and interaction between the fantastic and the real. In the novel, one finds an “alternation between the worlds of the miraculous and ordinary life, the inner self and the exterior world” (Behler 208).

Set in the late Middle Ages, the novel begins as Heinrich lies awake at night, musing and feeling restless about the story he heard from a stranger earlier. He says, “So ist mir noch nie zumute gewesen: es ist, als hätt ich vorhin geträumt, oder ich wäre in eine andere Welt hinübergeschlummert” (1:195).<sup>7</sup> He also notes no one else was moved as much as he was by the stories the stranger told, thus distinguishing himself as an intrigued listener of stories. He falls asleep and dreams what seems like a vision of his future life. He dreams of visiting foreign lands and experiencing extraordinary events. He dreams of loving and then being separated from the object of his passion. Most importantly, in his dream, Heinrich meets *die Blaue Blume* [the Blue Flower], which reveals an enchanting face of a woman to him. His joy of observing the Blue Flower is cut short when he is awakened by his mother’s voice. When Heinrich shares his dream with his parents, the father reveals that he, too, once dreamt a similar dream of meeting the Blue Flower. Shortly after this experience, Heinrich accompanies his mother on her visit to her paternal home in Augsburg. They are joined by a group of merchants who accompany them to Augsburg and tell Heinrich multiple fairy tales that foreshadow his future. During the journey, Heinrich is introduced to various people such as the miner,

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<sup>7</sup> “I have never been in such a mood. It seems as if I had hitherto been dreaming, or slumbering into another world” (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 15).

the hermit, Count of Hohenzollern, who lives in a cave since his return from the last crusade, a group of crusaders who are preparing for the next crusade, and their prisoner, Zulima. From these people, Heinrich hears many stories, songs, dreams and recollections. The first part of the novel is mostly dedicated to Heinrich's journey from Eisenach to Augsburg. Outwardly, the trip is uneventful, apart from these encounters. Instead of facing adversaries or suspenseful action during the journey, Heinrich experiences in each chapter new opportunities to take in a new story, be inspired by it, and slowly discover his own imagination. Heinrich is a keen listener. He never actually tells a tale to an audience and only listens as others narrate stories to him, but we see his creative imagination being stimulated and flourishing:

Mannigfaltige Zufälle schienen sich zu seiner Bildung zu vereinigen, und noch hatte nichts seine innere Regsamkeit gestört. Alles war er sah und hörte schien nur neue Riegel in ihm wegzuschieben, und neue Fenster ihm zu öffnen. Er sah die Welt in ihren großen und abwechselnden Verhältnissen vor sich liegen (1:268).<sup>8</sup>

Thus, there are no external obstacles to hinder Heinrich's development, the obstacles are rather self-imposed internal ones that would hinder his imagination.

Upon arriving in Augsburg Heinrich meets a poet named Klingsohr. Through a series of in-depth conversations, Klingsohr educates Heinrich on the importance of "reason, craftsmanship, and the mechanical to poetry" (Behler 217). Heinrich is then introduced to Klingsohr's daughter, Mathilde, whose face Heinrich recognizes as the one

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<sup>8</sup> "Many events seemed to conspire to aid his development, and as yet nothing had disturbed the elasticity of his soul. All that he saw and heard seemed only to remove new bars within him, and to open new windows for his spirit. The world, with its great and changing relations, lay before him" (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 105).

inside the Blue Flower from his dream. That night in Heinrich's dreams, he is visited by Mathilde, who says "wunderbares gehimes Wort in seinen Mund" (1:276), thus showing that she will become Heinrich's muse<sup>9</sup>. The chapter concludes with Heinrich's and Mathilde's celebrated union and Klingsohr's telling of a fairy tale. Here ends the first part of the novel, "Die Erwartung" [The Expectation]. I should note that rather rigid, problematic gender notions, which assign men to the role of poet and women to the role of muse, are at play in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. For the purposes of my thesis, I will focus on how the narrative structure and underlying notion of creativity in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* has shaped the modern works of German fantasy fiction.

Due to the author's untimely death, the second part of the novel was left incomplete aside from the first two chapters. Novalis' notes and Ludwig Tieck's reports based on them offer some insight into what Novalis had planned for Heinrich's destiny in the second part of the novel. In the beginning of the second part we learn that Mathilde has long been dead. As Paul Kluckhohn writes, this significant event contributes to Heinrich's maturation into a poet.

Das entscheidende Erlebnis, das ihn zu Dichter machst, ist erst der Tod Mathildens, durch den für ihn die Schranke zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits fällt, er in zwei Welten heimisch wird un an der äußeren Welt teilnehmend zugleich einer inneren und jenseitigen anzugehören vermag wie Novalis nach Sophiens Tod (1:57).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "She put a wondrous, secret word into his mouth, and it rang through his whole being" (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 121).

<sup>10</sup> "The decisive experience that makes him a poet is only the death of Mathilde, through which the barrier between this world and the beyond is removed and he feels at home in both worlds, participating in the events of the outer world, but simultaneously belonging to the inner and transcendent one, like Novalis after Sophia's death" (Behler 218).

The fleeting presence of a muse becomes a creative impetus for the poet because “only a love that has gone through death and rebirth can spiritualize nature and bring down the barriers between this world and eternity” (Hoffmeister 87). Once again, I should note the traditional gender roles. For my analysis of the three fantasy novels, my interest lies in how the poet is positioned exactly on the interface between two worlds in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

As anticipated in his first dream, Heinrich visits foreign lands and realms, blurring the boundaries between a fable and the real world. Eventually, Heinrich was meant to completely dissolve into poetry, a fate foreshadowed in the first part of the novel. When Heinrich and Mathilde are enraptured with each other, and Heinrich declares,

Sie ist der sichtbare Geist des Gesangs. Eine wiirdige Tochter ihres Vaters. Sie wird mich in Musik auflösen Sie wird meine innerste Seele, die Hüterin meines heiligen Feuers sein (1:276).<sup>11</sup>

He was also supposed to be reunited with Mathilde and to undergo multiple metamorphoses into a stone, a tree, a ram and a human again. Heinrich would also reunite with the people he met throughout the first part of the novel and become the poet, Arion, whose story the merchants related to him in the first part (1:376). The novel would thus come full circle, like an Uroboros, a snake that bites its tail, or like a never-ending story. Heinrich would thereby “vicariously bring about the golden age, uniting time and eternity, spirit and nature” (Behler 219).

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<sup>11</sup> “...she is the visible spirit of song, the worthy daughter of her father. She will dissolve me into music. She will become my inmost soul, the guardian spirit of my holy fire” (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 118).

*Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is a significant “poetic embodiment” of Novalis’ “philosophical outlook on life” (213). Through the eyes of Heinrich, we see Novalis’ Romantic conception of how one conceives of an idealized world. In his well-known aphorism from “Vermischte Fragmente,” Novalis writes:

Die Welt muß romantisiert werden. So findet man den ursprünglichen Sinn wieder. ... Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe, so romantisiere ich es (2:545).<sup>12</sup>

From the fragment above, we observe that Novalis considered a Romantic hero as an aesthetically and spiritually keen poet who transforms his experience into an artwork that can reduce the gap and mystery between the fantastical world and the real world. Novalis writes, “Der erste Schritt wird Blick nach Innen, absondernde Beschauung unsers Selbst. Wer hier stehn bleibt, gerät nur halb” (2:399).<sup>13</sup> The ones who isolate themselves by their continued self-contemplation remain in the fantastical realm and will eventually deepen the chasm between the fantastical and the real world. The poet has to turn the gaze outward into the real world. In the context of Novalis’ aphorisms, Romantic poets stretch the aesthetic horizon as they learn to gaze outward in a different way. *In Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the death of Heinrich’s muse Mathilde creates an intersection of fantasy and reality. The theme of a poet being the bridge between the two worlds also appears in

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<sup>12</sup> “The world must be romanticized. That is how we re-establish the original meaning. By giving the ordinary a high meaning, the habitual a mysterious appearance, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite an infinite air – I romanticize” (Behler 207-208).

<sup>13</sup> “The first step is to look inward, an isolating contemplation of ourselves. He who remains here has come only halfway” (my trans.).



Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* [Hymns to the Night], where the grief of the beloved's death awakens the speaker's poetic consciousness.

Novalis' notion of love further shows that the Romantic concept of creativity is supported by a specific understanding of love. German Romantic fiction generally is based on the binary of a male poet and his beloved muse, and celebrates the idealization of love. Novalis explicitly expresses this relationship in the opening poem that sets the stage for the novel.

Ich darf für Dich der edlen Kunst mich weihn;  
Denn Du, Geliebte, willst die Muse werden,  
Und stiller Schutzgeist meiner Dichtung sein (1:195).<sup>14</sup>

The beloved receives the poet's noble work as a representation of love, while the poet is given his muse. By describing the "beloved," who is the person the poem is addressed to, as a spirit, Novalis implies that love can awaken a poet's gaze to the soul of the inner world, as reflected in another *Bluthenstaub* fragment by Novalis': "Der Sitz der Seele ist da, wo sich Innenwelt und Außenwelt berühren. Wo sie sich durchdringen, ist er in jedem Punkte der Durchdringung" (2:419).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, instead of conforming to the society the protagonist belongs to or escaping indefinitely into the unknown, a successful Romantic hero brings the two worlds closer together.

Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte* can be viewed as a continuation of the Romantic tradition. It was his aesthetic response to his own conflicting reality of social

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<sup>14</sup> "To art I dedicate myself for thee,

For thou, beloved, wilt become the Muse

And gentle Genius of my poesy (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 14).

<sup>15</sup> "The seat of the soul is there where the inner world and the outer world touch each other. Where they permeate each other--it is in every point of the permeating" (*Schriften* 2:419).

upheavals, which included the aftermath of the Second World War and the following Cold War. Taking core structural elements from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Ende showed fundamental affinities with what constitutes a German Romantic hero. The similarities that the two books share are indeed striking. In the following sections, I will present Novalis' philosophical fragments and core structural elements of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as a framework through which to analyse the three fantasy novels as modern variants of German Romantic fiction. I will examine key symbolic elements contained within the novels, their portrayal of the protagonist's growth into a poet, intertextual references, the presence of muses, and the implied conception of a golden age. After a first reading of the three fantasy novels through the framework of Romantic fiction, I will characterize the fantasy heroes as tricksters in Chapter 2.

Novalis etched the Romantic notion of creativity and imagination into his novel. Based on his philosophy, *Die unendliche Geschichte* created its own, unique paradigm by intertwining its narrative with the culture industry, and the two recent novels followed suit. The three novels revolve around young protagonists who bear the features of a German Romantic poet-hero. The insertion of German Romantics' notion of creativity gives the passive readers-protagonists in the books the opportunity to transform into free, self-realized individuals. These books feature a specific, aggressive force that often embodies the culture industry, working against the imagination of children and preventing people's creative potential. The struggling Romantic hero thrives in the genre of fantasy, which celebrates the creative imagination, strange worlds, and new experiences.

## 1.2. *Die Unendliche Geschichte*

Like the German Romantics, Ende lived through tumultuous times, shaped among others by the experiences of the Second World War and the Cold War. Such historical contexts, coupled with the hopeful vision of a Romanticization of the world shape *Die unendliche Geschichte*. Ende acknowledged his indebtedness to Novalis, as he himself considered German Romanticism as “die bisher einzige originäre Kulturleistung Deutschlands in der Welt” (Bormann 709)<sup>16</sup>. In an interview with *Le Monde*, Ende explained why he used motifs from German Romanticism: “Je ne me cache pas avoir essayé, en écrivant *l’Histoire sans fin*, de renouer avec certaines idées du romantisme allemand. Non pas pour faire machine en arrière, mais parce qu’il y a dans ce mouvement qui a avorté des semences qui ne demandent encore qu’à germer” (De Rambures).<sup>17</sup>

Ende’s explicit use of German Romantic ideas in *Die unendliche Geschichte* has been recognized by a number of studies. Using key symbolic images from German Romanticism such as the Blue Flower, Ute Oestreicher proposes that *Die unendliche Geschichte* is “part of a literary tradition and heir to ideas promoted by the Romantic movement, especially German Early Romanticism” (118). In her discussion of the transformation of German Romanticism throughout the history of Germany, Margarete Kohlenbach mentions *Die unendliche Geschichte*, along with *Tintenherz*, as an example of a present-day view of German Romanticism and praises its “play with the text’s own textuality” (275). Bormann designates Ende’s *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Momo* as

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<sup>16</sup> “...so far Germany’s only original cultural achievement in the world” (my trans.).

<sup>17</sup> “I do not hide the fact that in this book I was trying to link up again with certain ideas of German Romanticism. Not in order to return to the past, but because there are, in that movement which failed some seeds that are ready to germinate” (Rosso and Watkins 90).

cult books for “Aussteiger” [dropouts] and notes that the elements of fairy tales found in these novels follow the tradition of German Romantic literature (709).

The influence of German Romanticism on Michael Ende is in fact so significant that it affects the very structure of his novel. The character development of Bastian, for example, loosely follows the structure of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Firstly, both novels are structured in two parts, with the death of the female muse as the novel’s dividing point. Secondly, they address the development of a reader/listener of stories into an active storyteller or poet. Third, the protagonists of these two novels bring about the golden age, bringing prosperity to both the fantastical and the real realm.

In both cases, the first part is about the protagonist being fixated on a female muse-figure (*The Neverending Story* 56). Even though Heinrich does not meet Mathilde until the end of his journey to Augsburg, he is affected by her invisible presence and longing for the feminine, which he encountered in the guise of the blue flower in his dream. Just as the vision of Mathilde enralls and inspires Heinrich, Bastian is suddenly struck with a vision of the Childlike Empress’ countenance. Enthralled with his vision, his desire to read becomes even stronger. “Er wollte nur noch eines: weiterlesen, um wieder bei Mondenkind zu sein, um sie wiederzusehen (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 161).”<sup>18</sup> Bastian feels compelled to shout out her new name, thereby saving Phantásien and its ailing ruler. Although the Childlike Empress does not make an appearance until the end of the first part, she indirectly makes her presence known during the conversations between Phantásien’s residents. Bastian had a muse-like figure before, a

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<sup>18</sup> “All he wanted was to go on reading, to see Moon Child again, to be with her” (*The Neverending Story* 142).

three-year-old girl Christa, who use to look up to Bastian when he told her his creative stories. Their friendship is cut short by her being sent to a boarding school. The Childlike Empress can be considered as the true muse for Bastian, for she is the only one who triggers Bastian's urge to engage in a creative process *for her*.

The second part posits the active poet-figure as being closer to the fantastical realm after the death of the female muse. Upon Bastian's entrance into the book of Phantásien, the Childlike Empress bestows him with her amulet AURYN that bears the inscription "Tu was du willst" (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 199).<sup>19</sup> It grants Bastian the power to fulfill any of his wishes, and the first of them is his physical transformation into the admirable, action-driven hero he always desired to be. The Childlike Empress disappears without a trace after his transformation, for "no one can meet the Golden-eyed Commander of Wishes more than once" (*The Neverending Story* 258).<sup>20</sup> In Phantásien, Bastian befriends Atréju and his friend Fuchur the Luckdragon, who urge Bastian to return to his original world. Bastian must return to the real world to bring about change in both worlds, or Phantásien will be in the same crisis that it found itself in at the beginning of the novel. The alternative is the cycle of repetition and retelling of what is available inside Phantásien. Refusing to accept his separation from the Childlike Empress, Bastian insists, against Atréju's wishes, not to leave Phantásien but to search for the Childlike Empress. Bastian initially wrongfully casts himself as an intrepid hero like Atréju, which contributes to worsening his problem of being further away from his own reality. Bastian

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<sup>19</sup> "Do what you wish" (*The Neverending Story* 176).

<sup>20</sup> "...daß man der Goldäugigen Gebieterin der Wünsche nur ein einziges Mal begegnet?" (*Die unendliche Geschichte* 293).

reaches the summit of her ivory tower, only to discover he is not present in her magnolia-shaped pavilion.<sup>21</sup> By hinting at the image of the Blue Flower and showing Bastian's inability to reach Phantásien's equivalent of the Romantic symbol, Ende equates his journey with that of Heinrich. Bastian fails to realize that the Childlike Empress watches him within AURYN, which has the pathway to his world<sup>22</sup>. Bastian's search for a muse to fill his void soon reveals itself as his desire of wanting to love and be loved once again. When Bastian meets the mother figure Dame Aíuóla, she reminds Bastian of what he truly might be wishing for and he can return to his world: his pursuit of and reunion with his father. After losing all of his memories in Phantásien, Bastian finally relinquishes AURYN and puts it on the ground. Bastian's action of voluntarily losing AURYN equates to his symbolic gesture of letting go of the muse and overcoming her death. His action of losing AURYN transports him inside AURYN, which contains a gate that resembles the emblem of Ouroboros and a fountain for the Water of Life. Bastian is stripped of his false appearance as a handsome hero. Holding the Water of Life for his father, he exits the vicious "circle" and re-enters the real world.

Showing how Bastian transforms into a poet from a mere reader of the book while also letting the readers of the book witness the formation of *Die unendliche Geschichte*, Ende demonstrates the Romantic notion of *Transzendentalpoesie*. During the first part, the protagonist acts as a reader/listener, and in both *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* shows that the very act itself of reading and listening has an

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<sup>21</sup> Seeing how the poet's desired muse is found within a flower, this Magnolia Pavilion appears to be an allusion to the Blue Flower in Heinrich von Ofterdingen.

<sup>22</sup> This is implied when the Childlike Empress reveals to Atréju that she has been looking over his journey as long as he had the AURYN with him. (*Die unendliche Geschichte* 168; *The Neverending Story* 147) We can assume that Bastian also was watched by the Childlike Empress, as he wore AURYN with him while he was in Phantásien.

impact on the world. In one of the stops during the journey, Heinrich experiences perhaps one of the most significant incidents that determines his life. Heinrich enters the hermit's cave and discovers a book written in a language that he cannot recognize. He is astonished to find that the book contains hieroglyphic depictions of his entire past, present and future life, including key episodes narrated thus far in the novel.

Sie dünkten ihm ganz wunderbar bekannt, und wie er recht zusah, entdeckte er seine eigene Gestalt ziemlich kenntlich unter den Figuren. Er erschrak und glaubte zu träumen, aber beim wiederholten Ansehn konnte er nicht mehr an der vollkommenen Ähnlichkeit zweifeln. (1:264).<sup>23</sup>

Through this encounter, Heinrich becomes the author and the protagonist of this text. This is a crucial instance of self-reflexivity or moment of *Transzendentalpoesie* at work in the novel: Heinrich sees himself becoming a poet, while the readers of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* witness both the process of Heinrich's becoming a poet and the book becoming a novel.

The episodes that illustrate the notion *Transzendentalpoesie* occur at least twice during *Die unendliche Geschichte*. In the first half of the novel, Bastian slowly begins to recognize the signs that he is invited to change Phantásien. Noticing that Bastian is still doubtful of his influence, The Childlike Empress attempts to resolve this crisis by visiting the Alte vom Wandernden Berge [the Old Man of Wandering Mountain]. The Childlike Empress enters a dark entrance on an enormous egg and finds the scribe who writes *Die unendliche Geschichte* into a book that bears the exact same appearance as Bastian's copy.

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<sup>23</sup> "They seemed strangely familiar to him; and on examination, he discovered his own form quite discernible among the figures. He was terrified and thought that he must be dreaming; but after having examined them again and again, he could no longer doubt their perfect resemblance (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 101).

When the Old Man begins to read *Die unendliche Geschichte* from the very beginning, which is the actual beginning of Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte*, Bastian has a moment of revelation.

Was da erzählt wurde, war seine eigene Geschichte! Und die war in der Unendlichen Geschichte. Er, Bastian, kam als Person in dem Buch vor, für dessen Leser er sich bis jetzt gehalten hatte! Und wer weiß, welcher andere Leser ihn jetzt gerade las, der auch wieder nur glaubte, ein Leser zu sein - und so immer weiter bis ins Unendliche! (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 188).<sup>24</sup>

Here we simultaneously witness Bastian's reading of *Die unendliche Geschichte* and our reading of the novel. We witness another case of *Transzendentalpoesie* at the end of the novel, when Bastian tells his adventures in Phantásien to his father. Bastian then visits Karl Konrad Koreander, the owner of the bookstore where *Die unendliche Geschichte* was found.

Ende effectively "visualises" Bastian's journey and intertwining of the reality and the fantastical kingdom in the first editions of *Die unendliche Geschichte*, which were printed in two different colours of ink: purple and green. Purple ink indicates that the current passage is being focalized through the characters who are present in the real world. Green ink shows that the characters who are present in Phantásien are the focalizers in the current passage. Bastian initially begins his journey under the purple text and later intervenes in the green, written world. By entering *Die unendliche Geschichte*,

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<sup>24</sup> "Why, this was all about him! And it was the Neverending Story. He, Bastian, was a character in the book which until now he had thought he was reading. And heaven knew who else might be reading it at the exact same time, also supposing himself to be just a reader" (*The Neverending Story* 165).



Bastian concludes the first part of the novel, thereby ending the interaction between the green and purple texts that cross their paths multiple times during the first part.

*Die unendliche Geschichte* contains a number of symbolic images and scenes from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which appear throughout the novel. I would like to focus in particular on one recurring motif in both books: The Water of Life. The Water of Life first appears in Heinrich's dream at the beginning of the novel that encapsulates his entire, past and future life. In one episode in the dream, Heinrich dreams of drinking from and bathing in a glittering, iridescent stream that is also a basin filled with countless sparkles from a beam of light. Swimming in the basin lets him transition into another significant dream, which is the one that reveals the Blue Flower. A similar motif appears again in "Klingsohr's Märchen," a fairy tale told by Klingsohr at the end of the first part of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Sophie, a personification of wisdom, plays with the liquid in a bowl on an altar, sprinkling it on the children to make strange shapes appear in the air. She tests the writings of the Scribe by immersing the sheets in the water to see what of the writing survives. The water not only appears as a source of creative aspirations but also a symbol of regeneration. Fable, a young child and personification of poetry in the fairy tale, later infuses the same water with the ashes of her mother. The liquid is shared among people, who feels a joyous presence of the Mother. When Bastian returns to his school's attic, he is reunited with his father, who has, in fact, frantically searched for him. Bastian narrates his journey in Phantásien to his father and confesses that he lost the Water of Life. However, Bastian realizes that he finally freed his father from his emotional shackles when he sees tears in his father's eyes. Bastian's water of life brings tears to his father, thus waking him up from his state of introspection. It is a thoughtful

continuation of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, for as Oestreicher puts it, “What Novalis sows as a premise, Ende reaps at the end of his novel in the form of a laborious moral” (116).<sup>25</sup>

As is the case for Heinrich in Novalis’ novel, the completion of Bastian’s character development is his introduction of a golden age to his real world. The subtle changes in Bastian’s reaction to his world lets us realize the impact the journey had on his outlook of the world. One example is his return to his home from the school’s attic. Bastian returns to the real world, where only a day has passed since he began reading the book. Without realizing that it is now a weekend and the school is closed, Bastian finds himself locked inside. He eventually escapes through a window, overcoming his fears.

“Für einen, der Herr von Perelín gewesen war, gab es hier überhaupt kein Problem - auch wenn er nicht mehr über die fabelhaften Körperkräfte verfügte und das Gewicht seines dicken Körpers ihm doch ein wenig zu schaffen machte” (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 421).<sup>26</sup>

He reminds himself of the experiences in *Phantasien* and sees himself to be capable of performing challenging physical tasks. He begins to discover the wonders in his previously “dull, everyday reality” (Ende, *The Neverending Story* 148), His physical feat is a considerable change from earlier in the novel when he feared gym class. Bastian thus successfully begins the steps of Romanticizing the world, for he can make use of what is

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<sup>25</sup> The grandiose narrative and the rich allegory is impossible to capture fully in this thesis. Another example of a repeated motif from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the characters’ search of an answer in times of crisis and their visit to the Sphinx. In the first part of the novel, Atréju is tested when he passes the two sphynxes under moonlight and enters a hall with colonnades. There he meets Uyulala, the bodyless oracle who only responds to and answers with poetry, and Atréju learns from this oracle that a human child can save *Phantásien*. In “Klingsohrs Märchen,” Fable comes across an open space with colonnades under a black sky. She meets a Sphinx, with whom she exchanges questions and answers.

<sup>26</sup> “To someone who had been lord of Perilin, this was no problem, even if he had lost his fabulous strength and even though the weight of his little fat body was making things rather hard for him” (Ende, *The Neverending Story* 371).

around him to connect with the fantastical world. In a conversation with Atreju about why the intervention of a human reader is so crucial, the Childlike Empress delivers the following speech, which in a way rephrases Novalis' notion of the Romanticization of the world and also clarifies how Bastian can bring about the Golden Age:

Alle, die bei uns waren, haben etwas erfahren, was sie nur hier erfahren konnten und was sie verändert zurückkehren ließ in ihre Welt. Sie waren sehend geworden, weil sie euch in eurer wahren Gestalt gesehen hatten. Darum konnten sie nun auch ihre eigene Welt und ihre Mitmenschen mit anderen Augen sehen. Wo sie vorher nur Alltäglichkeit gefunden hatten, entdeckten sie plötzlich Wunder und Geheimnisse. Deshalb kamen sie gern zu uns nach Phantásien. Und je reicher und blühender unsere Welt dadurch wurde, desto weniger Lügen gab es in der ihren und desto vollkommener war also auch sie. So wie unsere beiden Welten sich gegenseitig zerstören, so können sie sich auch gegenseitig gesund machen (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 168).<sup>27</sup>

By the end, Bastian introduces his creative imagination into the realm of Phantásien and spreads his stories to the previously dreary reality. Bastian will bring about the change in his world where dreams begin to merge with reality.

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<sup>27</sup> “Every human who has been here has learned something that could be learned only here, and returned to his own world a changed person. Because he had seen you creatures in your true form, he was able to see his own world and his fellow humans with new eyes. Where he had seen only dull, everyday reality, he now discovered wonders and mysteries. That is why humans were glad to come to Fantastica. And the more these visits enriched our world, the fewer lies there were in theirs, the better it became. Just as our two worlds can injure each other, they can also make each other whole again” (Ende, *The Neverending Story* 148).

### 1.3. *Tintenherz*

*Tintenherz* is another German fantasy fiction to be considered as what Kolenbach calls a “Romantic play in textual self-reference” alongside Ende’s *Die unendliche Geschichte* (Kohlenbach 275). The core paradigm of a reader being able to influence both the real and the fantastic realm resonates throughout it. Every chapter in *Tintenherz* begins with quotes selected by Funke from across works of fiction of many genres, and characters reference, reflect on and interact with works of literature that are perhaps already well-known to readers of *Tintenherz*. However, the narrative begins with an intriguing premise that differentiates itself from *Die unendliche Geschichte*: Reality and fantasy have already been partially infused with one another by a reader in the real world, but they have been maintaining an antagonistic relationship. Rather than summoning a designated storyteller to resolve its crisis, *Tintenherz* explores the consequences when the fantastical realm encroaches upon the real world and threatens it.

Like *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, *Tintenherz* is also structured around the notion of a female muse, in the form of Meggie’s mother Teresa. She is an absent muse, as is expected for the German Romantic model. However, her absence is noticeable from the very beginning of the novel, as opposed to a muse’s disappearance in middle of *Die unendliche Geschichte* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. By their lack of a muse, Meggie and Mo both establish themselves as the modern rendition of German Romantic protagonists at the outset of the novel.<sup>28</sup> The chapter that includes Mo’s narrated analepsis to Meggie about Teresa’s disappearance is titled “Damals”

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<sup>28</sup> I should note that *Die unendliche Geschichte* follows the Romantic model of gender roles because Bastian is obsessed with rescuing the Childlike Empress.

[Once Upon a Time]. Inside Mo's story, we find that before Teresa disappears into *Tintenherz*, storytelling and reading aloud used to be lively activities in the house, often requested by Teresa herself. "Ich las ihr damals abends immer etwas vor," recalls Mo (*Tintenherz* 152).<sup>29</sup> On the night of her disappearance, Teresa chooses *Tintenherz*, a book that she has been especially attached to. Mo recalls, "Deine Mutter liebte es, von einem Buch ins Unbekannte gelockt zu werden, und die Welt, in die Tintenherz sie lockte, war ganz nach ihrem Geschmack" (*Tintenherz* 153).<sup>30</sup> After Teresa's disappearance, Mo repeatedly reads *Tintenherz* out loud for countless days until he completely exhausts himself, which only results in making people and objects disappear around him and summoning the creatures from *Tintenwelt* in exchange. Similar to how Phantasien only repeats and retells itself unless a creative storyteller intervenes from the outside world, Mo is unable to create a narrative that can specifically bring Teresa back into his world.

The physical disappearance of his muse partially removes the barrier between the real and the fantastical world due to the introduction of Capricorn, Basta and Staubfinger. However, Mo refuses to engage with them anymore and decides not to read aloud as a storyteller anymore. He attempts to focus on his occupation of mending aged books, thus approaching his struggles only on the surface, both in a metaphorical and literal sense. Due to his resulting passivity towards reading, the reluctance to use his ability and his refusal to read to his daughter, Mo heightens the tension between the two worlds by severing the connection between them and preventing his daughter from engaging with the fantastic. Meanwhile the fantastic characters that now inhabit the real world start

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<sup>29</sup> "I always used to read aloud to her in the evenings" (*Inkheart* 137).

<sup>30</sup> "Your mother loved a book to lead her into an unknown land, and the world into which Inkheart led her was exactly what she liked" (*Inkheart* 138).

shaping the real world through their actions. Capricorn establishes and grows his base of operation, and he begins to eliminate copies of *Tintenherz* worldwide.

Having lost their muse before the beginning of the novel, Meggie and Mo are in a similar state of mourning as Bastian and his father. Although Mo is not as self-isolating as Bastian's father, Meggie cannot help but feel a distance. Often wondering about the whereabouts of her mother and how different her life could have been, Meggie likes to escape from her reality through reading, just like Bastian. Her deeply treasured box of books that she always carries with her symbolizes her desire to escape from reality. Mo reveals to Meggie later that he decorated the box with a silken cloak that he accidentally read out of *Tintenherz* on the day her mother disappeared into *Tintenwelt*. The box subtly implies that a simple escape from her uncomfortable reality is not possible, for her reality has already been infused with the fantastical realm.

As opposed to the dejected Mo, Meggie shows an active pursuit of the answers to the questions in her life and the disappearance of the muse. She continues to push her father not to conceal the true narrative about her mother. Meggie's efforts to resolve what her father started mirror Heinrich's and his father's reaction to the Blue Flower. While Heinrich's father also had a dream of meeting the Blue Flower, he made a decision not to pursue it, while his son succeeds in pursuing his Blue Flower and surpassing his father. Wondering if she has the same special talent as her father, Meggie experiments with reading aloud and successfully reads out Tinker Bell from *Peter Pan*. She also reunites with her mother earlier than her father during the novel. Teresa the absent muse returns, by being summoned back into the real world by Capricorn's captive Darius, who possesses the same talent but is not as effective as Mo and makes Teresa lose her voice as

a result. Teresa's return is a reversal of the traditional Romantic novel's treatment of their muses, but, typical again of the model, she loses her voice. Instead of Mo who represents the old, existing forms, Meggie becomes the one who actively initiates various events.

By showing how Meggie engages with *Tintenherz*, the novel follows the case of *Die unendliche Geschichte* and shows a self-reflexive nature in multiple instances. Before Mo's kidnapping, the father and daughter visit Meggie's self-isolating great aunt Elinor, a collector of antique books. It is in Elinor's house where Mo is kidnapped and Meggie catches a glimpse of *Tintenherz*.

Noch nie hatte sie so lange gezögert, ein Buch aufzuschlagen. Sie hatte Angst vor dem, was darin wartete. Das war ein ganz neues Gefühl. Noch nie hatte sie Angst gehabt vor dem, was ihr ein Buch erzählen würde, im Gegenteil, meist war sie so begierig, sich in eine unentdeckte, nie gesehene Welt locken zu lassen, dass sie zu den unpassendsten Gelegenheiten zu lesen begann (*Tintenherz* 103).<sup>31</sup>

Meggie's hesitant, terrified reaction to the book that might significantly change her life mirrors Heinrich's bewilderment towards his discovery of the book that portrays the events of his life. Throughout her life, Meggie has regarded books as a safe haven from her odd reality. But now Meggie feels uncomfortable about a book for the first time, because the book was the originator of a recent chain of extraordinary events. In these scenes with a self-reflexive nature, the readers of Funke's *Tintenherz* witness the formation of a new kind of *Tintenherz* and Meggie's initiation into being a poet. Here we observe an instance of *Transzendentalpoesie*, which develops further when Meggie meets

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<sup>31</sup>“ She didn't usually hesitate so long before opening a book, but she was afraid of what was waiting for her inside this one. That was a brand-new feeling. She had never before been afraid of what a book would tell her. Far from it. Usually, she was so eager to let it lead her into an undiscovered world, one she had never been to before, that she often started to read at the most unsuitable moments” (*Inkheart* 90).

Tintenherz's author Fenoglio, who agrees to help Meggie, Mo and their friends. Even though Fenoglio's *Tintenherz* is a book that has been already written, published and consumed in the real world, the book still remains unpredictable and subject to change. *Tintenherz* shows how Meggie, Mo and Darius alter the presence and absence of characters, and how the author figure Fenoglio alters the ending. From Fenoglio, Meggie finds a possible solution to become a successful storyteller and a Romantic poet figure. In Meggie's world, being a Romantic poet would imply reversing the psychological, introspective journey that has stifled their magical voices, and going back outside to the world to pursue poetic creation. It also means the poets introduce harmony between the fantastical and the real worlds that have grown hostile towards each other since the barrier between *Tintenwelt* and Meggie's world ruptured. In order to control Capricorn and free Meggie's gang, Fenoglio provides her with an alternate fate for Capricorn. Being the only reader who truly understands the joy of reading, Meggie uses Fenoglio's text and exercises her magical reading to send Capricorn and his men back into *Tintenherz*. Seeing what a creative storyteller can achieve, Meggie decides to experiment with writing at the end of the novel.

Meggie as a reader-become-storyteller lets the two realms mutually interpret and complement each other, while she lays her first stepping stone to becoming a storyteller. Her greatest impact in possibly bringing the Golden Age can be seen in the growth of the character Elinor. When Mo and Meggie visit Elinor, he entrusts her with hiding his copy of *Tintenherz*. By being the holder of the problematic text that has fundamentally changed the lives of Mo and Meggie, Elinor can be likened to the figure of the hermit from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. As an antique book collector who developed a deep



attachment to her old books, Elinor has disconnected herself from the outside world. She harbours an obsession with antique books and treats them as her commodities, which isolates her from her surrounding world and even her own family. But her identity as a book collector becomes insubstantial when Capricorn's men burn down her library. Her utter dependence upon books initially serves as a warning to Meggie not to be trapped in the role of being a mere passive reader who uses her books as an escape from her unpleasant reality. Before the events of *Tintenherz*, she was a hermit, just like the Count in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

Upon Capricorn's disappearance into *Tintenherz*, Meggie, Mo and their companions discover that many of the magical creatures from *Tintenwelt* have entered their realm. By learning to engage in storytelling at the end of the novel, Meggie succeeds in elevating the mundane world to the ideal: Mo reunites with Teresa, and the novel ends with the magical creatures from *Tintenwelt* and the protagonists living in harmony at Elinor's house. Elinor decides to collect books once again. But she does not return to her previous state of being a hermit, for she travels across Europe with Darius. Fantastic creatures teem in the mansion that previously used to be nearly uninhabitable and isolated due to the overwhelming presence of books. Some creatures choose to leave and explore the world, possibly expanding the fantastical world's horizon. Elinor ultimately aids in bringing about the Romanticization of the world. In this case, we may be able to regard Meggie's talent as the continuation of the concept of the Water of Life. Even though there is not an exactly equivalent object, Meggie's talent plays the same role in restoring the loving relationship between family and opening a new gateway for a harmonious union between the two worlds.

*Tintenherz* in the context of the German Romantic framework is a tale of how a poet makes use of and celebrates the link between the fantastical and the real world. It shows how they become close to reuniting with their idealized world, after the death of a muse dislocates them from their ordered existence.

#### 1.4. *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*

The events of *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* occur in a fantastical, fictional realm called Zamonien, which is occupied by Moers' own creations and devoid of humans. In this case, the "fantastical" counterpart of a world that is already fantastical is the abandoned catacombs of Buchheim that became gradually separated from the real world and turned into a place of myths and legends. Therefore, even though there is not an explicitly fantastical world in another dimension of reality, the catacombs can be considered as a fantastical realm and the same German Romantic paradigm can be applied to *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* in spite of the vastly different landscapes of the realms.

*Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* displays a striking similarity to the other two novels, yet there is still no in-depth comparative study of the novels. Overall there is very little scholarship on *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*, and the link to the Romantic aesthetic tradition is only mentioned briefly in a few of these studies. In the introduction to the anthology titled *Walter Moers' Zamonien-Romane* [Walter Moers' Zamonian Novels], Gerrit Lembke identifies self-reflexivity, that is the narrative's repeated reference to its own poetic nature, as a core theme in Moers' Zamonian novels. In this context, he also mentions the Romantic writers, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, as major influences for Moers:

In ihrem romantischen Fragmentcharakter (Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis)  
verweisen die Texte immer wieder auf ihre Poetizität, ebenso wie durch andere

Maßnahmen der Verfremdung, die von der Handlung selbst ablenken und auf die literarische Tektonik des Textes hinweisen (Lembke 22).<sup>32</sup>

Sven Hanschek attributes the play with the narrative devices and literary fantasy to two other German Romantic poets, Ludwig Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffmann, but does not elaborate further on that link. With my research that interprets Walter Moers' works using Novalis' philosophical discourses and German Romantic aesthetic paradigm, I hope to contribute to the scholarship on Moers, specifically about his possible literary influences and theoretical frameworks.

In this subsection, I suggest that *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* can be interpreted as a modern lineage of Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and other theoretical fragments. The shared features that I shall look at are the two-part structure with the loss of a muse as its dividing point, possible figures of muses, and the notion of *Transzendentalpoesie* found in the narrative. *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* retains the same two-part structure as *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* where the loss of the muse triggers the poetic journey of the main character and poet-to-be. It is worth noting that the novel has an obvious gender difference, which is the absence of a female muse. In this case the pivoting point, i.e. the muse, is the author of the manuscript.

The first part titled "Danzelots Vermächtnis" [Dancelot's Bequest] deals with the young Hildegunst von Mythenmetz's independence from his birthplace Lindwurmefeste [Lindworm Castle]. Unlike the pompous adult Mythenmetz who takes pride in being the greatest author in Moers' fictional world of Zamonien, the youthful Mythenmetz is a

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<sup>32</sup> "In their Romantic fragmentary nature (Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis), the texts repeatedly refer to their poetic nature, as well as through other measures of defamiliarization, which diverts itself from the plot and points to the literary tectonics of the text" (my trans.).

timid novice writer and passive consumer, who has spent the entirety of his life within a fortress. A Lindworm is educated strictly from a very young age to be able to write, analyze, recite, and recognize powerful works of fiction and poetry. The creative impetus that makes Mythenmetz embark upon a journey to Buchheim is his acquisition of the perfect manuscript. Reading the manuscript places Mythenmetz in a state of complete rapture, even giving him the sensation that he describes as the following: “Es war, als tanzte ich mit einem schönen Dinosauriermädchen, ... zu himmlischer Musik” (*Die Stadt* 26).<sup>33</sup> The manuscript is a personal essay that addresses a sentiment named “*horror vacui*,” which is “der Angst vor dem leeren Blatt” (26).<sup>34</sup> Having never published anything in Zamonien, this sensation occupies Mythenmetz from time to time. Shocked by how even the concept of an empty paper can produce a masterpiece, Mythenmetz decides to embark on an ambitious quest to find the author.

Ich wollte nach Buchhaim, um die Spur jenes geheimnisvollen Dichters aufzunehmen, dessen Kunst mich in solche Höhen geleitet hatte. Er sollte, so malte ich mir in meiner jugendlichen Zuversicht aus, den leeren Platz meines Dichtpaten ersetzen und mein Lehrmeister werden. Er sollte mich hinaufführen in jene Sphäre, in der solche Dichtung entstand (*Die Stadt* 30).<sup>35</sup>

Upon arriving in the city, he meets Phistomefel Smeik, who exerts complete control over the production of any kind of cultural activities within Buchheim, including but not limited to publication, poetry readings and theatre performances. He demands

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<sup>33</sup> “...dancing to a heavenly music with a lovely girl dinosaur in my arms” (*The City* 29).

<sup>34</sup> “a fear of a blank page” (*The City* 26).

<sup>35</sup> “...to get to Bookholm and pick up the trail of the mysterious author whose artistry had filled me with such exaltation. In my youthful optimism I imagined him taking Dancelot’s place and becoming my tutor. He would, I thought, bear me upwards to the sphere in which writing such as his originated” (*The City* 30).

absolute obedience to the ordered social hierarchy and silences any original voice that might topple his capitalistic system. He declares:

Ich überschwemme den Markt mit Billigangeboten, ruiniere die ganze Konkurrenz im Umkreis, und wenn sie dann pleite sind, kaufe ich ihre Läden zu Spottpreisen. Ich bestimme die Mietpreise von ganz Buchhaim. Mir gehören die meisten Verlage der Stadt. Fast alle Papiermühlen und Druckereien. ... Ich lege den Papierpreis fest. Die Auflagen. Ich bestimme, welche Bücher Erfolg haben und welche nicht. Ich mache die erfolgreichen Schriftsteller, und ich vernichte sie wieder, wenn es mir gefällt. Ich bin der Herrscher von Buchhaim. *Ich bin die Zamonische Literatur (Die Stadt 149).*<sup>36</sup>

Of the three novels, Smeik acts as the strongest motivator for the protagonist's ventures into the unknown. Directly responsible for the death of Mythenmetz's muse, he lures the innocent dinosaur into the catacombs by telling him that he has a clue about the identity of the anonymous author of the manuscript. He thus banishes Mythenmetz into the long-forgotten underground catacomb structures, which are a vastly interconnected network of corridors made out of bookshelves containing valuable books. Thrown into an environment teeming with both the most precious books and the most dangerous, predatory creatures in Zamonien, Mythenmetz begins an inward journey into the underground.

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<sup>36</sup> "I sell vast consignments of books. I flood the market with cheap offers, ruin my competitors and, when they go broke, buy up their businesses for peanuts. I control rentals throughout the city. ... I dictate the price of paper and the size of editions. I determine which books succeed and which don't. I make successful authors and destroy them at will. I'm the ruler of Bookholm. *I'm Zamonian literature personified.*" (*The City* 143-144).

The second part of *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* takes place entirely underground in the realm of the catacombs. In the catacombs we see an undeniable manifestation of *Transzendentalpoesie*. Mythenmetz finds shelter in die Lederne Grotte [the Leather Grotto] amongst the elusive, intellectual Booklings. The Booklings have a practice of personifying in living form the books they read. Each Bookling has an identity and even personality modelled after the author he chooses. They do not feel physical hunger, for they find an intellectual form of nourishment from books to be fulfilling. They have been the caretakers of an enormous, mysterious ancient machine that organizes the books of the catacombs in its own system. It self-operates based on a mechanism that was devised by a long-extinct species of intelligent dwarfs called der Rostigen Gnome [the Rusty Gnomes]. Die Büchermaschine der Rostigen Gnome [the rusty Gnome's Book Machine] works on a vast, interconnected railway for transporting books across catacombs, and it can be said to be the creative core of Buchheim along with its caretaker Booklings. Reminiscent of the miners from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the Booklings along with the Book Machine manifest the notion of *Transzendentalpoesie*, as I will elaborate below.

The notion of *Transzendentalpoesie* relates to the doubling of both the notions of writing and reading more than the other two novels. Each individual book is an object that wants to be read. But the forgotten Rusty Gnome's library also constructs a narrative through its unique system of organization, i.e. through the way books are placed in relationship with each other. As ancient as they are, the catacombs are, in a way, a narrative that continues to write itself when the Book Machine keeps reconfiguring the arrangement of the bookshelves. Meanwhile Booklings possess identities that are the

living personifications of the books that they read. Their lives can be equated to the Book Machine: embodying entire sections of bookshelves (i.e. collected works by individual authors) under the name of the books' authors, the Booklings continually shape the narrative of the books simply by interacting with other Booklings who are also personifications of other collected works. When we look at *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the miner who harvest the gemstones hidden in caves presents himself as a geological reader. Just as he reads the caves to discover the most prized treasures, Mythenmetz needs to learn to "read" the catacombs, if he is ever to be visited by the Orm and to turn the inward journey back outside to the world and to his active poetic creation. The catacombs, the Machine, and the inhabiting Booklings can be interpreted as the "Dreaming Books" that wait for their narrative to be read, with the reading being Mythenmetz.

After Mythenmetz is acquainted with the Booklings who reside in Leather Grotto, they lead him into a cave that stores the relics of celebrated authors. There they reveal to Mythenmetz the letter that Dancelot sent to the author of the manuscript, implying that the author had made his way to the catacombs. Not knowing that the author became Homunkoloss, Mythenmetz is distraught, believing that an unfortunate incident befell the author. Mythenmetz is shortly forced to leave the Booklings due to a devastating attack made on the Leather Grotto by a group of Bookhunters. To escape from the carnage, Mythenmetz escapes deeper into the machine of the bookshelves. Mythenmetz's attempts to reach the surface fail and he sinks further into the catacombs.

The journey awakens his forgotten instincts of being a dinosaur, such as when he lets out an enormous roar to intimidate the Harpyrs. A dinosaur's call is not the only



thing that awakens within Mythenmetz during his journey into the catacombs. One of the core concepts of the book is the Orm, which is “eine Art mysteriöse Kraft, die manche Dichter in Augenblicken höchster Inspiration durchströmen soll” (*Die Stadt* 20).<sup>37</sup> The Orm represents a pure form of creativity that is unbound to the ordered world and connected with nature. The Shadow King describes it as follows:

Jeder kann schreiben...Es gibt welche, die können ein bißchen besser schreiben als die anderen - die nennt man Schriftsteller. Dann gibt es welche, die besser schreiben können als die Schriftsteller. Die nennt man Dichter. Und dann gibt es noch Dichter, die besser schreiben können als andere Dichter. Für die hat man noch keinen Namen gefunden. Es sind diejenigen, die einen Zugang zum Orm haben. ... »Die kreative Dichte des Orms ist unermesslich. Es ist ein Quell der Inspiration, der nie versiegt - wenn man weiß, wie man dorthin gelangt. (*Die Stadt* 393)<sup>38</sup>

Mythenmetz dismisses the idea of the Orm; however, during his banishment in the catacombs, this hero who fears empty paper is trained by Homunkoloss himself to learn about the Orm and free the repressed creativity that lies silent within him. As a crucial step in Romanticization, Novalis required an inward journey as the first step, followed by a reaching out to the outside world, as mentioned in one of his philosophical fragments above. He must exit the catacombs and return to the real world, in order to begin the

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<sup>37</sup> “... a kind of a mysterious force reputed to flow through many authors at moments of supreme inspiration” (*The City* 20).

<sup>38</sup> “Anyone can write... Some people can write a bit better than others; they’re called authors. Then there are some who can write better than authors; they’re called artists. Finally, there are some artists who can write better than other artists. No name has yet been devised for them. They’re the ones who have attained the Orm. ...The creative density of the Orm is immeasurable. It’s a source of inspiration that never runs dry – as long as you know how to get there” (*The City* 377).

Romanticization. Completing his enriching process, Mythenmetz escapes from the catacombs with the Shadow King, who completes his revenge by igniting a fire in Smeik's residence that engulfs Smeik in flames. The flame spreads, awakening the city, as Mythenmetz walks away. The true death of Mythenmetz's muse occurs, and at this very moment of Buchheim's destruction, he is visited by the Orm, thus beginning his centuries-long celebrated life of writing. The Orm is comparable to the Water of Life in Novalis and Ende. Just as Bastian obtained the Water of Life after his difficult journey, Mythenmetz acquires Orm as the outcome of the upheaval he causes and his challenging quest to become a legendary writer. Smeik prevented creative expression and pursuit of the Orm, because he is afraid: "Und was noch schlimmer ist: Du könntest Schule machen. Andere Schriftsteller inspirieren, bessere Bücher zu produzieren. Nach dem Orm zu streben. Weniger, aber besser zu schreibend" (*Die Stadt* 367).<sup>39</sup> Following Smeik's demise and the crumbling of Buchheim, the creativity that stems from Orm is unfettered and will now lead Zamonien to the golden age. The closing scenes of this novel especially mirrors "Klingsohrs Märchen," for "Aus Schmerzen wird die neue Welt geboren, und in Thränen wird die Asche zum Trank des ewigen Lebens aufgelöst" (1:271).<sup>40</sup>

By showing a young protagonist whose lifelong goal is to become a successful author, *Die Stadt der träumenden Bücher* explicitly reflects, more than the other two novels, on Mythenmetz's growth as a poet. The book teems with allusions to classical

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<sup>39</sup> "Worse still, you might set an examole. You might inspire other writers to produce finer books and aspire to the Orm – to write less but better" (*The City* 352).

<sup>40</sup> "...the great secret is revealed to all, and remains forever unfathomable. Out of pain is the new world born, and the ashes are dissolved into tears for a draught of eternal life" (*Henry von Oferdingen* 166).

literature. One of the most significant literary mentor figures for Mythenmetz is a Bookling named Ojahnn Golgo van Fontheweg, an anagram for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Just as Klingsohr enriches Henrich with the art of creative writing, Golgo acts as Mythenmetz's mentor by navigating him through the Booklings' lives and the secrets of the catacombs.

The novel contains many instances of self-reflexivity and is structured as a Romantic *Transzendentalpoesie*. By letting the readers see the growth of both Mythenmetz and his novel, the reader sees the appearance of *Transzendentalpoesie*. The following narrative layers form an intricate frame.

- I. Homunkoloss, the author of the perfect manuscript, observes young Mythenmetz grow into a poet.
- II. Young Mythenmetz, the reader of the perfect manuscript experiences the process of becoming a poet
- III. Old Mythenmetz, the writer of *Die Stadt der träumenden Bücher*, observes his younger self becoming a poet, comments on the imperfections and flaws of his younger self.
- IV. Walter Moers, the translator, observes Mythenmetz's Zamonien story becoming a novel and simultaneously creates a German translation.
- V. We, as readers, observe the translation being completed by Moers' repeated intervention into the narrative in the form of footnotes.

Unlike in the previous two novels, Moers places an additional level of narrative, by stating that the book we are reading is a work of translation from the original "Zamonian" language. With this specific persona of a translator, Moers mimics Tolkien's

framing of Middle Earth. An “editor” addresses the reader in the Appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*, stating that he translated the materials from the Hobbits’ *Red Book*. Tolkien “defamiliarizes” Middle Earth by creating a distance between the original and the translated material (Hiley 122). However, Moers gives the readers a possibility of the continuation of the narrative and the opportunity to engage with them. In the epilogue of the novel, Moers posits the idea that the book we have read is merely a fraction of what Mythenmetz wrote about his life adventures. Moers brings the two worlds closer together as if Mythenmetz is indirectly accessible. The narrative layers and Moers’ perspectives enable the readers to insert themselves into a landscape where Zamonien and our world coexist. Thus, not only Mythenmetz but also Moers himself enables the Romanticization of the world.

Even though Mythenmetz inadvertently chose a destructive method to collapse the forcefully ordered and fabricated world of Buchheim, he is successful in bringing about the Romanticization where chaos and the true desires of the people will merge. After the events of this novel, Mythenmetz matures into a renowned author whose literary works would be read by protagonists of Moers’ books that take place in the future (e.g., *Die 13½ Leben des Käpt’n Blaubär* and *Rumo & Die Wunder im Dunkeln*). As long as Moers decides to write, we will continue to see his allusion to Mythenmetz in other novels that take place in Zamonia, and we will continue to see sequels. Seeing how Mythenmetz belongs to a species known for its longevity, Zamonien will continue to see the works of Mythenmetz. That means we in our own world will be able to read the works of Mythenmetz in the future.

## Chapter 2: A Trickster's Continuation of the Romantic Traditions

*There are three points of view from which a writer can be considered: he may be considered as a storyteller, as a teacher, and as an enchanter. A major writer combines these three—storyteller, teacher, enchanter—but it is the enchanter in him that predominates and makes him a major writer (Nabokov 5).*

### 2.1. The Definition of a Trickster

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains a story about the mischievous Greek god Hermes attempting to rescue Zeus's secret lover Io who is held captive by the many-eyed giant Argus. Disguised as a shepherd, Hermes visits Argus, tells him a lengthy story that puts him to sleep, and frees Io. This story effectively illustrates what a trickster is while setting up the major theme of my thesis: storytellers as tricksters.

To liken a Romantic hero to a trickster, it is necessary to clarify what characterizes a trickster figure and to identify the specific traits that are relevant to the discussion. "Trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox," writes Lewis Hyde (10). On this paradoxical figure, Claude Lévi-Strauss comments, "Since his mediatory function occupies a position halfway between two polar terms, he must retain something of that duality - namely an ambiguous and equivocal character" (226). Such is the ambivalent nature of a trickster archetype. Therefore, I will present the key features of tricksters based on how they apply to the Romantic heroes from the first chapter. A fitting definition of a storytelling trickster will be formulated accordingly. The aim of this chapter is threefold: first, to lay out how the protagonists become tricksters in the context

of their novels; second, to explore how their transformation affects both the written fantasy world and their reality; finally, to see what kind of tricksters the characters become if they are not cast as Romantic tricksters. To this end I employ a thorough analysis of the three novels' narrative based on my working definition of a trickster. The chapter ultimately addresses the formation and the impact of a specific archetype of trickster.

The list of traits below is a fusion of traits attributed to German Romantic poets and traditional tricksters. To define the concept of storytelling tricksters for the thesis, I propose the following characteristics which will distinguish a Romantic trickster from a more general trickster archetype:

(1) They are outsiders. They may not necessarily be shunned outcasts, but they have been dislocated from their previously stable state of existence. As a result of this imbalance in their lives, they find it difficult to participate in the process of socialization in their community. They reject or fail to follow a conformity to the rules and expectations of any specific society.

(2) They are inexperienced youths who await an awakening of their creative nature and achievement of their success. For instance, Heinrich has never read or heard of a poem before his journey begins. This is a modification of a trickster's trait of being initially a simpleton.<sup>41</sup> Tricksters would gradually collect potentially significant objects and abilities on their journey. Likewise, Romantic heroes, who used to be in the state of a

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<sup>41</sup> For instance, "Die drei Sprachen" [The Three Languages] from the Brothers Grimm's collections begins with a nobleman being furious with his simpleton son Hans, because every time the father sent Hans out to receive apprenticeships he came back with knowledge of how to understand animals' speech. Hans embarks upon a journey during which he utilizes his newly learnt languages of the frogs, dogs and pigeons. Hans eventually becomes the Pope, merely by his learning and application of the three languages.

blank page, would absorb new skills and stories to enrich themselves. The tricksters' abilities of performing trickery will only emerge after a series of enriching experiences from the paths they took.

(3) The Romantic storytelling trickster has a profound aesthetic appreciation of books. They appreciate not only the contents of the books such as stories but also the condition of books as artifacts. This trait differentiates them from other members of their communities. It even leads to their isolation from their society that regards books purely as commodities or instruments, as mentioned in the example of Hermione Granger from the *Harry Potter* series.

(4) They are border-crossers (Hyde 10; Alison Williams 3), *Grenzgänger* [border-crosser]. The tricksters normally venture across the boundaries between different geographical regions, yet their journeys also cross boundaries between social groups or internal conflicts. Usually a "trickster's position midway between the gods and humans allows him to function as a cultural transformer" (Hynes 40). The dichotomy between the gods and humans in trickster tales can be translated into the relationship between authors and readers in the context of this thesis. By encompassing the fantastical and the real realms, the tricksters become itinerant travellers, mediators and messengers between worlds, with the ability to bring them closer together.

(5) They are the key initiator of events. Their heightened curiosity for a specific narrated text opens the possibility of inverting or even solving the problems that lay dormant and unresolved until this interference.

(6) Creative storytelling is their means of navigating obstacles. This feature derives from lying and deceit, the well-known traits of tricksters. Readers' intervention in

the fantastical worlds with their storytelling can be interpreted as a specific type of trickery.

(7) By the end of the journey, they become active agents giving rise to a new realm, restoring the damaged realm and transforming the existing realms. This is different from the fourth feature above, because the fourth feature addresses how tricksters initiate key events while the sixth feature deals with the consequences of their actions. They learn to restore their unbalanced reality and successfully alter the world they originated from.

A number of trickster figures in the three novels have the seven traits. Certain figures may occasionally display only one or two of these traits, for they rather act as mentors. The tricksters who neither support the protagonists nor help them become storytelling tricksters are categorized as the malevolent, anti-Romantic tricksters. For the sake of clarification, tricksters should be differentiated from pranksters, based on the motivations for their actions. The tricksters' aim tends to focus on their personal, material gain or psychological victory, whereas for pranksters "performance and spectacle are the sole sources of pleasure" (Alison Williams 1).



## 2.2. *Die Unendliche Geschichte*

I will apply the above traits of tricksters to the characters of the novel, to see how Bastian transforms into a trickster and how his newly-gained status as a trickster affects the worlds he encompasses. The focus will be on Bastian and the fantastical creatures that reside in Phantásien. Bastian fully becomes a storytelling trickster, by being able to utilize his narrative desire to transform his world and to bring about a possible golden age. From the very first chapter, the book explicitly shows through the conversation between Karl Konrad Koreander and Bastian that Bastian is an outcast, and it quickly establishes why he became one. Bastian's conditions contribute to identifying him as a simpleton trickster type who is often placed in a socially disadvantaged status; however, as we shall see below, traits of a trickster in fairy tales "display an astonishing lack of stability, shifting almost imperceptibly into their opposites as the tale unfolds" (Tatar 32). In spite of being endowed with a creative imagination to formulate fantastical stories, Bastian does not excel in his schoolwork and sports, which leads to Bastian being perceived as "ein Versager auf der ganzen Linie" (*Die enendliche Geschichte* 9).<sup>42</sup> He has neither the confidence nor support to improve his situation. He is a social outcast and becomes neglected by his father, who stopped showing any kind of emotion and made himself occupied with thoughts that he does not share with Bastian. Stifled in every aspect of his life, Bastian awaits an invitation for an adventure.

Bastian's encounter with Koreander and *Die enendliche Geschichte* triggers his transformation into becoming a trickster, as he talks back to the bookshop owner's posing demanding questions and making blunt remarks and eventually steals the book. A fitting

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<sup>42</sup> "A failure all along the line" (*The Neverending Story* 8).

description of Bastian's initiation into becoming a trickster comes from Hyde's remarks on tricksters: "The thieving and lying that initiate the trip into this inky territory give the trickster the chance to remake the truth on his own terms" (53). Bastian's act of trickery precipitates his following actions, for he decides to sneak into the school's secluded attic and excuses himself of the obligations and restrictions of his school. As a trickster, Bastian made a conscious choice to initiate a significant course of action, and his interventions as a trickster will unfold as he shows signs of being a *Grenzgänger*.

Initially Bastian crosses the borders of the narrative planes between him and the reader (us), as he continuously interrupts our reading by analepses, in order to show us his musings. As a well-read youth, Bastian continuously interrupts his reading of Atréju's journey for two purposes. The first is to identify the hero's moments with his own life experiences and his feelings at the moment. Bastian immediately relates to Atréju, whose name means "Der Sohn aller" [Son of All] (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* 53) because all men and women of his tribe raised him.

Niemand konnte besser verstehen, was das bedeutete, als Bastian. Obwohl sein Vater ja immerhin noch am Leben war. Und Atréju hatte weder Vater noch Mutter. Dafür war Atréju aber von allen Männern und Frauen gemeinsam aufgezogen worden und war ›der Sohn aller‹, während er, Bastian, im Grunde gar niemand hatte - ja, er war ›der Sohn niemand‹. Trotzdem freute Bastian sich darüber, daß er auf diese Weise etwas mit Atréju gemeinsam hatte, denn sonst hatte er ja leider keine große Ähnlichkeit mit ihm, weder was dessen Mut und Entschlossenheit noch was seine Gestalt betraf. Und doch war auch er, Bastian,

auf einer großen Suche, von der er nicht wußte, wohin sie ihn führen und wie sie enden würde (Ende *Die Unendliche Geschichte* 53).<sup>43</sup>

The second purpose of Bastian's narrative interruptions is to question the narrative techniques, such as wondering why certain experiences from real life are omitted.

Einmal - als er noch viel kleiner gewesen war - hatte er sogar im Religionsunterricht gefragt, ob der Herr Jesus eigentlich auch wie ein gewöhnlicher Mensch gemußt hätte, weil er doch auch wie ein gewöhnlicher Mensch gegessen und getrunken hat. Die Klasse hatte gebrüllt vor Lachen, und der Religionslehrer hatte ihm einen Verweis wegen »ungebührlichen Betragens« ins Klassenbuch geschrieben.<sup>44</sup>

His peers' different reaction to his comments distinguishes Bastian from others. All the protagonists have a propensity to personally engage with the narrated text and to interrupt the narrated text we are reading by monologues and flashbacks. This is a distinctive feature shared among the three novels. From the reader's point of view of reading Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte*, the boundary between the fantastical and the real has already begun to break. The multiple framed narratives merge into one another: Bastian's focalization expressed via the purple ink; Atréju's and Phantásien residents' focalization

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<sup>43</sup> "No one knew better than Bastian what that meant. Even though his father was still alive and Atreyu had neither father nor mother. To make up for it, Atreyu had been brought up by all the men and women together and was the "son of all", while Bastian had no one-- and was really "nobody's son". All the same, Bastian was glad to have this much in common with Atreyu, because otherwise he resembled him hardly at all, neither physically nor in courage and determination. Yet Bastian, too, was engaged in a Great Quest and didn't know where it would lead him or how it would end" (*The Neverending Story* 40-41).

<sup>44</sup> "Once – when he was much younger – he had asked his religion teacher if Jesus Christ had had to go like an ordinary person. After all, he had taken food and drink like everyone else. The class had howled with laughter, and the teacher, instead of an answer, had given him several demerits for 'insolence'" (*The Neverending Story* 71).

expressed in green ink; and the omniscient narrator who encompasses both purple and green texts. Therefore, unbeknownst to Bastian, he becomes a *Grenzgänger*.

Bastian transitions from the *Grenzgänger* between his and our world to the one between his and Phantásien. He slowly realizes that he is capable of causing the event that affects the story of *Die unendliche Geschichte*. Bastian denies the connection between the two realms, as seen from one of his early sentiments such as: “Bastians Gedanken kehrten nur ungern in die Wirklichkeit zurück. Er war froh, daß die Unendliche Geschichte nichts mit ihr zu tun hatte (30).<sup>45</sup> By insisting on the disconnectedness of the two realms, in these early stages, Bastian uses the fantastic as an escape. He in fact actively intervenes in *Die unendliche Geschichte*’s story multiple times. His intervention initially begins in Part 1 when Bastian’s yell of terror reaches Atréju’s ears during the scene of encountering an enormous, terror-inducing spider named Ygramul. A more engaged incident of intervention is shown below, where Bastian’s urge to change Atréju’s course of action appears to be working.

Atréju hatte Lust, wegzugehen. Er wandte sich zurück, ging auf das runde Zauber Spiegel Tor zu und betrachtete dessen Rückseite einige Zeit, ohne zu begreifen, was es bedeuten sollte. Er beschloß, fortzugehen,  
*„Nein, nein, nicht fortgehen!“ sagte Bastian laut, »kehr um, Atréju. Du mußt durch das Ohne Schlüssel Tor!“<sup>46</sup>*

wandte sich dann aber doch wieder dem Ohne Schlüssel Tor zu. (101)

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<sup>45</sup> “Reluctantly Bastian’s thought turned back to reality. He was glad the Neverending Story had nothing to do with that” (Ende, *The Neverending Story* 23).

<sup>46</sup> Due to the limitations of black-and-white printing in the 1997 English translation, the original edition’s format of using purple and green text has been converted to using italicized and regular format of the text. Therefore, Bastian’s focalization is expressed in italicization. I will employ the same formatting as well to reduce any complications that might arise from using different colours of the texts.

Thus, Bastian's narrative desire to alter the current state plays a key role in bringing the two worlds closer together and acts as a driving force to progress the story, in the readers' perspective.

The infinite span of Phantásien allows a wide variety of characters to exist within the realm, such as tricksters who influence Bastian on his journey to find a way back to his reality. The best example would be Xayíde, a devious female enchantress who manipulates her hollow metal soldiers and who sends the demonic creature Gmork to kill Atreju. Bastian becomes vulnerable to her trickery that involves magic and machinery. She devises a scheme to hollow Bastian of any individualism and replace him as the ruler of Phantásien; however, she cannot be classified as the same type of trickster as Bastian is. The characters whom the protagonists consider villainous are not necessarily "failed tricksters," because they were not endowed with a mission to Romanticize the world in the first place. In fact, their mission is to undo Romanticization. *Die unendliche Geschichte* rather sheds more light on the fate of figures who either withdrew from the opportunities to become tricksters in the first place or became tricksters yet ultimately deserted or misled the project of Romanticization. The concept of a "failed trickster" suggested earlier indicates the latter case. In the second part of *Die unendliche Geschichte*, Bastian's development as a trickster comes to a halt. When the Childlike Empress presents Bastian with her amulet AURYN, Bastian is granted the right to exercise an absolute power at the cost of losing a portion of his memories. Being inside the realm that thrives on creative imagination and storytelling from humans, losing the memories turns Bastian into an authoritative ruler, which is the complete opposite of what a storytelling trickster strives to be.

Bastian realizes his wrongdoings when he discovers Die Alte Kaiser Stadt [The City of Old Emperors], a city where destitute, forgetful humans, who once visited Phantásien like Bastian, have unwittingly purged themselves of their memories by failing to exit the realm. They now occupy themselves with alphabet blocks under the supervision of an intelligent monkey Agrax, who explains the humans' state as the following: „Wer keine Vergangenheit mehr hat, der hat auch keine Zukunft ... Für sie kann sich nichts mehr ändern, weil sie selbst sich nicht mehr ändern können. (376)<sup>47</sup> “As a place that perpetually stores people who are no longer capable of creating words, let alone stories, and incapable of bringing about a change, Die Alte Kaiser Stadt is an asylum of failed tricksters. That is why Xayíde is not a failed trickster. The experience of visiting it urges Bastian to realise his role as a storytelling trickster and to return to his world to fulfill his destiny. The responsibility of being in control of the narrated worlds is realised.

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<sup>47</sup> “Without a past you can't have a future ... Nothing can change for them, because they themselves can't change anymore” (*The Neverending Story* 323).

### 2.3. *Tintenherz*

Meggie spends her life, not only as a receptive reader, but also a latent storyteller who has barely interacted with the world. During her trip to find her father and flee from Capricorn, Meggie exits from her comforting isolation to complete her introspective journey. While Bastian himself undergoes both the processes of witnessing and becoming a failed trickster, Meggie witnesses a variety of tricksters, who trigger her talents and put her on the successful path of becoming a trickster. As a departure from *Die unendliche Geschichte*, the protagonist Meggie has a stronger connection with her father Mo than Bastian has with his father; however, Meggie keeps experiencing a sense of barrier between she and Mo. Mo conceals from Meggie the truth about *Tintenherz* and his talent, which leads to Meggie's frustration at being kept in the dark. Furthermore, Meggie and Mo isolate themselves from the outside world. The first encounter with the protagonists take place in a remote farmhouse in which they have been living for just a year. "Der Bus, der wie ein bunt geschecktes plumpes Tier in der verlassenen Scheune stand, war Meggie vertrauter als alle Häuser, in denen sie mit Mo je gewohnt hatte"<sup>48</sup> (29) This is not an unfamiliar experience for them, for they have moved frequently. In addition, Mo's occupation as bookbinder requires he and Meggie to travel often, which prevents Meggie from establishing a solid relationship with a place they live in. They not only appear to be outsiders to the places they visit but also display one of the tricksters' characteristics of being itinerant.

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<sup>48</sup> "The camper van, standing in the abandoned barn like a solid, multicolored animal, was more familiar to Meggie than any of the houses where she and Mo had lived" (Funke, *Inkheart* 19).

In spite of their constant movement, Mo and Meggie are still in the process of becoming true *Grenzgänger*. Mo may have initially blurred the boundaries between the narrated, fantastical Inkworld and his real world, but he subsequently completely blocked any further progress of engaging with the fantastic. He builds a false narrative about the disappearance of Meggie's mother and prevents Dustfinger from entering the narrative. Mo's continued refusal to provide Meggie with a true retelling of the disappearance of the mother infuriates Meggie, who begins to break free from the false stories that Mo has been telling her about her mother and the book *Tintenherz*. On multiple occasions, she takes steps to transition into a willing *Grenzgänger*, by deciding to engage with the fantastical elements and embarking upon a journey to find her kidnapped father. In the beginning of the novel, she is the first person to notice Staubfinger and let Mo know of his presence. When Mo is kidnapped, Meggie takes the initiative and attempts to chase after him, until she is thwarted and then joined by Elinor and Staubfinger.

Before the narrative of *Tintenherz*, Mo can be considered as a storytelling trickster who failed to fully develop. Even though he is the *prima causa* of disorder by summoning the villains out of the book, Mo used to have a passive interaction with his ability, forgetting to doubt that his ability might be able to directly impact on his realm. After rupturing the boundary between his world and Tintenwelt, Mo attempts to repeatedly read *Tintenherz* to restore the imbalance; however, without the help of a creative narrative for him to engage, reading the same text is a futile effort. Mo further devolves into a passive reader, by making a decision to put his ability to rest and suppress his narrative talent. By being able to tangibly manipulate a book's state, Mo has adopted an alternative strategy to let out his desire to alter both the narrated and the real realms;



however, he can only engage with the external or physical aspect of a book, that is, its binding. Therefore, Meggie's full exercise of her magical reading takes on a significant meaning in the development of Mo's journey. Meggie's transformation into a trickster contributes not only to alleviating the damages inflicted on the world by the failed tricksters but also empowering them to be free from their previously limiting conditions. The second notable example of a failed trickster is Darius, who is another magic reader like Mo. Having suffered under Capricorn's imprisonment, Darius lets his fear cripple his ability to read properly. The characters whom Darius was forced to read out of books accordingly emerge in a damaged, crippled form. His anxiety prevents him from successfully summoning the denizens and objects from the books he is given.

In *Die unendliche Geschichte*, the author ultimately hides behind an omniscient narrative voice with frequent focalization through the characters of the novel. In the case of *Tintenherz*, a clear author figure exists in Meggie and Mo's realm, that is, Fenoglio. He puts ink to paper, but he does not have access to the soul or "heart" of the ink, to put it with a word play referencing the title. The materialization of his creation in his own world fascinates him, yet it is hard for him to realize that he has no power over the characters he has created and that they can overpower him:

„Ich rede nicht über Kinderzauber. Ich spreche von Buchstaben. Nichts ist mächtiger als sie, im Guten wie im Bösen, glaub mir ... Ich habe auch dich aus Buchstaben geschaffen, Basta! Dich und Capricorn.“

In spite of his speech, Fenoglio fails to exercise a direct impact on his creations' existence. He also asserts his omnipotence to Capricorn by stating his interpretation of his childhood; however, the villain and his henchmen overcome their fear of the author and

imprison him, and Capricorn's version of his childhood story remains dominant. Being able to create and manipulate a narrated world will only influence the materialised figures from a work of fiction. He and Meggie soon realize that an act of storytelling will have an impact; however, Fenoglio's function as a storytelling trickster is only achievable by the assistance of Meggie when she reads his handwritten text. Nevertheless, the experience inspires Meggie to experiment with creating a narrative in her own words.

Being under the protection of Mo, Meggie may appear initially as not only a passive reader but also a passive character of action; however, her curiosity and her doubtful nature of the surroundings contribute to initiating key events of the narrative. Mo forgets to doubt that his ability might be able to directly impact on his own personal reality. By being able to tangibly manipulate a book's state, Mo has adopted an alternative strategy to let out his desire to alter both the narrated and the real realms. Meggie invites Mo back into being an autonomous storytelling trickster, as she partially restores the imbalance from the beginning of *Tintenherz* and redeems Mo's failures.

#### 2.4. *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*

Hildegunst von Mythenmetz has comfortably lived as a member of a specific species that collectively trained themselves to become successful authors. Having been raised and educated in a sheltered environment, Mythenmetz's imagination and storytelling abilities have also experienced limitations; however, Mythenmetz loses his sense of belonging when the perfect manuscript completely shakes his perception of an author and puts him to shame. Mythenmetz's first steps into Buchheim excite him and surprisingly give him a sense of belonging, as he declares, „Hier schienen Leben und Literatur identisch zu sein, alles kreiste um das gedruckte Wort. Das war meine Stadt. Das war meine neue Heimat" (41)<sup>49</sup>. He gradually discovers his status as an outsider, as the city's denizens continue to label him with his species' stereotypes and even mock him for his origins. Mythenmetz's heightened sense of isolation sets him on a path to become a trickster. As a youth whose training to become an author was cut short due to his godfather's death, Mythenmetz still displays naiveté and awaits literary enrichment.

His disillusionment with his role models and his search for new role models are crucial steps to becoming a trickster, which is why the notion of "failed trickster" is mentioned in this sub-chapter. He develops and encounters three different role models in different stages of his journey. Witnessing the failures of his admired tricksters deeply disturbs the dinosaur, who steps further into the peculiar realm under Buchheim. Mythenmetz's first role model is Lindwurm Ovidios von Versschleifer, who left the Lindworm Castle in search of fame in Buchheim but was failed by Buchheim's system.

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<sup>49</sup> "Here life and literature seemed to be identical: everything centred on the printed word. This was my city, my new home" (Moers, *The City* 41).

Being absorbed in the vastness of Buchheim, Mythenmetz accidentally enters the “Friedhof der Vergessenen Dichter” (87), a space riddled with grave-like holes made for failed, homeless authors who once sought success in Buchheim. Mythenmetz is disgusted and appalled to witness Ovidios von Versschleifer writing a love song for the drunkards. This incident is one of the uncomfortable experiences Mythenmetz undergoes to finally realize the corrupt linings of the city, yet it also stimulates Mythenmetz to seek non-Lindworm mentors who can provide him with a new perspective.

Mythenmetz specifically seeks mentors who will equip him with the tools to produce life-changing masterpieces. Therefore, his literary education is derived from three different tricksters, each at a different stage of his development: an introduction to the culture of Buchheim by Colophonius Regenschein; accumulation of the Zamonian literature by the Buchlinge; and the complete inversion of the former conception of writing by the Schattenkönig. Colophonius Regenschein serves as the best embodiment of a successful storytelling trickster, which immediately earns Mythenmetz’s admiration. Within Zamonia, Regenschein’s fox-like species “Hundling” is known for their supreme intelligence, stamina, memory and deception, which they only utilize in perilous or illegal activities. Unlike other Hundlinge, however, Regenschein develops an aesthetic passion for books. He uses his sense of smell and incredible memory to develop as a highly skilled and intellectual Bücherjäger. Unlike the existing Bücherjäger who were considered to be barbaric and very ignorant of the books they were looking for, Regenschein considers the context, contents and history of the books he hunts. For this reason, he effectively uncovers the rarest books of any other book hunters. His nemesis Rongcong Coma, by contrast, presents himself as a drastic opposite of Regenschein, by

his extremely aggressive demeanor. We can observe it from his book *Der Weg des Bücherjägers* [The Way of the Bookhunters], a crude imitation of George Orwell's commandments from *Animal Farm*. Mythenmetz regards this work as the "die beschränkte Philosophie eines beruflichen Mörders."<sup>50</sup>

Katakombum: "*Der Bücherjäger ist so einsam wie die Spinxxxxe im Labyrinth. Seine Heimat ist die Dunkelheit. Seine Hoffnung ist der Tod.*"

- I. Katakombum: "*Alle anderen Bücherjäger sind gleich. Gleich wertlos.*"
- II. Katakombum: "*Was lebt, das kann man töten. Was tot ist, das kann man essen.*"<sup>51</sup>

Regenschein puts his accomplishments to good use by letting the general public access the precious books he collected and sharing his knowledge in a book he writes. He presents himself as a pacifist, non-disruptive *Grenzgänger*. In spite of his tremendous success that could ensure his safe retirement, Regenschein is enthralled by the vast, subterranean realm of undiscovered knowledge and begins to investigate the mysterious Schattenkönig. He insists on travelling between the two worlds in Buchheim, yet his process of bringing the two, separated realms closer together is cut short due to his disappearance. Regenschein reappears to Mythenmetz in the catacombs moments before his death, having been banished by Smeik as well.

Mythenmetz himself is unlike any of the tricksters he encountered, as he acts as a highly disruptive, simpleton trickster-*Grenzgänger*. His trouble-making decisions fuelled

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<sup>50</sup> "the intellectually limited philosophy of a professional murderer" (*The City* 173).

<sup>51</sup> "Rule 1. The Bookhunter is as lonely in the labyrinth as a Pinxxxx. His home is darkness, His hope is death.

Rule 2. All Bookhunters are equal. Equally worthless.

Rule 3. Anything alive can be killed. Anything dead can be eaten" (*The City* 171).

by impatience and ignorance eventually lead him to become the real initiator of events and a storytelling trickster who will ironically complete the legacy of the previous tricksters he admires. Mythenmetz utilizes the publication date and order of the books in the bookshelves and initially succeeds in navigating the corridors; however, due to his blind enthusiasm and fascination with books, he accidentally activates a mechanical contraption set by a Bookhunter. He plunges deeper into the catacombs. Mythenmetz roams the areas that even the deftest Bücherjäger dares not step in and stirs up the dormant areas of the catacomb, as Homunkoloss elaborates:

Seitdem du in den Katakomben bist, benimmst du dich wie ein Elefant im Porzellanladen. Ich war auf einem meiner Streifzüge, als du in Guldenbarts plumpe Falle gelaufen bist und ein halbes Stockwerk des Labyrinths eingerissen hast. Man muß es bis hinauf nach Buchhaim gehört haben ... Dann bist du in die Müllkippe von Unhaim gekracht und hast ihre sämtlichen Bewohner aufgeweckt, einschließlich einer Titanenmade (380-381).<sup>52</sup>

Of the three novels' protagonists, Hildegunst von Mythenmetz is perhaps the most flawed hero due to his tendency to be easily overwhelmed by his excitement and blinded by his pride. His eventual maturation stems from his realization of his own flaws and fears as an author, and his growth takes place mainly in the catacombs.

The Booklings, who are well-aware of their physical weakness, uses hypnosis to let the Book Hunters believe that they are ferocious creatures who eat books. But the truth shows otherwise. They indeed "eat" books only in a metaphorical sense, as they can

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<sup>52</sup> "You've been behaving like a bull in a china shop ever since you entered the catacombs. I was on one of my reconnaissance trips when you fell into Goldenbeard's clumsy trap and brought down half the labyrinth with you. They must have heard it up in the Buchholm. ... Then you landed with a crash in the rubbish dump and woke up all its inhabitants including that megaworm" (*The City* 364-365).

read and memorize any passage from a book and feel “full.” They have a deep aesthetic appreciation of books, and in every corner of the Leather Grotto Mythenmetz hears aphorisms, essays and quotes being uttered. Their living space includes even a hospital for damaged books. However, they cannot be storytelling tricksters because of one reason: they cannot tell original stories. In spite of their unique abilities, they are not able to create new stories, which is why they highly value Mythenmetz and accept him into their community. Another reason why they cannot be tricksters is that they cannot go to the surface. Their lungs have been accustomed to the air of the catacombs, and the upper world’s air is fatal to them, thus preventing them from becoming *Grenzgänger*. For these reasons, Booklings serve more effectively as Mythenmetz’s mentors rather than fellow tricksters. A trickster who truly helps Mythenmetz develop into a storytelling trickster is Homunkoloss, the Shadow King. He leaves the legacy of being the ultimate *Grenzgänger*, as he helps revert the prejudices of Mythenmetz about the Orm, rises to the surface of Buchheim and makes Mythenmetz traverse between the Orm and the Zamonien realms.

## Chapter 3: In Defiance of the Great Authority

*“Hast du es etwa schon einmal mit einem richtigen Bösewicht zu tun gehabt?”*

*“Ich hab von ihnen gelesen.”*

*Staubfinger lachte auf. “Nun, stimmt, das ist fast dasselbe”, sagte er. Sein Spott brannte wie Brennesselgift. Er beugte sich zu Meggie herunter und sah ihr ins Gesicht. “Ich wünsche dir trotzdem, dass es beim Lesen bleibt,” sagte er leise (Funke, Tintenherz 35-36).<sup>53</sup>*

### 3.1. The Implication of Tricksters

The significance of the storytelling tricksters is further established when attention is given to the villains of the novels. The three novels predominantly feature villains who avoid or abhor children’s storytelling and the culture of reading. These characters display an inability for autonomous, creative storytelling. Most tricksters need at least a propitious environment to highlight their creativity and a conflicting relationship with the antagonistic, regulatory powers that the tricksters will defeat (Hyde 10). The villainous deeds advance the protagonist’s development as a storyteller in all of the three books. The defeat of the antagonists gives the protagonists the freedom to navigate and transform the narrated worlds, by being autonomous tricksters.

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<sup>53</sup> “Have you ever had anything to do with a real villain?”

“I’ve read about them.” Dustfinger laughed aloud.

“Yes, of course that almost comes to the same thing!” he said. His mockery hurt like stinging nettles. He bent down to Meggie and looked her in the face. “All the same, I hope reading about them is as close as you ever get,” he said quietly (Funke, *Inkheart* 26-27).



I will investigate the antagonistic forces with a theoretical model from Jack Zipes' socio-critical interpretation on Romantic fiction and fairy tales, and his assessment of the instrumentalization of fantasy by the culture industry. Zipes considered the Romantic fairy tales and their fantastical elements as a revolutionary expression of the original authors' wish to change the "social configuration" and a celebration of "creativity and self-realization" (*Breaking* 75, 56). His approach aims to "comprehend the impact of technology on the historical development of the folk tale as a fairy tale, i.e., as a mass-mediated cultural form" (*Breaking* 108). Zipes argued that Novalis' utopian landscape in his stories was "created in rebellion against the manner in which reason had already become instrumentalized to serve the arbitrary interests of the authoritarian powers" (*Breaking* 105). He derives his theoretical framework from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's theory of the culture industry. His interpretation of the German Romantic fairy tales aligns with my intentions of looking at the three novels as the modern continuation of the German Romantic legacy. The books' antagonistic figures share fundamental similarities with each other, with regards to how they wish to undermine the autonomous exercise of imagination and storytelling.

The critical analysis of these antagonists' role in the social structure will be complemented with the concept of *rhizome* as coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, they give *rhizome* the following explanation:

The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers ... Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and

must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order (6-8).

In other words, the *rhizome* threatens a tree's hierarchy, since a tree's structure signifies a single source of authority and dominance. Also by giving the possibility of infiltrating the tree, the *rhizome* hints at a possible liberation from the existing structures that had previously dominated the realm. We may at first regard the tree as being at odds with the *rhizome* as a binary between good and evil; however, specifically in the context of the three novels, the structure of a tree can indicate the binary between the reader and the author. There is only one possible mode of interaction between readers and authors, which renders the readers as passive receivers. On the other hand, the concept of the *rhizome* and its ability to infect the tree opens up the possibility that readers may break free from the passive role imposed upon them by this binary and can now actively engage in the act of storytelling as well.

The villains in the three novels reveal their point of departure from being an extension of a German Romantic paradigm. The actions that pressure the protagonists to react and respond are villains that are real and tangible in the heroes' realms. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* may appear to lack a villainous figure in direct opposition to Heinrich, for most of the obstacles to becoming a poet are self-imposed. Yet in the Klingsohr tale we see an exception, namely the Scribe, who is responsible for the Mother's burning death and is defeated by Fable. Without a fundamental understanding of or love for reading, these villains strive to materialise and annihilate the culture of reading. They stand directly in opposition to the heroes who take reading and storytelling as significant activities in their lives. The previous chapters have primarily focused on the nature of

storytelling tricksters, their origins and the impact of their activities. This chapter will examine the implication of these storytelling tricksters in our modern day. I investigate what conditions in the novels' worlds led to the emerging of the figures in the books, what significant impact the villains can potentially have, the reaction of the heroes towards their obstacles, and the consequences for the antagonists' defeat. I argue that the three novels' presentation of their protagonists as storytelling tricksters provides the readers with a lesson about how their appreciation of reading and imagination can emancipate them from being passive readers.

### 3.2. *Die Unendliche Geschichte*

*Die unendliche Geschichte* reveals the significance of a storytelling trickster as the saviour of the narrated world of Phantásien. The formless threat Nichts appears as the primary antagonist in the first part of *Die unendliche Geschichte*, and Xayíde in the second part. In her discussion of the Romantic symbols in *Die unendliche Geschichte*, Oestreicher argues that the dark motifs of Romanticism are either parodied or reduced to a lowly state. This as a result elevates the intensity of the fear that Nichts can strike into the characters' hearts:

The big bad wolf of traditional fairy tales and the werewolf cliché of the Romantic gothic novel are magnified in Ende's parody in the shadowy entity Gmork, the impersonation of destruction. In *Spukstadt*, Gmork, who was previously depicted as a mythical being of immense destructive powers, is reduced to a starving, dying creature, explaining his nihilistic actions with didactic glee (145-46)<sup>54</sup> (Oestreicher 115).

In order to intensify the dangers of remaining in Phantásien, the secondary threat to Bastian is a resident of Phantásien, Xayíde. Acting as a power-hungry temptress, Xayíde utilizes magical gifts and eloquent flattery to exploit Bastian and undermine his creative will, thus grounding him longer in Phantásien while deepening his amnesia. By letting Bastian hear only the words he wants to hear and creating conflicts with Atréju, she creates a crack in the harmony between the fantastical and the real world. Without acknowledging the consequences, Bastian lets himself become the centre of attention and refuses to notice the absence of memories that might paint him in a negative light. By

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<sup>54</sup> Page number inserted by Oestreicher.

refusing to exit Phantásien, Bastian himself becomes a bigger villain than Xayíde herself. Phantásien is a realm that is utterly dependent upon the humans' imagination and intervention in their narrative. Bastian becomes the most creative storyteller in the chivalric society at the Silver City of Amarganth, because the city's most talented bards could only reformulate the same stories repeatedly in an eloquent manner. Letting Bastian stay in fantasy only creates a vicious circle where the elements of Phantásien are "dissolved, dissipated and diffused" (Filer 60). Nichts will happen again if Bastian refuses to break the circle. He attempts to become the totalitarian ruler of Phantásien, by enforcing his coronation and silencing the opposing parties. After voluntarily stripping himself of his gained status as a hero and roaming Phantásien, Bastian begins to return to the original purpose of his journey when he first entered the realm: finding his way back.

Combined, the threats from Nichts and Xayíde signify the vanishing of individuality and the emergence of alienation and artificiality in modern industrial life. The destruction of Phantásien by Nichts is based on the condition of humanity's disappearing hopes and imagination, "depriving a man of his freedom, which is replaced by delusions, fears, desires for vain, hurtful things and thoughts of despair" (Alina 143). Especially in the modernized world, children are far too easily disillusioned, for "Das Bild der Welt wurde buchstäblich unmenschlich" (Ende, "*Literatur für Kinder*"?) 312).<sup>55</sup> Ende states, "Kurzum, dem Kinde wird klargemacht, daß alles, was ihm die Welt bis dahin vertraut und heimatlich erscheinen ließ, nichts als plumpe, betuliche Lüge war." (Ende, "*Literatur für Kinder*"?) 310).<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the Nichts aggravates the

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<sup>55</sup> "The image of the world literally became inhumane" (my trans.).

<sup>56</sup> "In short, it is made clear to the child that whatever made him feel a sense of familiarity and belonging to the world until now has been nothing but a crude, white lie" (my trans.).

disillusionment, distrust and disregard that the children will have towards the imagination. Another reason why Nichts threatens Phantásien's integrity is the erasure of any distinguishable feature from the world, thus rendering the fantastical creatures and their habitats into Nothing.

Meanwhile, the sorceress Xayíde represents the sense of being hollowed out and controlled by the artificiality and constraints of technology. She says, "Alles, was leer ist, kann mein Wille lenken" (322).<sup>57</sup> From her earliest appearance she emanates the air of eerie artificiality. Bastian is irked by her odd eyes, one being green and the other being red. Her residence inside Die sehende Hand [The Seeing Hand], a hand-shaped tower with countless eyes as its windows, is apparently the only place in Phantásien to have clocks. Every object she presents to Bastian represents artificiality, such as her hollow metal soldiers or the belt of invisibility. Claiming to adhere to Bastian's needs, Xayíde in fact controls them, using her power and technology to do so. By consistently using phrases that deface her status, she creates the illusion for Bastian that he possesses the authority, while he slowly adheres to Xayíde's aspirations. He even displays totalitarian tendencies and attempts to use violence to silence Atréju, who has become his dissident. Xayíde attempts to utilize Bastian's wish-making ability that comes from AURYN, emptying Bastian of his true memories and true wishes and filling him with her own strategies.

What distinguishes *Die unendliche Geschichte* from the other two novels is the fact that Bastian does not attempt to defeat these antagonistic forces. The Nothing becomes nonexistent once Bastian restores Phantásien. Xayíde meets her own demise

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<sup>57</sup> "My will can control anything that's empty" (Ende, *The Neverending Story* 286).

when her hollow giants strangely disobey her will and trample her to death. None of the characters who showed antagonistic actions towards the protagonists are vindicated, because that is what Ende intended:

Mes livres ne sont pas des westerns. Il ne suffit pas de tuer les méchants à la fin pour que tout rentre dans l'ordre. Je ne m'attaque pas à des individus mais à un système -appelez-le, si vous voulez, capitaliste - qui est en train, nous nous en apercevrons dans dix ans ou dans quinze ans, de nous mener tout droit vers l'abîme (De Rambures).<sup>58</sup>

When we regard *Die unendliche Geschichte* as Ende's criticism of the capitalistic system, Bastian being the storytelling trickster delivers a significant message. In his discussion of the culture industry with respect to the instrumentalization of fantasy, Zipes writes, "the process by which people and cultural forms are made into commodities through the mass media in the twentieth century has all but crippled the ability of human beings to distinguish the real from the unreal, the rational from the irrational." His critique of the cultural production that commodifies individual expression and autonomy nearly mirror the remarks of Gmork, a Phantásien's werewolf who explains to Atréju the consequences of being consumed by the Nichts:

Ihr seid wie eine ansteckende Krankheit, durch die die Menschen blind werden, so daß sie Schein und Wirklichkeit nicht mehr unterscheiden können. ... sobald die Reihe an dich kommt, ins Nichts zu springen, wirst auch du ein willenloser und unkenntlicher Diener der Macht. ... Vielleicht wird man mit deiner Hilfe

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<sup>58</sup> "My books are not Westerns. It is not enough to kill the bad guys at the end to get everything back in order. I do not attack individuals, but a system—call it, if you will, capitalist—which is leading us (as we will discover in ten or fifteen years) directly to the abyss" (my trans.).

Menschen dazu bringen, zu kaufen, was sie nicht brauchen, oder zu hassen, was sie nicht kennen, zu glauben, was sie gefügig macht, oder zu bezweifeln, was sie erretten könnte (*Die unendliche Geschichte* 142, 144).<sup>59</sup>

From the dying words of Gmork, one sees an explicit statement from Ende on the capitalistic system. When Phantásien is consumed by Nichts, the real world becomes filled with more lies and disillusionment than before, thereby reducing the integrity of creative imagination. Before Bastian's intervention, Phantásien reaches the state of complete destruction, for it has not been visited and healed by a human child for a long while. Nichts and Xayíde, which are the embodiment of Ende's concerns, cannot be eliminated at once by a confrontation. Bastian neither exerts a magical influence directly over Nichts nor does he engage in a combat with Xayíde. As an imaginative storyteller who brings prosperity of imagination to both worlds, Bastian is the "seed" that Michael Ende took from German Romanticism. After Phantásien has been consumed by Nichts, Bastian is able to resurrect the realm merely from a grain of sand that was given to him by the Childlike Empress.

Initially, Bastian does not appear to be an ideal hero. Having suffered from a lack of meaning and love in his life, he is prone to temptation and the instant gratification that comes from imagination and the fantasy he creates. The novel even begins with Bastian's sudden entrance into a bookshop as he escapes from his bullies. Having been used to his blind acceptance and passive enjoyment of the adventure stories, he initially refuses to

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<sup>59</sup> "You'll be like a contagious disease that makes humans blind, so they can no longer distinguish between reality and illusion...When your turn comes to jump into the Nothing, you too will be a nameless servant of power. ...Maybe you'll help them persuade people to buy things they don't need, or hate things they know nothing about, or hold beliefs that make them easy to handle, or doubt the truths that might save them" (*The Neverending Story* 125, 127).



admit the impact his imagination can have on both his and the fantastical realm. Bastian eventually realizes his true wishes and concludes the novel by exiting the same bookstore to reunite with his father who waits outside. Even in “a society oriented towards the reification and standardization of human beings as commodities by powerful interest groups,” Bastian demonstrates that an imaginative reader can be the emancipator by being a trickster who brings the previously separated worlds together (Zipes, *Breaking* 108). To the modern consumer society, where people are made to “relinquish their own autonomy” (Zipes, *Breaking* 109), Bastian’s intervention as a storyteller appears as a model that resists the instrumentalization of fantasy.

### 3.3. *Tintenherz*

Due to the story of the fantastical characters encroaching into the real world, in *Tintenherz* both the villains and the binary conflict are more concretized and intensified than in *Die unendliche Geschichte*. Like many of the objects and characters Mo summoned before, Capricorn and Basta have a physical presence in the real world. Once they realize that there is no solution to return to Tintenwelt, they disappear, only to resurface years later as a powerful gang of scoundrels and the antagonistic forces pitted against Meggie, her family and friends. Embedded in the modern landscapes of the present day, the feudalistic villains may initially appear entertaining, for Capricorn is accompanied by his obsessive, influential mother and a group of illiterate simpletons as his henchmen. Yet their cruelty begins to surface and disturb the readers, due to the similarities with they share with the figures we have already witnessed in history.

The protagonists and the readers begin to perceive Capricorn's threats and cruelty deeply, as the villains' actions leave a physical impact on Meggie's world. Margaret Hiley notes the novel's continued use of fire as a key motif. The book begins with Meggie lighting her candles so that she can read, disobeying her father's warnings about candles. Staubfinger is a fire-eater by profession. Capricorn's horrifying, destructive servant is made of ashes and consumes whatever Capricorn orders to with fire. Capricorn and his men burn houses to the ground. They scourge the world to steal all of the copies of *Tintenherz* in every language they can find, proceed to pile up and burn all of the copies. Hiley points to the epigraph at the beginning of the original German edition, in which one finds a poem by Paul Celan, a German Jewish poet and Nazi labour camp survivor. In the quoted poem, Celan repeatedly mentions the word "Asche" [ashes],

which inevitably reminds the adult German readers of the Nazi regime's Bücherverbrennung and the concentration camps.<sup>60</sup> In the chapter in which Capricorn sets fire to the copies of *Tintenherz* in front of his crowd, Funke inserts another epigraph that is reminiscent of this theme from Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. It strikes terror into the readers to witness how fire, a motif that once used to signify Enlightenment, can be instrumentalized to engulf the products of creativity and imagination. Capricorn's domination of the real world and *Tintenherz* with fire and his demise by Shadow's betrayal concretizes Adorno's and Horkheimer's notion of "the self-destruction of enlightenment" (Adorno and Horkheimer xvi). By burning copies of *Tintenherz* and enforcing a specific set of stories to be read aloud, Capricorn also symbolizes the deprivation of a resisting voice by censorship. Funke's implied matching of the horrific deeds to the actions of Capricorn stresses his uncontrolled brutality towards books and storytelling.

Being summoned out of a world that lacks a widespread literacy, Capricorn and his men show no interest in the enriching power of books. Capricorn's intentions with classic, beloved stories such as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and *Treasure Island* embody Adorno and Horkheimer's notion of the culture industry, that is, as Zipes puts it, "To extend the domination of capitalism and make human beings and their cultural expressions into commodities" (Zipes, *Breaking* 109). According to Zipes, this is a core goal of the instrumentalization of fantasy, and this is precisely what Capricorn attempts to achieve. Capricorn even prevents his henchmen and workers from learning to read and write. Preventing his people from participating or even observing a written narrative,

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<sup>60</sup> The Nazi book burning in 1933. The targeted books allegedly contained ideologies that conflict with Nazism.

Capricorn locks away literature itself, while commodifying it as a means through which to grow his authority. In Capricorn's lair where the understanding of literature is banned and mystified, the protagonists can prevail by using reading and writing as acts of trickery. Once they are trapped in Capricorn's village, the act of writing itself becomes a display of resistance and hope. Fenoglio tricks Basta into supplying him with pens and papers, claiming that he can provide him with an effective hex in exchange. Teresa, who has been under the captivity of Capricorn since she was summoned back into the real world, teaches Staubfinger how to read and acts as an informant. Being able to read gives Staubfinger a glint of confidence, "Er war jedes Mal aufs Neue stolz auf sich, wenn die spinnengliedrigen Zeichen sich endlich zu Wörtern zusammenfügten und er ihnen ihr Geheimnis entreißen konnte" (*Tintenherz* 352).<sup>61</sup> Meggie and Mo write in Elvish to exchange secret messages between each other (*Tintenherz* 425).<sup>62</sup> These simultaneous efforts contribute to eventually undermining Capricorn's authority. It requires the combined act of reading, writing, and storytelling to resolve the crisis.

Even though Fenoglio appears to intimidate Capricorn, his authority exerts no influence on him whatsoever. Unless a new narrative is written and introduced, the creatures from *Tintenherz* will be unaffected. It is only after Meggie's intervention as a reader that Fenoglio sees a possibility of altering the narrative. The final chapters of *Tintenherz* contain the idealistic illustration of how storytelling would change the world. Meggie eliminates the villainous characters from Tintenwelt by reading Fenoglio's alternate manuscript, which paints Shadow in a sympathetic light and lets him take

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<sup>61</sup> "He felt a fresh sense of pride every time those spindly symbols finally fitted together into words and he could get their secret out of them" (Funke, *Inkheart* 328).

<sup>62</sup> (Funke, *Inkheart* 397).

vengeance against Capricorn for the abuse he suffered. She even restores and revives people whose lives were taken by Shadow due to Capricorn's tyranny. Using her ability, Meggie also unwittingly removes Fenoglio from her world, thus destroying the hierarchy between the reader and the author. The resolution lets Mo return to being the reader-storyteller, transforms Teresa from being the listener of stories to a storyteller to Meggie, and stimulates Meggie's attempts to become a storyteller herself. The implication of Meggie developing as a storytelling trickster poses a hopeful solution to the real world on preventing the abuse of the fantastic.

### 3.4. *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher*

In *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* we observe a wide array of antagonists that belong to the culture industry of Buchheim. Due to the fact that the core events take place in a city of bibliophiles, the novel contains a variety of malicious figures associated with books. The novel contains a larger amount of criticism towards blind consumerism and the commodification of books. Driven by the villains' pursuit of power and financial control, their brutal deeds connect to the silencing of any creative, original voices and the destruction of a readers' autonomous exercise of imagination.

Phistomefel Smeik is a much more sophisticated villain than Capricorn, and perhaps more complicated than Xayide. Unlike Capricorn's illiterate henchmen, Smeik's followers are cultured bookshop owners, politicians and musicians. Using his intricate network of people and his resources, Smeik achieves what Adorno and Horkheimer would call, "standardisation and mass production, sacrificing whatever involves a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system" (Adorno and Horkheimer 121). Located at the most ancient parts and the very centre of Buchheim, Smeik's residence presents itself as a centralised location of authority and stretches its symbolic roots throughout the city. Smeik's utterance "Ich bin die Zamonische Literatur" (*Die Stadt* 149)<sup>63</sup> captures the totality of his power over literature, people and the market:

Die Schwarzmannngasse hatte die Form einer Spirale, die sich viele Male um das geographische Zentrum der Stadt wand, in dessen Mitte Phistomefels Haus stand.

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<sup>63</sup> "I am Zamonian literature personified" (*The City* 144).

Es mußte eines der allerersten oberirdischen Gebäude der Stadt sein (*Die Stadt* 113).<sup>64</sup>

In one successful venture to gain power, he floods the book market with crass, blockbuster books and prevents the publication of well-written masterpieces that can stimulate the readers. The city has become tourism-centred and bursting with oversupply (Lembke 265). Smeik brings the literature of Zamonien to a “genau regulierte Mittelmaß” (*Die Stadt* 366).<sup>65</sup>

One of Smeik’s major strategies to usurp the city’s book market is his Trompaunenmusik [trombone music], a hypnosis technique disguised as an entertainment and targeted towards the elitist and upper class citizens of Buchheim. By carefully manipulating the notes in this unique form of music, Smeik lets the listeners experience a life-like illusion and inserts subtle instructions to enact whatever he orders them to do. Mythenmetz witnesses the audience swaying and reacting in the exact same manner with no independent thinking. The concert’s final notes transform the listeners into rioters, making them raid any bookstores they can find and purchase any books that they can get their hands on. As Zipes puts it, the instrumentalisation of an art form renders the citizens into “consumers who out of a sense of confusion and impotence gratefully relinquish their own autonomy to allow the bureaucracy or industry to make decisions for them” (*Zipes Breaking* 109).

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<sup>64</sup> “Darkman Street described a series of spirals round the geographical centre of Bookholm, so Pfistomel Smyke’s house, which stood at its focal point, must have been among the very first of the city’s buildings to be constructed from the ground (*The City* 108).

<sup>65</sup> “carefully controlled mediocrity” (*The City* 352).

Smeik explicitly states that he is a step away from exercising a state of dictatorship over Zamonien:

Das Problem ist: Um Geld zu verdienen - viel Geld! -, brauchen wir keine grandiose, makellose Literatur. Was wir brauchen, ist Mittelmaß. Ramsch, Schrott, Massenware. ... Du [Homunkoloss] bist der erste und zugleich der letzte deiner Art. Du bist der größte Dichter Zamoniens. Und damit dein eigener schlimmster Feind (Moers *Die Stadt* 367).<sup>66</sup>

To Smeik, who has been running a number of operations to dominate Buchheim, any form of originality undermines his attempts to stunt the individuality and creativity of Zamonien's citizens. Therefore, he senses the greatest threat from the poet, who produced the most perfect manuscript that profoundly affects anyone who reads it. Smeik mutilates the poet and reassembles him into an enlarged, ferocious creature, and banishes him to the catacombs. Smeik places a high bounty on the poet's head for the Bookhunters to see, so that the poet has to either be constantly on the run from them or hunt them down. With this plan, Smeik wishes to eliminate the unpredictable clan of Bookhunters and seize the remaining powers held by them. Smeik favours Regenschein due to his display of sophistication; however, when Regenschein attempts to learn more about Homunkoloss, he banishes him as well. Smeik's tyranny encroaches upon the territory of the Buchlings, when the profit-driven group of Bookhunters slaughters the Buchlings. Smeik's domination dissipates when a spark of fire from Homunkoloss' burning body incinerates

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<sup>66</sup> "The problem is this: in order to make money – lots of money – we don't need flawless literary masterpieces. What we need is mediocre rubbish, trash suitable for mass consumption. ... You're the first and last of your kind, the greatest writer in Zamonia and, thus, my direst foe" (*The City* 352).



his residence and spreads over the entire city. By completely purging Smeik's totalitarian control, Mythenmetz ultimately rises as the hero of the narrative.

One of the recurring concepts of the book is called "Orm," a mysterious, ubiquitous flow of the power of creativity that visits authors. Anyone who is visited by this power instantly writes a masterpiece that will enchant generations to come. The Orm has been derided, especially by Mythenmetz. In the modernised world, Orm becomes a myth that very few creatures of Zamonien believe in. During his banishment in the catacombs, Mythenmetz, who possessed the fear of empty paper, is trained by Homunkoloss himself to learn about the Orm and the new ways of unlocking his inner creativity. One such striking example is when he tells Mythenmetz that the reason why he was unsuccessful was his use of his right hand while the writer's hand was the left one all along. Once Mythenmetz lets fire destroy the forces and structures that have suppressed any creative expression in Zamonien, he is endowed with the flow of Orm, which engraves on the night sky the book that the reader has read so far. Mythenmetz undergoes an enriching process of rebirth to free the repressed creativity that lay silent within him all along, and receiving the Orm brands him as such. His acceptance of his fate mirrors a segment from Novalis' "Klingsohr Märchen," "Aus Schmerzen wird die neue Welt geboren, und in Thränen wird die Asche zum Trank des ewigen Lebens aufgelöst" (1:271).<sup>67</sup> The forcefully ordered and fabricated world of Buchheim collapses, bringing about the Romanticization that consists of creative chaos and emerging from the true desires of people.

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<sup>67</sup> "Out of pain is the new world born, and the ashes are dissolved into tears for a draught of eternal life" (*Henry von Ofterdingen* 166).

## Conclusion

Fantasy fiction is “marked by constant tension between the power of the author and of the reader,” claims Hiley (123). This thesis has attempted to contribute to the discussions on the key traits of modern German fantasy fiction and their implications, which were the transformations of the young readers into active boundary-crossers between worlds by means of storytelling. Their ability to transcend the boundaries of two worlds and discover similarities with Romantic poets establishes them as the fairy tale archetype of a trickster. Specifically in the context of German fantasy fictions, what gives them superiority, the freedom to defy the normal rules, and independence as tricksters is their ability to express their storytelling. This is also a message to modern readers, who will hopefully no longer be tricked and instead develop as independent tricksters.

Due to the scope of the thesis that covers three books, possible interesting topics that might spark further discussions were omitted. One of them is on the gender constellation in German Romantic fiction and whether the three novels attempted to alter or follow it. Another question that requires further exploration is whether the sequels to *Tintenherz* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* followed the same narrative patterns discussed in this thesis. One can also look at how the three books’ visual appearances contribute to delivering their narrative. It is worth noting that all of the three books contain illustrations that mark the beginning or end of each chapter. *Die Unendliche Geschichte* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* teem with detailed illustrations and a play with different fonts. It will provide an interesting point of view to analyze the placement and the subject of the illustrations, and how it shows what the author wishes to present to the readers the most. Additionally, one can explore how the books’ messages

on being imaginative in the dehumanizing modern world, especially Ende's critique of the capitalistic systems, changed in the process of being adapted into visual media such as films.

Young adult fantasy literature that contains heroes as readers are legion; however, these journeys that open the gate to another fantastical realm usually lead to the permanent closure of the fantastical world. The story of growing from being mere passive readers into boundary-crossing storytellers is specific to Germany. In these novels, it is through their creative, storytelling imagination that the heroes defeat the antagonists, as opposed to magical objects, sorcery, and innate supernatural talents in Anglo-American fantasy. With their specific focus on the creative, storytelling imagination, *Die Unendliche Geschichte*, *Tintenherz* and *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* articulate a compelling critique of, and warning against, a world that is alienating to those who cannot conform. The struggling Romantic hero thrives in the genre of fantasy, which celebrates the creative imagination, strange worlds and new experiences. They represent a hopeful stimulus for passive readers not to be purely subsumed by fantasy as a means of escape, but to be active storytellers who can bring about change in their world. I would like to conclude this thesis with the words from Michael Ende: "Denn was ist Poesie anderes als die schöpferische Fähigkeit des Menschen, sich in der Welt und die Welt in sich zu erfahren und wiederzuerkennen?" (Ende "'Literatur für Kinder'?" 316).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Because what is poetry other than the creative ability of man to experience and recognize himself in the world and vice versa?" (my trans.).

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