

## Images of Childhood in Romantic Children's Literature

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In his *Vorlesungen über die deutsche Wissenschaft und Literatur* (Lectures on German Science and Literature, 1807) the German literary historian Adam H. Müller holds the opinion that the observation of children and the occupation with childhood should be the “best and most noble source of historical research”.<sup>1</sup> Müller's treatise has a special position among the early literary histories insofar as it contains a long section concerning the Romantic image of childhood. According to Müller the observation of the child's play and behaviour as well as the interest in child language is a necessary condition both for the contemplation of lost childhood in literature and for the preservation of a childlike sense without becoming childish (119). In addition, these aspects also are important for the historiography of literature. However, Müller does not conclude from the importance of childhood for historical research and literature that children need their own literature which should play an important part in the child's development. For Müller the preoccupation with the phenomenon of childhood is exclusively determined by a retrospective approach. This view can also be found in the autobiographical novels around 1800, which are characterized by a reflection of one's own life and therefore, also of one's own childhood. Childhood as a special stage of life and the experiences of children have moved increasingly into the centre of interest since the end of the eighteenth century. Prototypical works for this interest are Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Les confessions* (The Confessions, 1782) and Karl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* (1785/90). As editor of the journal *Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenkunde* (Magazine for Experiential Psychology, 1783-93) Moritz demanded, on the one hand, the analysis of childhood autobiographies and, on the other, the precise observation of children for a fully developed psychology of childhood. These autobiographical novels could be interpreted as “ethnographic accounts about childhood”,<sup>2</sup> because the authors are concerned with a stage of life which proves to be “strange” for the adult observer on closer examination. In a further step the retrospective involvement with the child's perception leads to a new experience: childhood is not interpreted as a stage of preparation for adulthood anymore, but as an autonomous phase thus obtaining more and more independence.

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<sup>1</sup> Erste und edelste Quelle der Geschichtsforschung (Müller [1807], 118).

<sup>2</sup> Kindheitsethnographische Berichte (Steinlein [1999], 281).

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the discourse about childhood did not take place in children's literature, but in pedagogical-philosophical treatises and in literature for adults. Starting from a sharp criticism of the utilitarian thinking of the Enlightenment, especially of the philanthropic ideal of education in Germany, the foundations were laid for an image of childhood that has influenced children's and adult literature until the present. As a countermovement to the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement was important for the development of children's literature for four reasons: the creation of an image of childhood by the early Romantics which was contrary to the ideas of the Enlightenment; the classification of children's literature by traditional genres (folktales, legends, nursery rhymes) during late Romanticism, the replacement of the moral tale, which was favoured during the Enlightenment, fairy tales (both folktales and literary fairy tales) as the main genre of Romantic children's literature, and the constitution of new literary children's characters. As a result, the motifs of the "lively imaginative child" (lebhaft fantasiereiches Kind) and the "strange child" (fremdes Kind) or "eternal child" (ewiges Kind) attain great significance. These motifs found their prototypical expression in E.T.A. Hoffmann's fairy tales for children *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* (Nutcracker and Mouse King, 1816) and *Das fremde Kind* (The Strange Child, 1817). In every respect the Romantic children's literature holds an outstanding position in Germany. Compared to the Romantic children's literature in other countries, it unfolded relatively early, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. In addition, translated in other European languages it played a decisive role in the development of international children's literature.

## 1. Pre-Romantic concepts of childhood

Before analyzing the Romantic image of childhood in seven countries (Germany, England, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Russia) on the basis of selected children's books, it is helpful to explain the underlying aspects of this image of childhood, which can be reduced by and large to the ideas of the Enlightenment (especially the ideas of John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Johann Gottfried Herder) and to the works written by the Pre-Romantics and early Romantics (William Blake, Jean Paul, Charles Lamb, Novalis, Henrik Wergeland, William Wordsworth). These authors created models of interpretations constitutive for the philosophical, anthropological, aesthetic and educational discourses of childhood since the end of the eighteenth century.

Although Rousseau argued in *Émile ou de l'éducation* (Emil, or on Education, 1762) that “We do not know childhood”,<sup>3</sup> and Novalis noted in his *Fragmente und Studien* (Fragments and Studies, 1799-1800): “Study of pedagogy – children are still terrae incognitae”,<sup>4</sup> attempts were made during the age of Enlightenment to examine the phenomenon of childhood from pedagogical and philosophical points of view. The works of John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder play a significant role. In his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), John Locke emphasized the importance of the child’s play and the child’s imagination respectively. With his claim to combine instruction and diversion in children’s literature, Locke caused a paradigm shift. Whereas Locke described the child as “wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases” (325), Rousseau regarded it as “young plant”.<sup>5</sup> The tension between these metaphors reveals the ambivalence characteristic of the Romantic approach to childhood. To a greater extent than Locke, Rousseau laid the foundations for the works of William Blake, William Wordsworth, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. His greatest achievement consisted in drawing attention to childhood as a period of life in which mankind is very close to the natural state. In this regard Rousseau’s main claim was that the child should be perceived as a being in itself and not as a small adult. According to Rousseau, innocence was the child’s essential quality. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that children must be brought up as naturally as possible. Because of his sceptical position towards science and culture he disapproved of books as means of education suitable for children. Books as reading matter were not allowed until children were able to understand their content and meaning. Books, by and large, were anathema, aside from Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which taught self-sufficiency and survival in the natural world. As for Rousseau, he did not consider education possible before the age of fourteen. Although Rousseau thus denied the *raison d’être* of children’s literature, his demands were pioneering for a new pedagogical literature for children characterized by the idea of a model of development. As a result childhood was considered an independent stage of life.

According to Rousseau the child is not important because it embodies the state of mankind before the Fall, but because the child represents an ideal of humanity that deviates from the Judeo-Christian doctrine of innate sin. In this sense Rousseau challenged the traditions that viewed children as potential adults, and presented a revolutionary, but simple

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<sup>3</sup> Nous ne connaissons pas l’enfance (Rousseau [1962], 33).

<sup>4</sup> Studium der Pädagogik – Kinder sind noch terrae incognitae (Novalis [1960], Fragment No 146, 575).

<sup>5</sup> Jeune plant (Rousseau [1962], 246).

view that celebrated the natural tendencies of childhood. In addition, Rousseau maintains the child's natural innocence and kindness, which is menaced by social institutions like family, school, church, and state. This view of childhood drew upon the cult of the "noble savage" in the eighteenth century and was adopted by the Romantics. From then on children were regarded as unknown beings. Adults have to take up an observer's position towards them in order to fathom out their character. In England Rousseau's image of childhood exerted a great influence on William Blake. In his *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) the idea of childhood as absolute innocence is allied with the belief in the innate evil in mankind – a combination which reveals Blake's ambivalent attitude. In Blake's view innocence and experience represent two "States of the Human Soul" which have to complement each other in order to attain intellectual maturity. Blake's concept of childhood envisions three phases. Firstly, childhood presents itself as a heavenly state (for example in "The Echoing Green" and "Laughing Song"). However, this perspective is not suitable according to the rules of human society. But even the standpoint of experience is incomplete since it does not offer any alternatives to the unbalanced rational worldview based on Thomas Hobbes' philosophy. Although the child must leave the state of innocence, its naive perception establishes a vision of a better life, expressed for instance in Blake's poem "Holy Thursday". Innocence and experience as points of view are incomplete unless they complement each other in "Imagination".

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Johann Gottfried Herder, Jean Paul, Friedrich Schiller, and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi brought about a turning point in pedagogy. This is characterized by a break with the Enlightenment's concept of education, which focuses on the utility principle. In this regard Schiller, in his essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (Naive and Sentimental Poetry, 1795/96), described the child as "a lively representation to us of the ideal, not indeed, as it is fulfilled, but as it is enjoined; hence we are in no sense moved by the notion of its poverty and limitation, but rather by the opposite: a notion of its pure and free strength, its integrity, its eternity".<sup>6</sup> The representatives of a new humanist pedagogy put special emphasis to the child's human education. This principle also applies to children's literature whose purpose no longer lies in imparting vocational knowledge and moral instruction. The contrast between pedagogical convention on the one hand and aesthetic value on the other, which played an important role

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<sup>6</sup> Eine Vergegenwärtigung des Ideals, nicht zwar des erfüllten, aber des aufgegebenen, und es ist also keineswegs die Vorstellung seiner Bedürftigkeit und Schranken, es ist ganz im Gegenteil die Vorstellung seiner reinen und freien Kraft, seiner Integrität, seiner Unendlichkeit (Schiller [1993], 87).

in the evaluation of children's literature, gave way to a pedagogical discussion about the aesthetic autonomy of children's books claimed above all by Pestalozzi. The discovery of the child's intrinsic values also revealed its special state of mind, whose active centre is marked by imagination. In his *Palmbblätter* (Palm Leaves, 1786), Herder addressed the issue of adequate reading matter for children and recommended the stories from *A Thousand and One Nights*, because they stimulate the child's imagination and impart a sense of poetry. In *Iduna oder der Apfel der Verjüngung* (Iduna, or the Apple of Rejuvenation, 1796), Herder commented on the child's fondness for magical incidents and foreign atmosphere: "A child never feels happier, as when it imagines and invents strange situations and people".<sup>7</sup> This thesis is more comprehensible against the background of Herder's philosophy of history, which assumes a relationship between childhood and "oriental tales"; such tales are seen as works from a historical period that is interpreted as the childhood phase of mankind. Since the child's imagination must be turned toward good and noble things, literary works from this early period seem to be more suitable than the widespread fables or moral verses for children common during the Enlightenment.

Herder obtained his image of childhood from the supposed analogy of ontogenesis and phylogenesis by comparing the individual's stages of development with the course of human history. Therefore, Herder rejected Rousseau's identification of childhood and the state of nature in favour of the child's close relation to an archaic state of mankind. Whereas the representatives of the Enlightenment defined childhood as a mainly forward-looking transitional period that reaches its goal in adulthood, considering, as John Locke did, the child's mind a "tabula rasa", Herder regarded the child as a complete human being from the beginning. For the first time, the small child became the centre of attention: All specific abilities already exist as innate talents and merely need activation. Whereas Rousseau assumed that these abilities develop naturally without any help, Herder emphasized the parents' function as educators. With their assistance the child will be acquainted with human language and the emotional world. Since the child is distinguished by enthusiasm, imitative instinct, trustfulness, confiding nature and obedience, its personality can easily be moulded. Because of its spontaneous imagination the child is open to music, dance and poetry. Herder's conception of the child as gifted with linguistic talents and lively imagination was adopted by the Romantics for their own idea of the child as poetical personality.

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<sup>7</sup> Ein Kind fühlt sich nie glücklicher, als wenn es imaginiert und sich sogar in fremde Situationen und Personen dichtet (Herder [1883], 485).

## 2. Early Romantic images of childhood

In the following section I will concentrate on the various aspects that characterize the Romantic image of childhood, in particular its proximity to nature and more direct relationship to transcendence. All other Romantic aspects can be deduced from these ideas. The complex of proximity to nature involves qualities like naivety, respect towards creation, vitality, but also savagery and sensuality, which were disliked by society. Proximity to transcendence gives rise to qualities like creativity, imagination and contemplation, but it also entails rather tragic motifs, such as isolation, longing, melancholy and premonition of death. Because of its association with an immediate experience of nature and contact with the divine the Romantics ascribed to the child a role as mediator. The child is provided with ingenious qualities like comprehension, intuition and participation in divine knowledge. These abilities distinguish a large number of literary child characters after Goethe's Mignon. The early Romantic interest in childhood began with a sharp criticism of enlightened rationalism and the rejection of utilitarianism which was disparaged as a futile accumulation of knowledge and pseudo-erudition. For this reason the child's yearning for magic, love and religion was ignored in the Enlightenment. But education has to be geared to the child's nature, as Jean Paul claims in *Levana oder Erziehlehre* (Levana, or Doctrine of Education, 1814). The child should represent a "revolt against the spirit of the times".<sup>8</sup> Jean Paul and other Romantics acknowledged the child's individuality and autonomy and emphasized its intrinsic values. Exactly this acknowledgement is an important condition for the early-Romantic transformation of their image of childhood into a myth of ideal mankind. Jean Paul's works already indicated a cult of childhood, which linked an anthropological level of reflection with a metaphysical level of reflection. Thus the Romantics revered the child as the embodiment of a "divinity in man".

Behind the connection of nature and transcendence as a prominent quality of childhood, the idea of a specific Romantic view of art is concealed. Romantic child characters often adopt the function of a genius of poetry or art. In this case the interest in childhood paved the way for projections and longings by interpreting childhood as the "other" in contrast to adulthood. Following Neo-Platonic mystical images of childhood, the Romantics considered the child's existential state of mind to be of absolute perfection and original

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<sup>8</sup> Erhebung über den Zeitgeist (Jean Paul [1937], 567).

integrity. Novalis had posited: “Where there are children, there is a golden age”.<sup>9</sup> In the spirit of early-Romantic philosophy Novalis regarded the child as a symbol of hope quite close to the Divine and betokening a past (but also future) human state, in which man lived (or will live) in harmony with nature. The idea of the Golden Age, in connection with the philosophical paradigm of a triadic progression: natural state – social alienation – future expectation, assigns a double function to the child as representative of a past and also as prophet of a future Golden Age. Schiller had already indicated the child’s messianic function in his famous statement: “They are what we were, they are what we want to be again”.<sup>10</sup> Fulfilment in God is thus the first and original quality of the child: It is distinguished by natural purity, moral kindness, sense of virtue, beauty and truth. The child’s distance from society corresponds with its proximity to nature. The child experiences infinity in nature and to this – as a reflection of the divine – its longing is directed. This inclination to the animation of nature is connected with the spontaneity of the child’s imagination, which, like reason, is an organ of the divine to be found in man. Since reason normally awakes late, imagination exerts an almost unlimited influence on children. Imagination enables the child to animate things, to imagine transcendence and to integrate these experiences into its daily routine. This ability destines the child to represent a poetic being: This ability destines the child to represent a poetic being: It becomes the prototype of the poet. According to the Romantics, the child’s divinity gets lost when the naivety of the child’s consciousness is destroyed by the emergence of reason.

The range of the Romantic images of childhood was complemented by Wordsworth’s ode *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807) and his autobiographical story in verse, the *Prelude* (1850), in which Rousseau’s concept of the „child of nature“ became the focus of attention again. These works expressed an intensive feeling of the irretrievable loss of childhood and thus caused a revision of early-Romantic ideas. The English tradition suggested a distinction between the child as a signifier for a childlike apprehension of the world, and the recollections of innocence, so familiar to readers of Wordsworth. The hope of the adults’ return to a “second higher childhood”<sup>11</sup> expressed by Novalis in his Fragment No 480 is not possible anymore. The relations between these qualities and a special stage of life lead Wordsworth and numerous other representatives of the late Romantics to demand that the child should be protected from dangers, but also to a

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<sup>9</sup> Wo Kinder sind, da ist ein goldenes Zeitalter (Novalis [1960], Fragment No 96, 456).

<sup>10</sup> Sie sind, was wir waren, sie sind, was wir wieder werden wollen (Schiller [1993], 695).

<sup>11</sup> Zweyte höhern Kindheit (Novalis [1960], vol. III, 345).

sentimental view of childhood as a lost paradise, which could only be brought back by memory.

Nevertheless, the Romantic discussion about the child's importance always deals with the nature of mankind. The reference to the child serves to point out that the child has a soul, dreams, an unconsciousness, imagination, religion and proximity to nature, a closeness withheld from mankind by the Enlightenment. Therefore, a topical potential is inherent in the Romantic discourse on childhood. Childhood is a cipher for freedom from duties and work; these are contrasted with the child's pure play and its devotion to the moment. Within the scope of an aesthetic movement which aims at a "poeticization of the world", the Romantics stylize childhood to a literary and historical-philosophical cipher of high symbolic value. In a next step they transform childhood into a sentimental myth without any reference to the social reality of a child's life.

### 3. The central position of the fairy tale in Romantic children's literature

Accordingly the early Romantic discourse on the child does not take place in children's literature at all, as a children's literature primarily dedicated to children was not considered necessary. The Romantics argue that children already have a suitable reading matter in folk poetry. The philanthropic attempt to establish a pedagogy of imagination was taken up and modified by the late Romantics. The refusal of utilitarian purposes and the revaluation of both imagination and the world of sense paradoxically lead to the withdrawal of the process of independence for children's literature. Childhood and traditional poetry (folktale, folk song, legend, and myth) were related to each other more or less in accordance with Herder's ideas about ontogenesis and phylogenesis. According to Novalis' considerations concerning the special affinity between the child's philosophy of life and the fairy tale as "confessions of a true synthetic child, an ideal child"<sup>12</sup> the fairy tale was favoured as suitable reading matter for children. In addition, where childhood was considered to be a state of heightened sensitivity to all things spiritual, rather than something to be grown out of and improved upon, then the fairy tale also attracted those who wished to recuperate the child-sensitivity in themselves. For the first time the Romantics laid special emphasis on the demand for the child's aesthetic-literary education. In late Romanticism, this resulted in a tendency to submit folk poetry to pedagogical claims. Going back to Herder's concept of childhood, the German poets Achim

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<sup>12</sup> Bekenntnisse eines wahrhaften, synthetischen Kindes, eines idealischen Kindes (Novalis [1960], Fragment No 234, vol. III, 281).



von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, who edited the three-volume *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn, 1805-1808), containing an appendix with children's songs, maintained that the orally transmitted songs and rhymes for children represent an adequate literary form especially for small children. However, their postulate that orally transmitted forms should be gently revised in order to satisfy artistic demands was rejected by the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. In the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales, 1812) the Grimms claimed to record folk poetry faithfully without any revision. But the increasing success of the fairy tale collection as a children's book prompted the Grimms to make various changes in later editions, as they filled out gaps in the text, compiled different versions and adjusted the fairy tales stylistically. The Grimms created a purportedly special children's tone, distinguished by contamination, direct speech, addition of traditional sayings and a tense shift from present into imperfect. The Grimms thus helped to establish the folktale as a pedagogically relevant reading matter for children. The rewriting of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* as a "book of education", as it was termed in the preface to the last edition, formed the basis for legitimizing the functionalization of the fairy tale as a didactically important genre for children.

This image of childhood only took up certain aspects of the Romantic discourse and already anticipated features of Biedermeier children's literature. But its pioneering vitality waned, because the discussion about the analogy between childhood as stage of life and orally transmitted folk literature caused a recalling of virtues like simplicity, purity, proximity to nature and religious awe, which were ascribed both to the simple people and the child. All passages not corresponding to this ideal – like erotic content, ironic comments, and social criticism – were eliminated or reduced in order not to destroy the image of a light-hearted idyll of childhood.

The activity of collecting fairy tales and other folk literature, initiated by the brothers Grimm, encouraged collectors and scientists in almost all European countries to publish popular folktales which were adapted to the child's intellectual grasp, such as the collections of George Stephens/Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius: *Svenska folksagor och äfventyr* (Swedish Folk Legends and Adventures, 1844-1849), Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald: *Eestirahwa Enemuistesed jutud* (Old Tales of the Estonian People, 1866), Svend Grundtvig: *Danske Folkeeventyr* (Danish Fairy Tales, 1876-78), Fernán Caballero: *Cuentos, oraciones y adivinas refranes populares infantiles* (Tales, Prayers, Riddles and Popular Children's Proverbs, 1877) and Joseph Jacobs: *English Fairy Tales* (1890-93). Even outside Europe many scientists and writers were stimulated by the success of the Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's

and Household Tales) to record folktales handed down orally. Thus Silvio Romero edited *Cuentos populares do Brasil* (Brazilian Folk Tales, 1885), Sazanami Iwaha published *Nihon Mukashibanashi* (Japanese Fairy Tales, 1894-96) and Richard Chase collected folktales from the Appalachian mountains for *The Jack Tales* (1943).

An outstanding example is the fairy tale collection *Norske Folkeeventyr* (Norwegian Folktales, 1841-44) by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe. A selection intended for the youth with the title *Nor, ein billedbog for den norske ungdom* (North, a Picturebook for the Norwegian Youth, 1835) had already been published some years earlier. At first, the editors adjusted to the Romantics Adam Oehlenschläger and Ludwig Tieck, as they interpreted the folktale merely as a subject matter for their own poetical creation. However, over the years the *Children's and Household Tales*, which were translated in parts by Asbjørnsen into Norwegian, exerted more and more influence on their fairy tale conception. From now on they considered folktales as cultural-historical documents reflecting an early phase of Norwegian national literature and having an equivalent in childhood as a stage of life. Beside the achievement of putting orally transmitted folktales down in writing, thus rescuing them from oblivion, the editors rendered outstanding services to the revival of Norwegian as written language by the careful literary revision of the folktales and the blending of the predominant Danish language with Norwegian dialects. Together with the literary endeavours of the Norwegian Romantics (Henrik Wergeland) their work contributed to the development of national identity.

In Russia the folktale collectors Aleksandr Afanasyev (*Narodnye russkie skazki* – Russian Fairy Tales, 1855-66) and Ivan Khudyakov (*Velikoruskie skazki* – Russian Fairy Tales, 1860) rendered a great service to the publication of folktales. These often were revised in later editions in order to adapt them for children. Even the authors Petr Ershov and Aleksandr Pushkin took up popular folktales. Nevertheless, they wrote their versions in verse and thus established the tradition of the rhymed fairy tale in Russia. By the synthesis of folktale and fairy tale, Pushkin and Ershov created at the same time a new genre in children's literature, refraining from moral comments and aphorisms. From the Russian folktales they adopted the realistic description of the day-to-day life in villages or towns. The combination of fairy tale-like vagueness and concrete representation of places, typical of the Russian folktale turned up again in their works. In contrast to these models Ershov's *Konek-gorbunek* (The Little Hunchbacked Horse, 1834) and Pushkin's fairy tale poems *Skazka o Čare Saltane* (The Tale of Tsar Saltan, 1831), *Skazka o rybake i rybke* (The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish, 1833) and *Žolotoj petušok* (The Golden Cockerel, 1834) predominantly represent a

critique of contemporary society. For this reason both authors came into conflict with the tsarist censorship. Ershov's fairy tale was considerably abridged because of its anti-monarchist tendency and the siding with the simple Russian folk. It was published in extracts in a literary journal in 1834; a complete edition was edited two years later. The connection of folktale and fairy tale as a typical feature of the popular French "conte de fée" also affected *Nouveaux contes de fées* (New Fairy Tales, 1857) by Sophie Comtesse de Ségur, whose image of childhood was obviously influenced by French Romanticism.

All collectors of folktales and legends which could be ascribed to European Romanticism share the view that the orally handed-down folk literature represents the only suitable reading matter for children. This sanctioned reading matter was both confronted with the rejected children's literature of the Enlightenment and the non-sanctioned light fiction for children and youth. This light fiction gained great acceptance on account of the expanding book market since the end of the eighteenth century and was not influenced by the Romantic discourse.

Nevertheless, in the first half of the nineteenth century many children's books contained traits of the early Romantic image of childhood. Above all this was the case with the small amount of genuine Romantic children's books, but also with many children's books which could not be ascribed to Romanticism, since their authors merely adopted and partially even trivialized elements of Romantic ideas. The contribution of the fairy tale to Romantic children's literature is considerable: In Germany the fairy tales of Ludwig Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Clemens Brentano should be mentioned first. However, because of their complexity, these fairy tales, intended for children, were ascribed to adult literature by literary historians and literary critics until the 1980s.

The two-volume collection *Kinder-Mährchen* (Fairy Tales for Children, 1816-17), containing fairy tales by Carl Wilhelm Contessa, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and E.T.A. Hoffmann, played an important part. As a result the Romantic fairy tale for children was chronologically ahead of the folktale in Germany, since the folktale was declared as suitable reading matter for children only in the second edition of the *Children's and Household Tales* (1819) by the brothers Grimm. That the tradition of the Romantic fairy tale for children did not break off at all upon the publication of the Grimm's collection is evident from the fairy tales written by Hans Christian Andersen, Clemens Brentano, Wilhelm Hauff, John Ruskin, George Sand, and Zachris Topelius.

#### 4. Constitution of new literary child characters

The literary child characters in Romantic fairy tales are distinguished by a certain variety. Beside the motifs of the “lively imaginative child” and of the “strange child” (or “eternal child”) one also finds child characters who slip into the role of an outsider or serve as a satirical portrayal of the enlightened ideal of childhood. The latter type is generally represented by minor characters, such as the noble brother and sister, Adelgund and Hermann von Brakel, in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Das fremde Kind* (The Strange Child). Above all it is surprising that, contrary to all expectations, the early Romantic model of the divine child, living in accord with nature and not affected by social demands, is found extremely rarely in Romantic children’s literature. A typical work for an idyllic representation of childhood is the Norwegian story *Lille Alvide* (Little Alvide, 1829) by Maurits Hansen, which was presented as a classic text in reading books. Four-year-old Alvide is characterized as a pious girl, endowed with traits of an innocent angel. She moves freely out in the open and is not afraid of wild animals, which become tame and friendly towards her. The modernity of this story is not the result of the homogeneous, almost sentimental image of childhood, but of the strict concentration on the child’s perspective and of the narrative technique, which is distinguished by a simple linguistic style and an imitation of oral storytelling.

Clemens Brentano’s fairy tale *Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia* (Rooster, Hen and Little Cluck, written in 1805/06, published in 1846/47) and William Roscoe’s “papillonade” *The Butterfly’s Ball* (1807) hold a special position. Roscoe attributes childlike qualities such as taking joy in pure play and little pleasures like dancing feasts, disguises and giving delicacies to animals. The identification of small animals and children is emphasized both by the frontispiece (a boy invites a group of children to come into the garden) and by the illustrations presenting animals as human figures. In Brentano’s fairy tale human and animal existence is mixed up, symbolically expressed by the animal-like names of the three major characters, which have human shape but occasionally act like hens. The Christian interpretation, disclosed by several allusions to the Bible, amalgamates with the fairy tale level and represents the human development from loss and restoration of the heavenly state. The action’s wave-like movement (interplay of states of misery and states of happiness) and the chronological linkage of incidents occurring at different times suggest that a development does not really happen. On the contrary, the story demonstrates the eternal recurrence of the same. The influence of the Romantic image of childhood is shown both in the characterization of Little Cluck and the endeavour to regain the heavenly state of childhood, as well as in the

last scene when all figures present change into children sitting on a meadow and listening to a fairy tale told by Rooster. The poet has also changed into a child and sits right in their midst.

In his fairy tale *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* (Nutcracker and Mouse King, 1816), written for children, E.T.A. Hoffmann tried to unfold the inside world of a “lively imaginative” child. Hoffmann radicalized the late-Romantic pattern of the “dualistic fairy tale”, which already hinted at the dualism between magical and empirical events in fairy tales. He thus created with his works a new type of fairy tale characterized as “realistic fairy tale”,<sup>13</sup> assessed by many literary scholars as a precursor of modern fantastic children’s literature. The action is no longer shifted to an uncertain place, but allows access to the daily routine of children from the urban upper middle class at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The child’s world of play is described in detail, as re family life and the parents’ educational measures. The representation of daily life is arranged according to the laws of modern psychological realism which, strictly speaking, excludes the magical. The tale focuses on a seven-year-old girl, Marie Stahlbaum, as she broods increasingly over her imagination and nightmares, thereby alienating from her own family. Her parents embody the principle of enlightened reason, whereas the girl gains experience which gives her access to another level of reality. The clash between experience of reality and experience of wonder becomes ambiguous; it can be interpreted as dream, illusion, reality or a crisis of consciousness. Both approaches to experience happen in the girl’s inner world, thus mirroring a mental conflict. Since her parents express doubts regarding the truthfulness of Marie’s experience and disapprove of her superstition, the girl is depressed by a sense of increasing isolation which cannot even be overcome by her godfather Drosselmeier. He is the only adult psychological parent who shows any understanding for her situation. Even the narrator seemingly stands by Marie, but on closer examination he points to the story’s ambiguous state, which is counterbalanced by childlike and adult point of view. From the adult’s point of view the fairy tale reveals itself as a gloomy story of disease; from the child’s point of view the story changes into an optimistic fairy tale. This ambiguity is also shown in the last scene. The marriage and the retreat into a gingerbread country can either be interpreted as a euphemism for a delusion or as a cheerful fairy tale ending.

With this pessimistic view of the dangers to which “lively imaginative” children are exposed on account of their parents’ lack of understanding, Hoffmann created an image of childhood which is in radical contrast to the pre-Romantic utopias of childhood. The crucial novelty of Hoffmann’s literary discourse consists of taking the child’s perception and

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<sup>13</sup> Wirklichkeitsmärchen (Thalmann [1952]).

imagination seriously, thus denying its interpretation as abnormal behaviour in the sense of enlightened middle class reason. In this fairy tale a new literary poetics of the strange and uncanny in connection with the hardly known dimension of the child's imagination is developed. This concept is diametrically opposed to the predominant pedagogical-rhetorical aesthetics of contemporary children's literature, which struggles against the presentation of horrors and magical events in reading matter for children. Literary critics disapproved of Hoffmann's work because of its strangely disturbing representation of the child's inner life. In addition, they denied that *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* was a fairy tale for children, since the intended readership would not be able to understand the complicated narrative structure and the ambivalent ending.

Hoffmann integrated this fairy tale into his four-volume collection *Die Serapionsbrüder* (The Serapion Brethren, 1819-21) and tried to argue for its status as children's literature in the frame story: "In my reservation it is generally a great misunderstanding to believe that lively imaginative children, about whom we are talking, are satisfied with shallow drivel often presented as fairy tale. Oh! They probably demand something better, and it is astonishing, with what precision and liveliness they grasp some things, which totally escape many a very intelligent father. Learn this and have respect!".<sup>14</sup> Hoffmann expressed a poetics of the fairy tale for children that aims at the transgression of the border between children's literature and adult literature, thus anticipating ideas of the twentieth century. Even if Hoffmann admits, concerning this "fairy tale for big and small children", that children cannot fully grasp the type of character and its meaning down to the last detail, he concedes them an access to this story thanks to their imagination, which probably even exceeds the understanding of an adult reader. Accordingly, the child, with his ascribed proximity to poetry and magic, serves as an example for the adult. Behind these ideas Hoffmann's concept of an ideal childhood is revealed; a childhood that is not bound to the biologically determined stage of life, but can be preserved as infinite possibility in the mind. The "serapionical principle" also applies to *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*. This principle means that the higher reality, commonly regarded as madness, emerges from the poet's visionary power. However, the fantastic world of imagination is not allowed to break free, but has to be in contact with reality.

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<sup>14</sup> Es ist [...] überhaupt meines Bedünkens ein großer Irrtum, wenn man glaubt, daß lebhaft fantasiereiche Kinder, von denen hier nur die Rede sein kann, sich mit inhaltsleeren Faseleien, wie sie oft unter dem Namen Märchen vorkomen, begnügen. Ei – sie verlangen wohl was Besseres, und es ist zum Erstaunen, wie richtig, wie lebendig sie manches im Geiste

*Nußknacker und Mausekönig* has been translated into almost all European languages and influenced the development of Romantic children's literature in England, France, Sweden and Russia for a long time. In Germany, by contrast, there was no reaction to this work in children's literature during the nineteenth century; only Erich Kästner picked up the thread with his fantastic children's novel *Der 35. Mai oder Konrad reitet in die Südsee* (The 35<sup>th</sup> May or Konrad rides to the South Sea, 1931), opening an intertextual dialogue with Hoffmann's fairy tale in the twentieth century.

In his early fairy tales, the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen referred above all to Hoffmann's image of childhood. Numerous common aspects can be found, for instance in *Den lilla Idas Blomster* (Little Ida's Flowers, 1835) and *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*. It is left open whether the nocturnal adventure of the middle class girl Ida, who is informed about the true nature of the wilted flowers and is allowed to participate with her doll Sophie in a festive flower ball in her parents' living room, is a dream or reality. In contrast to Hoffmann's model Andersen's fairy tale lacks the sense of earnestness and threat. Andersen describes an idyllic childhood and takes the edge off the child's ambivalent experience such as found in Hoffmann's *Marie Stahlbaum*. Andersen's *Eventyr, fortalte for børn* (Fairy Tales, Told for Children, 1835-48) achieved fame because of their aesthetic sense of childhood. The author presents not only the child's immediate surroundings, distinguished by an exact description of places and landscapes, but also imitates the language of the child. Furthermore, Andersen consciously adopts the child's point of view by moving small ordinary things into the centre of the story. In these "fairy tales of things" inanimate things like toys or household articles (which carry childlike qualities) dominate the action. The allegorical fairy tale *Sneedronningen* (The Snow Queen), which is distinguished by a skilful combination of realistic and fantastic events, stands out because of its composition. This work is often classified along with Hoffmann's fairy tale as the precursor of fantastic children's literature. Andersen succeeded in reconciling his deistic world view with the Romantic construction of childhood. After many trials the selfless love of the girl Gerda overcomes the Snow Queen, regarded as the personification of abstract reason, and liberates the boy Kay from her magic spell. Both children become more mature and even almost adult through their experience, but in their hearts they are still children and preserve childlike qualities such as faith in God, a love of nature and an inclination to art. The fairy tale's philosophical expressiveness is

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auffassen, das manchem grundgescheuten Papa gänzlich entgeht. Erfahrt es und habt Respekt! (Hoffmann [1999], 306).

enhanced by setting the action into the narrator's immediate present with the last sentence "And it was summer, warm, wonderful summer".<sup>15</sup>

Inspired by Andersen, the Swedish-speaking author Zachris Topelius, who is regarded as the founder of Finnish-Swedish children's literature, addressed Hoffmann's fairy tale poetics. The first result was his fairy tale collection *Sagor* (Fairy Tales, 1847), but Topelius indicates his own poetical view only in the preface to his eight-volume anthology *Läsning för Barn* (Reading Matter for Children, 1865-96). He expressed a programme of an aesthetic poetry for children, combining Romantic ideas of childhood, especially Hoffmann's concept of the "lively imaginative child", with an anthropomorphological view and he proposed a pedagogics concentrated on the child's angle.

In Russia Antonij Pogorelskij, who was a renowned expert in German Romantics and highly appreciated E.T.A. Hoffmann's works, carried on where the Romantics has left off with his fairy tale for children *Černaja kuriza, ili podsemnyje šiteli* (the Black Hen, or the Underground People, 1829). As in Hoffmann's *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* a lonely, sensitive child, who often daydreams and is misunderstood by the adults, is the focus of attention. In this story it is not clear at all whether the fantastic incidents happen in reality or whether they should be interpreted as dreams. The things which the main character Aljosha gets from fantastic figures contribute to the reader's uncertainty. Although a connection to a story of disease is established (where the fantastic incidents are hints to the child's madness), Pogorelskij decided against an open ending. He conforms to the contemporary literary conventions by making the loss of the child's world of dreams and imagination the subject of discussion on the one hand, and by presenting Aljosha's change into a self-confident boy who has both feet firmly on the ground on the other. The loss of the world of imagination is accompanied by a melancholic atmosphere already indicated at the beginning, as the narrator wistfully describes in the introduction the look of the city centre and suburbs of St. Petersburg in the early nineteenth century and complains about the loss of familiar places of his youth.

The tendency to take over themes and motifs from *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*, but also to reduce the ambivalent meaning and to present an unambiguous harmonious solution instead of an open ending, characterized almost all post-Romantic fairy tales. Typical works are the Swedish children's classic *Lille Viggs äventyr på julafton* (Little Vigg's Adventures on Christmas Eve, 1875) by Victor Rydberg, the fantastic children's novel *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) by Mary Louisa Molesworth or *L'histoire d'un casse-noisette* (The Story of a Nutcracker, 1845) by Alexandre Dumas. Until recently, many scholars have mistakenly

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<sup>15</sup> Og det var sommer, den varme, velsignede sommer (Andersen [1995], 253).



classified Dumas' fairy tale as a faithful translation of Hoffmann's story. However, because of its adaptation to the upper middle class milieu in France, the shift from a realistic to a magical frame narrative, the reduction of the grotesque, the integrated moral comments, the adjustment to the tradition of the French fairy tale and the revised ending, *L'histoire d'un casse-noisette* goes far beyond a mere translation. In comparison to Hoffmann's original, Dumas' adaptation turns out to be a step backward, as Dumas adapted his image of childhood to contemporary pedagogical demands. The fallacy that both fairy tales are identical is one reason why the modernity of Hofmann's works is underestimated.

There was no reaction to the idea of the role of the "lively imaginative child" as a victim in fantastic children's literature for a while, except in realistic Romantic children's literature, for instance in the short story collection *I Brønden og i Kjærnet* (In the Well and in the Lake, 1851) written by the Norwegian author Jørgen Moe. The six stories describe the adventures of the siblings Beate and Viggo, who represent the same qualities as Marie and Fritz Stahlbaum in *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*. The book's title refers to two dramatic events: Beate falls into the well and is saved from drowning by holding on to her doll (which is as important to her as the nutcracker is to Marie Stahlbaum) at the well's edge; Viggo breaks through the frozen surface of the lake during ice-skating and is saved by his dog. Some analogies are obvious: Beate's and Viggo's being rescued by their best friends (doll, dog) and the place of danger (well, lake). The collection of stories is determined by a contrast of two literary movements. Whereas the stories about Beate are influenced by the Romantic movement, the stories about Viggo display features of Naturalism. Beate experiences a discrepancy between her hopes and reality and finally she resigns herself to this. This development is particularly evident in "Den flydende ø" (The Flying Island). At first sight an idyll is represented, characterized by innocent play and daydreams. However, Beate disturbs the peacefulness of nature because of her inattentiveness. Her feeling of guilt is confirmed by the loss of her doll and by the fact that her father punishes her. Beate submits to the social demands and gradually falls into the role of a victim. Her brother, however, who has both feet firmly on the ground and vigorously takes the initiative, has a great future. Although Moe clearly demonstrates his sympathy for the female character, he already indicates a certain scepticism towards the self-assertion of the Romantic image of childhood.

Romantic concepts of childhood also come to light in Jules Michelet's *Mémorial* (Memorial, 1820-22) and in Alphonse Daudet's *Le petit chose* (The Small Thing, 1865). Although both works were not initially intended for children at first, they eventually gained acceptance as children's reading matter. Michelet's autobiography was revised by his widow

after his death and published as a children's book with the title *Ma Jeunesse* (My Youth, 1875). The abridgements and revisions resulted in an overly simplistic version, which reminds us of the Romantic myth of childhood. In favour of the predominant pedagogical function ironic passages were eliminated in order to emphasize the main character's exemplariness. Despite this apologetic tendency, Michelet's autobiography remained a realistic and moving representation of a child's physical and psychological sufferings. For this reason the novel can be assigned to the literary motif of the child as a misunderstood victim of society, established by E.T.A. Hoffmann. This pattern is even more evident in Daudet's autobiographical novel *Le petit chose*. In this work the main character is not assigned a proper name. With the deprecating term "small thing" he is deprived both of his individuality and of his gender (in order to conceal from the reader for a long time that the story is about a boy). The uneasy, claustrophobic atmosphere and the adults' lack of understanding for the child's interests contribute to the novel's gloomy mood. Due to its modernity and radical views, which were unrivalled during that time, the work is seen as a continuation of Hoffmann's late-Romantic concept of childhood, as expressed in *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*.

##### 5. "Strange children" in children's literature

Another pioneering fairy tale for children, *Das fremde Kind* (The Strange Child, 1817), was also written by E.T.A. Hoffmann. Although the motif of the strange child already appeared in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, 1795/96), Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (The Disciples of Sais, 1802) and Ludwig Tieck's *Die Elfen* (The Elves, 1812), it was Hoffmann who realized this significant motif in its complexity and thus added a new facet to the Romantic image of childhood. The strange child is unusual for several reasons: the mysterious background (the strange child comes from the kingdom of fairies, which is not commonly accessible to people), the family situation (it has lost its father) and its loneliness. In addition, the strange child has inexplicable magic abilities: It can fly and understand the language of nature. As for its looks ("face of the sweetest child brightly illuminated by the sun")<sup>16</sup> it gets close to the tradition of the Romantic genius, which is emphasized by its voice, resounding like music, and by the ability to fly. Further clues involve the peculiar details concerning its age and name. The strange child has no proper name and is addressed either as "strange child" or "dear child". As it originates from a fairy queen, it is

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<sup>16</sup> Das von der Sonne hell erleuchtete holde Antlitz des lieblichsten Kindes (Hoffmann [1987], 166).

even immortal and ageless. Furthermore, a division into three areas of life catches the reader's eye: the strange child's sanctuary, the immediate surroundings and the distant hostile world. The contrast between education and play is also characteristic of this motif. The strange child never goes to school. The mechanical learning at school, which suppresses the child's imagination, opposes the play in the strange child's sanctuary. Its enemy, therefore, is a teacher. The strange child is at the mercy of Magister Tinte (i.e. Master Ink, also known as the gnome king Pepser). So the strange child is on a collision course with society's rules. In Hoffmann's fairy tale an attempt is made to articulate the opposition between childhood and adulthood the subject of discussion. Beside these features the relationship between the strange child and his playmates is decisive. This meeting comes about when the siblings Felix and Christlieb are bored and long for a friend. However, one interesting aspect of the motif "the strange child" is the observation that most of the child figures embodying this type have an ambiguous sex or may be perceived as different, even contradictory in terms of their sex by other characters in the text. The strange child's appearance is described just at the moment when it meets its new playmates for the first time. This description is based on the playmates' point of view. The naming and first description underline the strange child's gender neutrality in Hoffmann's *Das fremde Kind*. However, the brother and sister obviously perceive in different ways. This state of affairs is disclosed when both are asked by their parents to describe the strange child and they begin to quarrel about its looks. At this moment the strange child loses its status of gender neutrality. Whereas Felix portrays it as a boy with green garment and a huntsman's equipment, Christlieb represents it as a girl with a dress made of roses who is fond of dolls (171). From the siblings' gender perspectives, the supposed bisexuality of the strange child is revealed. Felix and Christlieb are not aware of the discrepancy in their statements, because at the next meeting they call it "princess" (Christlieb) and "prince" (Felix), respectively. It is interesting that neither the neutral term "child" nor the contradictory gender perspectives is denied by the strange child. On the contrary, when asked whether it is a princess or a prince, it answers the siblings "certainly".<sup>17</sup> Whereas Felix and Christlieb are determined by their gender, the strange child transgresses the borders marked by gender.

From a narratological point of view, two levels of gender perspective must be differentiated: the gender marking carried out by the narrator and the gender marking established by the observer appearing in the text. The narrator describes the strange child as a

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<sup>17</sup> Allerdings (Hoffmann [1987], 176).

gender neutral character, but in the siblings' perspective it gets an ambiguous gender status, because Christlieb takes it to be a girl, while Felix interprets it as a boy. This ambivalence is supported by the strange child's approving reaction. In view of this fact one could assume that the strange child represents a Romantic genius whose origin is of subjective character. It implies both the male and the female sex and thus presents for the siblings a reflection of their own sex. Against this background the strange child's gender neutrality, a Romantic ideal of childhood appears to be represented, which leads to a reversal of the binary gender pattern. The strange child embodies a sexless being, a "third sex" equivalent to the neuter gender. According to this premise Hoffmann's fairy tale can be interpreted as an attempt to achieve in literature a symbiosis of female and male sex in childhood. In this case the symbiosis is not realized by androgyny, which is often found in adult literature, but by gender neutrality.

These gender perspectives, and the resultant relativity concerning the strange child's gender marking, explains the melancholic ending of the story. It is a characteristic feature of the strange child that it cannot grow up. Whereas the playmates cross the threshold of childhood and become conscious of growing older, the strange child remains in the stage of eternal childhood. This state occasionally enables the friends to preserve their own childhood by the recollection of the strange child. But the strange child's refusal to grow up involves an increasing detachment from the playmates. After their final separation, it is delivered to a state of growing isolation. In Hoffmann's fairy tale the siblings and the strange child must separate, but Felix and Christlieb know for sure that they will be able to recall the strange child in dreams. Whereas the strange child becomes estranged from ordinary children by its release from time and its immortality in children's literature, the respective characters in adult literature are snatched from their friends by an early death. An archetypal pattern was the girl Mignon from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*; but this aspect is also reflected in Charles Lamb's essays "Dream Children: A Reverie" (1823) and "The Child Angel: a Dream" (1833), which unite the insatiable longing for childhood as lost paradise with the personal loss of much-loved children. The children, stylized as angelic characters, are deprived of the natural process of development by their early death and thus become symbols of eternal childhood: "We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name" (Lamb: *Dream Children* [1935], 299).

The motif of the "strange child" is repeatedly taken up and varied in Romantic children's literature. A critic of the idea of "eternal childhood" is already indicated in

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Wilhelm Hauff's fairy tale "Die Geschichte von dem kleinen Muck" (The Little Muck, 1825), published in the fairy tale almanac *Die Carawane* (The Caravan, 1826), likewise in the fairy tale "Zwerg Nase" (Dwarf Long-Nose, 1827), published in *Der Scheikh von Alessandria und seine Sclaven* (The Sheik of Alexandria and his Slaves, 1827). The main characters in both fairy tales are shunned by society because of their deformed appearance. Their outsider position is also stressed by their seeming agelessness, their tiny figures and their special abilities, which come close to magic for the bystanders. A friendly relationship with other people, be they children or adults, is only possible when the main characters either regain their original figure ("Zwerg Nase") or accept their special life situation ("Der kleine Muck"). Further variations of the "strange child" are obvious in John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* (1841) and George Sand's *Histoire du véritable Gribouille* (Story of the True Gribouille [= Ninny], 1850). These fairy tales are classified as important contributions to English and French children's literature because they combine fantasy and reality. As in Hoffmann's fairy tales, the preference for grotesque figures and changes, especially the metamorphosis of insects into human beings and vice versa, attracts the reader's attention. The borders between real and fantastic events gradually become blurred. Many incidents take place on two levels, either in anticipatory dreams or in a surreal world tied to the world of reality. This development has consequences for the main characters Gluck and Gribouille, whose origin, age, name and magical abilities contribute to an increasingly puzzling situation. The connection to the reign of elves and insects, the ability to communicate with animals and mythical figures, their innocence, kind-heartedness and naivety indicate that Ruskin and Sand not only took up the motif of the "strange child" intertextually, but also integrated pre-Romantic ideas of the "divine child". Additionally, in Sand's fairy tale a connection to the Romantic cult of childhood arises from Gribouille's self-sacrifice and revival in the reign of elves showing analogies to Christ's death and resurrection.

## 6. Conclusions

Despite these instances of innovative discourse, two tendencies have opposed each other since the Romantic movement: a pedagogical movement which dissociates children's literature from adult literature on the one hand and a literary-aesthetical movement emphasizing the common aspects of children's and adult literature on the other hand. The exemption from immediate purposes of education was achieved just for part of children's literature. The idea of the autonomy of childhood stressed the intrinsic value of childhood as a more authentic and

original way of life. As a consequence, the functionalization of this stage of life as preparation for adulthood was rejected. This development demonstrates that children's books written by the Romantics only took effect in assimilated form, that is, as adaptations to the demands of literary educators. However, as children's literature achieved liberation from pedagogical control by means of the development of the book market and of light literature, the influence of the Romantic movement was less important. In spite of the change of the image of childhood, children's literature was further tied to the task of preparing the children for future social tasks. In the first decades of the nineteenth century the demand to be pedagogical and useful was opposed by the aesthetic idea of childhood, which reduced its function of anticipating pedagogy and approved of highly literary modes of storytelling. But this development did not lead directly to a literary children's literature. The demand to be pedagogically useful was, rather, moderated to the demand to be pedagogically appropriate.

Nonetheless, the images of childhood expressed in Romantic children's literature influenced international children's and adult literature until the end of the twentieth century. Reminiscences of the Romantic concepts of childhood are obvious not only found in the work of the German-language authors Hermann Hesse, Marie-Luise Kaschnitz, Gottfried Keller, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil and Adalbert Stifter, but also in English (Henry James, Virginia Woolf), French (Henri Bosco, Victor Hugo), American (Nathaniel Hawthorne, J.D. Salinger), Russian (Fëdor Dostoevski, Leo Tolstoi) or Scandinavian (August Strindberg, Sigrid Undset) adult literature. The legacy of the Romantic image of childhood can be seen more clearly in European and American children's literature, starting with the nonsense books by Lewis Carroll (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865) and William Thackeray (*The Rose and the Ring*, 1855), the children's novels by Edith Nesbit (*The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, 1900; *Five Children and It*, 1905) and Astrid Lindgren (*Pippi Långstrump* – Pippi Longstocking, 1945; *Mio min Mio* – Mio, my Mio, 1955), the fantastic novels by Michael Ende (*Die Unendliche Geschichte* – The Neverending Story, 1979), Tove Jansson (*Muminböckerna* – Moominbooks, 1945-70) and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (*Le petit prince* – The Little Prince, 1943) up to the picturebooks by Elsa Beskow (*Puttes äventyr i blåbärsskogen* – Little Hans in the Blueberry Wood, 1901) and Maurice Sendak (*Outside Over There*, 1981). The fascination of Romantic images of childhood has not decreased down to the present, as is evident in contemporary children's literature. Proof of this influence is, among other things, the successful children's novels by David Almond (*Skellig*, 1998), Jostein Gaarder (*Sofies verden* – Sofie's World, 1991), Peter Pohl (*Janne min vän* – Johnny, My Friend, 1985), Philip Pullman (*His Dark Materials*-trilogy, 1995-2000) and Michel Tournier (*Vendredi ou la vie*

*sauvage* – Friday and Robinson, *Life on Speranza Island*, 1977). Each text demonstrates the extent to which the project of writing for children is influenced by Romantic thought.

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