

**OLD FABLES AND THEIR NEW TRICKS:
EXPLORING REVISIONIST FAIRYTALE FANTASY
IN SELECTED TEXTS BY CORNELIA FUNKE AND SVETLANA MARTYNCHIK**

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by Cornelia Funke and Svetlana Martynchik

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that the fairytale fantasy, a hybrid genre that combines fairy tale and fantasy characteristics, not only inherits the qualities of its generic predecessors but also unlocks new opportunities for critical reflection. It does so primarily by retelling, revisioning, and reinterpreting familiar scenarios from classic fairy tales. The goal of this study is to provide means to the understanding of the narrative apparatus and the revisionist qualities of the fairytale fantasy genre.

Fairytale fantasy is remarkable for its generic flexibility that allows it to reimagine classic fairy tale tropes and challenge readers' expectations. Through an examination of two sets of case-studies from different national literatures, this dissertation shows that by integrating fairy tale's historical context with fantasy's creative capacity, works of fairytale fantasy produce a set of unique intertextual relations and narrative characteristics that influence the reading process in intellectually stimulating ways.

Drawing from a comparative analysis of two fairytale fantasy works (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* by Cornelia Funke and *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* by Svetlana Martynchik) and two fairy tale collections (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* by Alexey Tolstoy), this study combines a historical analysis with a structuralist reading to illustrate how the fairytale fantasy's generic hybridity enables the transformation of supernatural narrative devices into mechanisms of critical reflection. This work examines the devices by which fairytale fantasy engages readers into the world-building process and draws attention to the educational applications of the genre.

Lay Summary

This dissertation argues that the fairytale fantasy, a hybrid genre that combines fairy tale and fantasy characteristics, unlocks new opportunities for critical reflection. It does so primarily by retelling, revisioning, and reinterpreting familiar scenarios from classic fairy tales. The goal of this study is to provide means to the understanding of the narrative apparatus and the revisionist qualities of the fairytale fantasy genre.

Through an examination of two sets of case-studies from different national literatures, this dissertation shows that by integrating fairy tale's historical context with fantasy's creative capacity, works of fairytale fantasy influence the reading process in intellectually stimulating ways. This study examines the mechanisms by which fairytale fantasy engages readers into the world-building process and draws attention to the educational applications of the genre.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author S. Dreier. The research included organization of two scholarly panels “Teaching Heroism: Ways to Bring Fantasy into the Classroom” for the *International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts* (Orlando, FL, 2017) and “Reimagining Social Justice Concerns: Bringing Fantasy Fiction into the Classroom” for the *Modern Languages Association Annual Convention* (New York City, NY, 2018). Exposure to the international academic community and collaborative research with colleagues across languages and disciplines allowed this project to identify and address relevant yet underexplored questions within the field of fantasy studies.

Portions of Chapter 2 have been published as Dreier, Stephanie, “Learning to Be a Hero: The Role of Magical Objects in *Harry Potter* and *Reckless*,” *Yearbook of Eastern European Studies*, vol. 7, 2017, 17–29. A number of passages cited in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 have been published as Dreier, Stephanie, “Magical Objects in Fantasy: A Multicultural Examination,” *Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres*, edited by Mark A. Fabrizio, Sense Publishers, 2006, 179–92. An abridged version of Chapter 5 has been published in *Fastitocalon: Studies in Fantasticism Ancient to Modern*, vol. 7, 2017, 109–20.

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Dedication

Посвящается Юре Соколову и Ко.

Introduction

One can find stories about magic, other worlds, time travel, and transformation throughout human history, in all languages and in literatures of all nations. Unnatural, supernatural, and impossible phenomena never fail to captivate us. The desire to experience the extraordinary is what drives people towards supernatural fiction. In *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (2014), the novelist and historian Marina Warner discusses the “need to move beyond the limits of reality” (15) that draws readers to supernatural narratives. From ancient myths to modern fantasy, people find pleasure in hearing, reading, and writing stories about the impossible, the strange, and the mysterious. Supernatural themes surround us on television, in fiction, in video games, and even on stage.

Non-mimetic fiction has not always been celebrated. North American fantasy scholar Kathryn Hume argues that ancient Greek philosophers followed by early Christian thinkers were the first to dismiss non-mimetic narrative devices as insignificant and even potentially harmful. Hume concludes that mindlessly perpetuating this degrading attitude toward the supernatural prevented coming generations from developing “an analytic vocabulary for exploring and understanding fantasy” (3). For centuries, mimetic literature has been given preference while non-mimetic fiction was reduced to escapism and infantile daydreaming.

The void in analytical vocabulary as a result of the “mimetic bias” continues to impact research on fantasy to this day. In “On the Origins of Modern Fantasy,” Michelle Eilers points out:

One difficulty in attempting to write about “fantasy literature” is the fact that “fantasy” can be interpreted in numerous and often conflicting ways. Some writers view “fantasy” as a literary mode present in all fiction, others believe it is a limited and identifiable

genre of relatively recent origin, and others assume it just means pornography [...] Consensus about the nature of the genre concerns only its broad outlines (317).

Scholars outside the field of fantasy studies, including the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (“Der Dichter und das Phantasieren,” 1907) and the acclaimed folklorist Jack Zipes (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much,” 2008), frequently juxtapose “fantasy” and “imagination.” For the sake of the argument of this dissertation, it is crucial to distinguish the “act of fantasizing” from the “genre of fantasy.” Throughout this work, *fantasy* (i.e. *fantasy fiction*) is understood exclusively in its capacity as a literary genre. Although the discussion is situated within the existing scholarship on supernatural fiction, this study ultimately proposes an original definition of fantasy as an independent literary genre with a distinct set of thematic and structural features.

While non-mimetic fiction always had its advocates (e.g. Samuel T. Coleridge, Edgar A. Poe, George MacDonald), old biases continued to impact the common perception of fantasy literature well into the second half of the twentieth century. Most scholars agree that it was the revolutionary success of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) that finally granted fantasy extensive appreciation (cf. Mendlesohn and James 10). During the second half of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty first century, fantasy became one of the most-read literary genres worldwide. Over time fantasy literature evolved, branching into various subgenres that have little in common with Tolkien’s narratives.

The extensive demand for fantasy literature suggests that, more than ever, readers today desire to submerge in imaginary worlds. Supernatural themes receive more exposure than they have in a very long time. Drawing from Kathryn Hume’s work, I believe that the overwhelming

popularity of fantasy signifies a long-overdue paradigm shift: previously dismissive attitude toward fantasy gradually gives way to curiosity and appreciation.

In the 1960s, partially due to the triumph of Tolkien's works and partially because celebrated writers such as Mikhail Bulgakov (1891–1940) and Jorge L. Borges (1899–1986) popularized the use of supernatural themes, fantasy fiction started receiving widespread scholarly attention. While some still reject fantasy as an apprehensive way of dealing with reality that perpetuates withdrawal, most scholars, including Garry K. Wolfe (1986) and Elena Kovtun (2007) agree that the unrestricted imaginative nature of fantasy fiction enriches the reading process.

The shifting attitude toward fantasy might also be prompted by the internal transformations taking place within the genre. Various scholars, including Elizabeth Heilman (2003), Sonja Lloidl (2010), and Mark Fabrizi (2016), argue that fantasy narratives are growing more complex. One-dimensional adventure stories give way to intricate plots that use supernatural narrative devices to explore culturally, politically, and socially relevant topics.¹ Works of *fairytale fantasy* might serve as an illustration of these changes within the fantasy genre.

The central concept of my project is the term “fairytale fantasy,” a notion that has yet to gain widespread recognition in critical scholarship. Along with “epic,” “urban,” “comic,” and “dark” fantasy, “fairytale fantasy” is one of the subgenres of fantasy fiction. For the purposes of this study, the term fairytale fantasy is used to describe works of fantasy fiction that build on narrative tropes, character archetypes, and language devices inspired by folk- and fairy tales.² This dissertation investigates the origins, the narrative structures, and the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy.

¹ This is not to say that complex and meaningful fantasy narratives did not exist previously. My hypothesis considers tendencies, not individual examples. To support the argument, relevant problematic aspects of early forms of fantasy (i.e. “genre fantasy”) are considered in Chapter 1.

² The origins of the concept are discussed in Chapter 1.

Fairytales fantasy stories are not the only ones that incorporate familiar tropes from older supernatural narratives. In fact, “retelling of old tales” seems to be part of a trend that is currently taking by storm supernatural fiction as well as film. Modern narratives revisit and reinterpret familiar scenarios from various sources ranging from myths (e.g. Rick Riordan’s *The Lightning Thief*, 2005) to comic books (e.g. Brian Azzarello and Lee Bermejo’s *Lex Luthor: Man of Steel*, 2005).

Fairytales fantasy is, arguably, one of the most vibrant manifestations of the movement. Judging by the enthusiastic reception of works such as Jane Yolen’s novel *Briar Rose* (1992), Gregory Maguire’s novel *Wicked* (1995), the films *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013) and *The Huntsman: Winter’s War* (2016), the miniseries *Alice* (2009), and the ongoing TV series *Once Upon a Time* (2011–present), readers and viewers are more eager than ever to revisit, reevaluate, and reinterpret familiar fairy-tale inspired plots, characters, and ideals. In this regard, I strongly agree with the acclaimed folklorist Donald Haase, who observes that “as a genre characterized by endless variation and adaptability, the fairy tale lends itself especially well to reinvention” (1010).

Studying fairytales fantasy texts can be a way to explore similarities and differences between the genres of fairy tale and fantasy. My work uses a comparative analysis of classic fairy tale and contemporary fairytales fantasy case studies to show how the fairytales fantasy genre complies with the conventions of both of its predecessors while at the same time also breaching them. At the heart of my argument is the assumption that a borderline status in-between fairy tale and fantasy fiction imparts to the fairytales fantasy the ability to transform supernatural narrative devices into mechanisms of critical reflection. On a larger scale, the goal of this work is to further reaffirm that non-mimetic fiction such as fantasy can generate profound arguments with an advanced social, political, and cultural agenda. This study further reinforces this hypothesis, first,

by discussing the narrative devices by which fairytale fantasy works engage readers into the world-building process and, second, by exploring the educational applications of such works in the classroom.

Fairytale fantasy combines the rhetorical strategies of fantasy fiction with narrative elements from classic folklore. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997), John Clute and John Grant describe two related concepts that should be distinguished from the fairytale fantasy: *twice-told tale* and *revisionist (fantasy) fiction*. The term “twice-told tale” refers to a narrative that is essentially a retelling of an older story. “Revisionist fiction,” similarly, designates a narrative that derives from an inherent story; it distinguishes from the twice-told tale by a stronger emphasis on reevaluating and challenging generic tropes.³

My extensive search of critical explorations into the fairytale fantasy has not yielded any appreciable results. Despite the worldwide popularity of many fairytale fantasy works, the genre is hardly ever mentioned in literary criticism.⁴ As of now, fantasy scholarship does not offer clear guidelines on whether fairytale fantasy works should be studied as an independent category. Otherwise excellent recent studies of fantasy (e.g. Augusta Royfe, 2007; Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, 2009) have enriched our knowledge of the fantasy genre and its role in society, but their focus remains on detached national canons: individual works of fantasy are described in little detail and serve to illustrate shared generic trends rather than unique potential for critical exploration.

Similarly, only few monographs focus on a particular subgenre of fantasy fiction. More commonly, works in the field have a comprehensive orientation: they assume the shape of an

³ Chapter 1 provides a more detailed analysis of both categories.

⁴ Scholarly research on revisionist tendencies in fairy tales (e.g. *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, 1997, by Cristina Bacchilega and *Fairy Tale and its Uses in Contemporary New Media and Popular Culture*, 2016, edited by Claudia Schwabe) will be discussed later in this work.

introductory survey that dispute the limitations of the fantasy genre and describe popular subgenres of fantasy fiction (e.g. Attebery, 1980; Kovtun, 2007). At the opposite end of the spectrum we find edited collections that deal with a specific, typically widely popular, work of fantasy (e.g. Kupriianov and Surkov, 2006; Bell, 2016). While methods and research objectives in the scholarship on fantasy fiction might vary, the general tendency remains for studies to be limited to a singular linguistic (predominantly Anglophone) framework. As a result, it is exceedingly rare to find comparative studies linking fantasy works from across different languages and national literary traditions. The research I propose, by way of contrast, considers the cultural and linguistic landscape of several national literatures by focusing on Germanic and Russian fairy tale and fantasy traditions.

This dissertation is designed to address two objectives. Its first goal is to provide a theoretical framework that will enhance the understanding of the underlying conditions of the remarkable revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy genre. Its second goal is to examine and, based on the evidence I have collected, lay out the proposition that fairytale fantasy enjoys a privileged status in the German and the Russian literary traditions as compared to the status it has in the Anglophone tradition (a situation duplicated, by the way, in most other subgenres of fantasy fiction). To reach these goals, this study provides an exploration of Germanic and Russian supernatural fiction from a historical point of view, followed by a structuralist reading of selected national case-studies.

Not the least among the reasons that have prompted me to use German and Russian sources is my aspiration to increase scholarly attention to works that, in the current state of affairs, are regularly excluded from the predominantly Anglo-centric international canon of fantasy fiction. Comparing German and Russian literary traditions, which draw from such distinctive and yet, I

argue, similar linguistic, cultural, and mythological backgrounds, allows for a more diverse exploration of the fairytale fantasy genre. This dissertation thus intends to be a dynamic multilingual investigation across literary as well as cultural traditions.

In literary studies, fantasy has been described, among other things, as a genre (Clute and Grant, 1997), a mode of storytelling (Attebery, 1980), and a narrative technique (Hume, 1984). My research draws from two methods of categorizing fantasy fiction. The first is introduced by the historian and fantasy scholar Farah Mendlesohn (*Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 2009): it differentiates between fantasy works based on their rhetorical strategies. The second arises from a concept of genre proposed by the comparatist David Fishelov (*Metaphors of Genre*, 1989): it distinguishes between works of fantasy fiction based on thematic and structural elements. This work employs both Mendlesohn's and Fishelov's theoretical frameworks to contextualize the fairytale fantasy genre within the international fantasy fiction tradition.

Simultaneously, my research draws from the theoretical approaches of folklorists, including Jack Haney (1999) and Maria Tatar (2010) in order to establish parallels between the fairy tale and the fairytale fantasy genres. It has been argued (Neklyudov, 2001; Warner, 2014) that classic tales continue to be relevant to our perception of literature and the world around us. This study aims to show that fairytale fantasy is a valuable tool in discovering and retrieving original meanings behind traditional fairy-tale scenarios. The hypothesis to be tested is that the fairytale fantasy genre designates a shift in the paradigm of how readers respond to supernatural narratives overall and, specifically, to fairy tales.

The main case studies examined in this dissertation are the novels *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* (*Reckless: The Petrified Flesh*) by Cornelia Funke and *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* (*Yellow*

Metal Key) by Svetlana Martynchik (i.e. Max Frei).⁵ Both works appeared when fairytale fantasy started to gain world-wide recognition: *Yellow Metal Key* was published in 2009 and *Reckless Series* was launched in 2010. I consider the popularity of both works in their respective country of origin to be a further indicator of the current transformation taking place within the fantasy genre.

Cornelia Funke is an internationally recognized German-speaking author of children's and young adult's literature. Some of her best-known works comprise *Reckless Series*, an ongoing fairytale fantasy trilogy that revolves around the adventures of a modern-day protagonist in a fairytale like imaginary world. The universe features a familiar geography and social order, which is a few centuries behind in terms of technological progress, but enjoys the advantages of magic. The protagonist of the series is Jacob Reckless, who accidentally finds his way into a parallel fairy-tale realm. *Reckless Series* is clearly inspired by the Grimm Brothers' classic fairy-tale collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, edited between 1812 and 1857).

Svetlana Martynchik, widely known under the pseudonym Max Frei, is a leading Russian fantasy writer and story-teller. Her *Yellow Metal Key* is a fairytale fantasy that presents an investigation of the protagonist's mental breakdown written in the form of a satiric travel novel. *Yellow Metal Key* shows strong ties to Alexey Tolstoy's fairy tale *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* (*The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino*, 1936) and, via A. Tolstoy, Carlo Collodi's *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia d'un burattino* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 1881–1883).

Reckless: The Petrified Flesh and *Yellow Metal Key* offer an elaborate foundation from which to investigate the generic features of the fairytale fantasy. Both works introduce an original storyline that is heavily supplemented with narrative elements from national fairy tales. The portal-

⁵ For the purpose of convenience, all primary works are first referred to by their original headings and, subsequently, only by their translated titles.

quest fantasy *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* describes the protagonist Jakob, himself an implied reference to the Grimm Brothers, and his adventures in the fairy tale-like world “behind the mirror.” *Yellow Metal Key*, a liminal fantasy structured like a travel novel, offers a multitude of intertextual references to the popular fairy tale *Buratino* while following the protagonist on his unnerving journey across Eastern Europe. Both works are commonly addressed as “fantasy fiction” without any reference to their ties to fairy tale traditions. This dissertation intends to show that it is essential for a comprehensive interpretation of the novels to place them within their genealogical context that is comprised of both the fantasy and the fairy tale tradition in equal measure. Drawing on a structural close-reading analysis of *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* with their respective prior stories, this study aims at illustrating which narrative features enable fairytale fantasy works to reevaluate and, ultimately, reinterpret classic fairy tales.⁶

Despite the popularity of both authors, as well as the growing popularity of the category of fiction they represent, as of yet, there exists only limited research on fairytale fantasy in either the German, the Russian, or even the Anglophone scholarship. My dissertation aims to fill this knowledge gap by addressing the emerging interest in fairytale fantasy fiction. Funke and Martynchik are among the few non-Anglophone authors of fairytale fantasy that gained international recognition. My investigation of *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* and *Yellow Metal Key* shall be a step, even if a small one, toward establishing a more inclusive international canon of fantasy literature.

Among other things, the selection of primary sources is predetermined by the notoriously abundant fairy tale traditions in the German and Russian national literatures; both provide a superb

⁶ The term “prior story” has been suggested by John Clute. It refers to the original narratives (e.g. fairy tales) from which twice-told tales, revisionist fantasies, or fairytale fantasies derive. See more in Clute, John, “Twice-Told,” *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, edited by John Clute and John Grant, sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=twice-told. Accessed 25 Oct. 2017.

background for the study of the fairytale fantasy genre. Modern German and Russian fairytale fantasy narratives benefit from a unique base of prior stories that allows to take utmost advantage of the flexible generic features of the fairytale fantasy. A survey of the historical evolution of supernatural fiction in each of the national literatures will illustrate how, on the one hand, individual fairytale fantasy works are embedded in their origins, and how, on the other hand, their hybrid narrative structure enables them to surpass conventional frameworks.

In addition, this dissertation will show that the fact that fairytale fantasies inherit a link to the national literary tradition associated with the fairy tales from which they borrow is responsible for introducing new opportunities to challenge readers' generic expectations. Thus, I argue that revisionist qualities of the fairytale fantasy genre have a unique influence on the reading process. By referencing folk- and fairy-tale markers, fairytale fantasy narratives establish a connection to the expectations which readers hold for fairy tale works (i.e. their "horizon of expectations" in the terminology proposed by Hans R. Jauss). This is a major source of the genre's revisionist potential: by either meeting or violating readers' generic expectations, fairytale fantasy works produce original interpretations of traditional settings and scenarios.

Drawing from reader response criticism (Iser, 1972; Jauss, 1982), my study aims at showing that readers' perception of fairytale fantasy narratives is shaped by previous experiences of reading "classic" fairy tales. When borrowing structural and thematic tropes from tales, fairytale fantasy reinforces an intellectually stimulating dynamic that enables readers to become more involved in the world-building of the secondary world.⁷ More specifically, the reader's "horizon of expectations" becomes the driving force in determining what external meaning will impact the

⁷ In the essay "On Fairy-Stories" (1947), J. R. R. Tolkien claims that fantasy fiction (i.e. fairy-story) relies on the ontological contrast between the imaginary narrative space (i.e. "Secondary World") and our consensus reality (i.e. "Primary World"). A "Secondary World" is therefore a distinctive yet contingent imaginary space that is created by the author.

understanding of the story. I use this theoretical framework to propose new techniques to utilize the pedagogical potential of unconventional fictional works popular among students. The diverse interpretive strategies employed by this study aim to highlight the multidimensional character of the fairytale fantasy genre.

The structure of my study is determined by the incentive to introduce the genre of fairytale fantasy to a broad international community of literary scholars. The subsequent five chapters discuss a variety of aspects that aim to enhance the understanding of the fairytale fantasy. Thus, Chapter 1 determines the terminology and methodology of my investigation. It provides an overview of the history of European and North American fantasy fiction and fairy stories, followed by a survey of relevant scholarship. Among other things, the chapter proposes a variety of working definitions that are meant to help navigate this dissertation.

Chapter 2 situates Cornelia Funke's fairytale fantasy *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* within the German tradition of supernatural fiction. The chapter summarizes the genre's historical evolution, ultimately arriving at the parallels between Funke's work and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tales. The comparison highlights alternative application of shared topics and narrative structures in the works, drawing attention to the ways in which contemporary fairytale fantasy narratives reinvent familiar fairy tale tropes. At the heart of the argument is the assumption that the retellings of classic stories in fairytale fantasies enable readers to discover relevant ideas behind old plots, archetypes, and symbols.

Chapter 3 builds on the comparative analysis carried out in the second chapter in order to make a case for the educational value of fairytale fantasy works. It examines the depiction of educational practices and images of heroism in *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* through the theoretical framework associated with critical pedagogy. Funke's unorthodox interpretations of

authority and heroism are treated as manifestations of critical reflection made possible by the generic features of the fairytale fantasy.

Structurally comparable to the second chapter, Chapter 4 turns to a new set of case-studies, namely Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key* and Alexey Tolstoy's *The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino*. It reviews the history of Russian supernatural fiction and contextualizes the emerging fairytale fantasy within the tradition. The chapter uses a comparative analysis of Martynchik's and Tolstoy's works to illustrate how traditional fairy tale scenarios serve as explicit and implicit frame narratives in modern fairytale fantasies.

Building on the previous chapters, Chapter 5 goes beyond individual case studies. It uses reader response theory to analyze the nature of genre-related expectations generated by fairytale fantasy works. The core assumption is that the hybrid structure of fairytale fantasy is made possible by a specific mechanism of world-building, for which I coined the term "alternative subcreation." I claim that "alternative subcreation" contributes to the revisionist properties of the fairytale fantasy by granting the reader additional interpretive freedom.

It is my hope that this study will be of interest to several academic audiences: first, the scholars in the field of fantasy studies; second, the comparatists interested in Russian and German popular culture; and, finally, literature teachers in secondary and post-secondary education. On the large scale, this work is meant to offer an innovative lens through which to consider the most recent changes within the genre of fantasy fiction. Grounded in cross-cultural and multilingual analyses, my research suggests a new direction for fantasy criticism that moves toward a more inclusive international canon of fantasy fiction.

This dissertation is devoted to strengthening the study of fantasy literature by investigating an, as of yet, underexplored phenomenon. By examining the hybrid generic features of the fairytale

fantasy, my work opens up new structural parallels along with cultural and educational dimensions that previously have not been analyzed in the context of fantasy fiction. This research contributes to several key debates in fantasy studies, including the historical evolution of the fantasy genre and its generic versatility. In a broader context, my work aims to reinforce a more profound understanding of the influence of the fairy tale genre on contemporary German and Russian fantasy narratives.

For many “non-mimetic” inevitably equals “nonexistent,” “escapist” and, consequently, insignificant. Despite the popularity of supernatural fiction and film, despite the progress achieved by dedicated fantasy scholars, the long-lasting mimetic bias remains a dragon to be slain.

My analyses of *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* shall serve as proof of the extent to which imaginary worlds enable critical reflection. Fairytale fantasy stories are driven by the necessity to connect the contemporary with the past, the new with the familiar. As a result, one might argue that fairytale fantasy fiction is, in fact, anti-escapist: it constantly looks back, maintaining a bond with “what came before,” but also emancipating from it through revision and reinterpretation.

Chapter 1. The Origins of the Fairytale Fantasy

It has not been until the twentieth century that the genre of fantasy fiction became a reoccurring subject of scholarly research. Because the topic is still relatively new and many areas remain to be explored, the terminology in which fantasy fiction is discussed is often vague. Practically every other theoretical study redefines the basic terms, reinforces new definitions, and suggests a new canon.

This chapter establishes the relevant terminology and methodological approaches that will help navigate the subsequent analyses in the following chapters. In addition, the following sections provide an overview of the history of Anglophone fantasy fiction and its scholarship. Although this dissertation deals predominantly with German and Russian primary sources, it is my belief that the discussion will not be comprehensive without a commentary on the genre on an international scale. The aim of this chapter is to show how the genre of fantasy fiction has evolved over time to eventually produce the subgenre of fairytale fantasy.

1.1. Critical Terms: Defining the Supernatural

Fantasy is part of an extensive framework of supernatural fiction. I understand *supernatural fiction* or *supernatural narrative* in accordance with Gary K. Wolfe's definition as "any fiction portraying events or figures that apparently violate natural laws" (127). In this work, supernatural fiction is treated as an umbrella term that encompasses "any story whose premises contradict the rules of the mundane world" (Clute and Grant 909) including horror fiction, science fiction, ghost stories, fantasy fiction, fairy tales, weird fiction, and myths. Supernatural fiction is

the broadest category I use to describe literary works with non-mimetic narrative elements; it is meant as an antonym of realistic (i.e. mimetic) fiction.⁸

It is not rare to find the term *speculative fiction* used as a synonym of supernatural fiction. That is, debatably, not entirely correct. The term gained critical acclaim due to Robert A. Heinlein (1907–1988), after he used speculative fiction as a synonym of science fiction in the essay “On the Writing of Speculative Fiction” (1947).⁹ Although speculative fiction might have gradually surpassed its initial conceptual boundaries, it is, nevertheless, important to consider that Heinlein specifically insisted that speculative fiction does not include works of fantasy fiction. This study, therefore, evades the term “speculative fiction” in favor of the less controversial “supernatural fiction.”

When describing non-mimetic fiction, another descriptive attribute that commonly appears is *impossible*. In the early research into fantasy fiction, scholars, including Colin N. Manlove (1975), Marshall Tymn and Roger Schlobin (1979), regularly defined fantasy as a genre that deals with impossible phenomena. Manlove and Schlobin treat *supernatural* and *impossible* as synonyms. Following Gary K. Wolfe, I consider “impossible” an imprecise and, therefore, problematic category.¹⁰ To evade the ambiguity, in this study the question of possibility and impossibility is disregarded. Instead, I differentiate between mimetic and non-mimetic fiction depending on whether or not a narrative describes events that *violate natural laws*. To rephrase,

⁸ I am aware of the many existing alternative definitions of “supernatural fiction” and those of the other terms discussed in this section. My goal here is to suggest a vocabulary that is best suited to navigate the arguments developed throughout this work.

⁹ For a critical overview of Robert A. Heinlein’s oeuvre see Franklin, Bruce H., *Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction*, 1980; see also Nicholls, Peter, and David Langford, “Speculative Fiction,” *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, edited by John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls, and Graham Sleight, www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/speculative_fiction. Accessed 26 Sep. 2017.

¹⁰ There is always going to be a debate as to which criteria to use to define the boundaries of what is to be considered possible.

narratives will be considered “supernatural” when describing or implying the possibility of events that breach the limits of consensus reality.¹¹

Fantasy fiction is frequently examined in the context of its “fantastic” elements. The word “fantastic” has multiple meanings in the context of fantasy studies. First, *fantastic* might be used as an adjective to describe wondrous events. Second, compatible with how “supernatural fiction” is understood in this work, *fantastic fiction* might be a critical term that refers to various forms of non-mimetic fiction. Last but not least, *the fantastic* (i.e. *fantastique* in French) might designate a separate literary genre introduced by the Bulgarian-French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov in the pioneering work *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*.¹² In an effort to reduce misinterpretations, this study employs the term “fantastic” exclusively within the limits of Todorov’s definition.

Tzvetan Todorov (1939–2017) was among the first to deliver a comprehensive analysis of rhetorical strategies associated with a particular kind of non-mimetic fiction. In *The Fantastic* (1973), Todorov uses the structuralist approach to define and describe the genre of the fantastic. He calls the fantastic a “frontier” phenomenon on the cusp between the “uncanny” and the “marvelous” genres (cf. Todorov 41). By contrasting the uncanny with the marvelous, the philosopher describes multiple kinds of supernatural narratives, drawing attention to the ways in which language is used to create the fantastic effect.¹³

According to Todorov, uncanny narratives are “uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and not to a material event defying reason” (47). Marvelous narratives, on the other

¹¹ For a discussion of the concept of consensus reality and the historical opposition between mimetic and non-mimetic fiction see Hume, Kathryn, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, 1984.

¹² The work was originally published in French under the title *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* in 1970; it has been translated into English by Richard Howard in 1973.

¹³ Here and hereafter the term “fantastic effect” is used to describe the feeling of marvel, surprise, or uncanniness experienced by readers in the course of a supernatural narrative.

hand, “may be characterized by the mere presence of supernatural events, without implicating the reaction they provoke in the characters” (47). Put differently, the source of the unnaturalness of an uncanny narrative is emotion, whereas that of a marvelous narrative is an event. In uncanny narratives, the fantastic effect is produced indirectly, for example through metaphors, allegories, or intertextual references. In marvelous narratives, on the other hand, the fantastic effect arises from visible transgressions of reality, such as, for example, time travel, immortality, or anthropomorphic animal helpers.

Narratives that do not make it clear whether a physical transgression of reality occurred or it was imagined by one of the characters fall into Todorov’s category of the fantastic. In the recent study of Todorov’s fantastic *Unraveling the Real* (2010), Cynthia Duncan argues:

Although there is no single definition of the fantastic that stands out as absolute and final, almost all critics agree that it incorporates something into the narrative that may strike readers as supernatural or otherworldly, inexplicable or impossible, something that unsettles readers and makes them hesitate or doubt the nature of what they are reading (2).

A vital element of any fantastic narrative is “hesitation”: the feeling that is comprised of anticipation and uncertainty in regard to the events of the story. In Christine Brooke-Rose’s words: “the basis of the fantastic is the ambiguity as to whether the weird event is supernatural or not” (63). In a truly fantastic narrative the reader can never be sure about the reality of the supernatural event. Likewise, the source of the unnaturalness is unclear: it might be the result of deluded perception or that of an actual miracle. Todorov’s definition of the fantastic is extremely narrow, although he does set a formidable example of genre analysis. This dissertation returns to Todorov’s

categories repeatedly, not least because its subject, the fairytale fantasy, also combines the elements of two genres.

Contrary to Todorov's fantastic genre, most forms of supernatural fiction are defined by their depiction of non-mimetic elements. As far as fantasy and fairy stories are concerned, the violation of natural laws (i.e. the supernatural) typically manifests itself either in magical beings (e.g. elves, dwarfs, trolls), in magical practices (e.g. shapeshifting, time travel, teleportation), or in magical realms (e.g. "Narnia," "Platform Nine and Three-Quarters"). Depending on the imaginary world, *magic* can be omnipotent or restricted by rules, inborn or learned, accessible to many or few.

As a category, "magic" incorporates a broad spectrum of non-mimetic narrative devices but certainly not all of them. It is important to note that *magical* and *supernatural* are not treated as synonyms in this study. The supernatural shall be used as a broad descriptive category for non-mimetic events that encompasses not only magical elements but also various unexplainable, uncanny, strange, and mysterious phenomena.

1.2. The Many Faces of Fantasy

As mentioned in the introduction, the term "fantasy" can refer to various things ranging from the act of imagination to a particular form of visual art (cf. Clute, and Grant viii). In literary studies, fantasy has been considered a genre, a mode of storytelling, a style, and a narrative technique.¹⁴ As a result, the last seventy years of scholarly exploration produced numerous definitions of the term, some of which complement while other contradict one another. The

¹⁴ See Nikolajeva, Maria, "Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern," 138–40.

following sections provide an overview of selected relevant scholarship, ultimately proposing an original working definition of fantasy fiction to be employed in this dissertation.

In *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1986), Gary K. Wolfe suggests that fantasy scholarship is rooted in the early eighteenth century attempts to redefine “imagination and fancy” (xvi) by authors such as Joseph Addison (1672–1719), Johann J. Bodmer (1698–1783), and Lord Henry H. Kames (1696–1782).¹⁵

Wolfe argues that it was Samuel T. Coleridge’s (1772–1834) distinction between fancy and imagination in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) that “set the stage for critical debate that would occupy much of the nineteenth century and that arguably surrounded the birth of the modern fantasy narrative” (xvi). Despite the emerging research on the topic, many critics continued to question the legitimacy of non-mimetic narrative devices; they followed in the footsteps of ancient Greek philosophers and early Christian thinkers, who dismissed “fantasy elements [...] as superstitious” and only tolerated such if they were justified by a “didactic or moral purpose” (cf. Wolfe xvii).

Over time the number of scholars who advocated in favor of supernatural fiction grew. Such thinkers included George MacDonald (1824–1905), William Morris (1834–1896), Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), and G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936). They followed in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) who were among the first to offer a critical vocabulary to study non-mimetic fiction.

Although it was convention at the time, the Scottish poet and novelist George MacDonald (1893) first refused to associate his works with either children’s literature or pseudohistorical

¹⁵ Gary K. Wolfe emphasizes the significance of early scholarly explorations such as Addison’s *The Spectator* (1711–1712), Bodmer’s *Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie* (1740), and Kames’ *Elements of Criticism* (1762).

fiction. MacDonald insists on the imperative role of a consistent moral order in works of fantasy fiction:

The laws of the spirit of man must hold, alike in this world and in any world he may invent. It were no offence to suppose a world in which everything repelled instead of attracted the things around it; it would be wicked to write a tale representing a man it called good as always doing bad things, or a man it called bad as always doing good things: the notion itself is absolutely lawless. In physical things a man may invent; in moral things he must obey – and take their laws with him into his invented world as well (*The Fantastic Imagination 2*).

The author of *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), MacDonald was a pioneer of the literary genre that eventually became recognized as fantasy. Diana Waggoner (1978) calls MacDonald “the first true fantasist” (15). He greatly impacted the subsequent cohort of twentieth century European and North American fantasy writers and scholars.

Although George MacDonald is said to have authored the first modern fantasy narrative, it is the British writer, linguist, and poet J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973), who produced the novels (i.e. *The Hobbit*, 1937; *The Lord of the Rings*, 1954) that granted fantasy fiction international acclaim. Tolkien was a trained medievalist, who believed that languages are embedded in mythologies. On multiple occasions, the “father” of fantasy fiction admitted to having created his extraordinary imaginary worlds for the purpose of accommodating his invented languages.

In “On Fairy-Stories,” a pioneering essay that was first presented in form of a lecture in 1938 and later published in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (1947), J. R. R. Tolkien

discusses the fairy-story (i.e. fantasy fiction) as a literary form. He introduces a range of new theoretical concepts, including “Primary world,” “Secondary World,” “Secondary Belief,” “Faerie,” and “Eucatastrophe” that later became indispensable to fantasy scholarship.¹⁶ Tolkien remarks that fairy-stories are set in an imaginary realm, the “Faerie.” The Faerie is a “Secondary World,” a distinctive yet contingent imaginary space that is created by the author, who becomes a “subcreator.” The process of subcreation implies drawing images and concepts from the Primary world and reimagining them in original ways. According to Tolkien, the “Primary World” is our consensus reality that has been created by God. Mark Fabrizio remarks that in the Tolkienian sense, “for a tale to be considered a fairy-story [...] it must be presented as being “true” in the sense that the reader may take it as an intended representation of a reality defined by the author” (“Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 46). In other words, the fairy-story depends on being perceived as credible. Tolkien calls the belief in the fictional reality of a secondary world the “Secondary Belief.” Secondary Belief is contrasted with the “Primary” (i.e. religious) belief in God.

Subcreation, Tolkien insists, is a process more powerful than ordinary imagination because it addresses a number of essential psychological needs:

Fantasy itself is the first of these – the purest form of human creativity, and one that enhances rather than undermines reason, since it depends on the reader’s exercise in distinguishing the real from the non-real. “Recovery” is Tolkien’s term for the “regaining of a clear view” or an innocent perspective; and “escape” is a kind of coping mechanism exemplified by the symbolic escape from

¹⁶ From here on, I shall capitalize the critical terms when quoting from Tolkien and use lowercase when discussing the concepts independently.

death embodied in many fairy stories. Finally, “consolation” is provided by the tale’s happy ending, or “eucatastrophe” (Wolfe xx).

The fiction and scholarship produced by J. R.R. Tolkien and his fellow Inklings marked the beginning of fantasy fiction’s rise toward becoming an independent internationally recognized phenomenon that we know today. Nevertheless, despite fantasy’s popularity and undeniable influence, it still remains to be fully understood. In fact, even something as rudimentary as a definition stirs up controversy.

Colloquial descriptions of fantasy fiction as “any story with supernatural elements” inevitably result in generalization. Loose understandings of fantasy can stretch as far as to encompass “almost any 20th-century novel which stands aside from [...] the presumptions of the mimetic novel” (Clute and Grant 338), including Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924), Franz Kafka’s *Das Schloss* (1926), Jorge L. Borges’ *Labyrinths* (1962), and Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). With that in mind, Clute and Grant remark that “much world literature has been described, at one time or another, as fantasy” (337). No need to say that overextended definitions have little use as they juxtapose too many unrelated works.

Although vague descriptions of fantasy are clearly misleading, one would be hard-pressed to find a precise definition that retains universal acceptance. To illustrate the range of viewpoints, below are examples of existing definitions of fantasy. The literary scholar Colin N. Manlove (1975), for example, suggests that fantasy is “a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms” (*Modern Fantasy* 1). Manlove emphasizes that fantasy narratives are characterized by an inclination toward nostalgia.

Another pioneer of fantasy studies, William R. Irwin (1976) claims that “fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of what is transforming the condition contrary to fact into ‘fact’ itself” (4). Irwin is among the first to define fantasy by its rhetorical apparatus.

Brian Attebery (1980) describes fantasy as “a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought” (*Strategies of Fantasy* 10), as well as “any narrative which includes as a significant part of its makeup some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law” (Wolfe 40). Attebery emphasizes that non-mimetic fiction can be useful in revising canonical assumptions about literature.

The fantasy scholar Kathryn Hume (1984) suggests a broad definition of fantasy that may include nearly any work ranging from Homer to Kafka. The author focuses on the roles of supernatural elements in different literary genres, arguing that fantasy cannot be separated from “literature as a whole” (25). Hume argues that fantasy is an impulse that manifests itself in “any departure from consensus reality” (21) and that “informs the spirit of all but a small part of western literature” (3). She considers both fantasy and mimesis equally important impulses.

To this day, there seems to be no conventionally accepted definition, except, maybe, that fantasy is a “fuzzy set” that has no clear boundaries and, therefore, cannot be defined by them.¹⁷ The historian Farah Mendlesohn points out that today one is rarely trying to argue for one particular definition of fantasy, as it has been noted to be too broad to fit into a singular all-encompassing description; instead, contemporary scholars tend to pick one of the existing doctrines and modify it toward their own research agenda (cf. *Rhetorics of Fantasy* xiii).

¹⁷ The expression “a fuzzy set” was first suggested by Brian Attebery, and later endorsed by numerous scholars, including John Clute and Farah Mendlesohn.

Similarly, most scholars acknowledge that there is no “standardized canon” of fantasy fiction. Surely, some works are more likely to be included, but overall the range is too extensive. Apart from J. R. R. Tolkien’s masterpieces, other works that are likely to be considered part of the early Anglophone canon of fantasy fiction include C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), Peter S. Beagle’s *The Last Unicorn* (1968), and Ursula K. Le Guin’s *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968).

Resulting from the conditions mentioned above, fantasy scholars inevitably face the challenge of distinguishing fantasy fiction from other forms of supernatural fiction, most notably children’s literature and science fiction.

It is not easy to draw a line that separates children’s literature and fantasy: even Carlo Collodi’s *Pinocchio* (1881–1883) or, indeed, Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* were once considered books for children. Likewise, the more contemporary *Harry Potter Series* (1997–2007) that initially was marked as children’s literature is often regarded as having surpassed this label. In the words of the fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes: “the fantastic blurs the lines between commodities produced for children and for adults” (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much” 5). Put differently, fantasy literature tends to raise issues that are equally relevant to diverse age groups. To avoid confusion, this study considers the term “children’s literature” to apply to fictional works that are meant for specific age groups, whereas fantasy fiction, if not stated otherwise, is considered literature for all ages.

As with children’s literature, it is important to distinguish fantasy from science fiction or sf. Science fiction as a genre tends to demand explanation and reasoning (cf. *Rhetorics of Fantasy* xiv). According to John Clute and John Grant, the main distinction between fantasy and sf is that “science fiction tales are written and read on the presumption that they are *possible* – if perhaps

not yet” (338). To rephrase, science fiction needs to prove the validity of its creations. Fantasy, by comparison, draws inspiration from purely imaginative concepts that do not require justification or explanation; fantasy presents its supernatural events as facts that are not meant to be plausible. In addition, as remarked by Colin Manlove: “fantasy often draws spiritual nourishment from the past (even when set in the present day) [...] where science fiction is usually concerned with the future and the way we may develop” (*Modern Fantasy* 8). Last but not least, the element of wonder is at the heart of typical fantasy narratives. Science fiction stories, by way of contrast, are driven by a desire for discovery and technological curiosity.

Fantasy fiction also needs to be differentiated from genres such as horror and ghost story. According to Manlove, the main difference is that in horror and ghost stories the supernatural remains estranged, foreign, and frightening, whereas in fantasy the readers as well as the characters gradually familiarize themselves with the uncanny, potentially even embracing it as a worthy aspect of life (cf. *Modern Fantasy* 9).

Horror and ghost stories rely on “monsters and evil spirits [...] whose distinguishing characteristics are that they are evil for the sake of evil, irrational, and purposefully destructive” (Waggoner 12); hero/ines in such narratives are unchanged by the experience of meeting the monstrous beings, their “only feelings are of revulsion and disgust” (12). Fantasy, by way of contrast, usually requires the evil to pose a moral dilemma (cf. 12). As with horror and ghost narratives, fantasy may feature beasts and daunting characters, but their functions go beyond causing fright; instead, they bring depth and complexity to the story.

1.2.1. Defining Fantasy Fiction

In the introduction to *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, John Clute and John Grant propose a definition of the genre that arises from the opposition between fantasy and realism.¹⁸ The authors note that before the Age of Enlightenment there was no institutionalized division between mimetic and non-mimetic narrative elements. In other words, there were no grounds for discrimination between fantasy and realistic fiction. To quote Mark Fabrizi, Clute and Grant's approach ultimately suggests that "one may disregard most pre-17th century literatures that contain fantastical elements such as monsters, wizards, and magic (e.g., *The Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *The Faerie Queen*, and the works of Shakespeare) from consideration as fantasy literature" ("Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature" 45). I consider Clute and Grant's paradigm instrumental in separating fantasy from other forms of supernatural fiction and establishing the boundaries of the genre.

Building on the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, John Clute, and John Grant, I view fantasy fiction as an independent literary genre with a distinct set of thematic and structural features. For the purpose of this study, the following definition will be considered: fantasy is a genre of fiction comprised of narratives in which the violation of natural laws, otherwise known as the supernatural component, is indispensable to the integrity of the narrative.¹⁹

Fantasy differs from other subcategories of supernatural literature by its treatment of the imaginary narrative space. While other fictions might feature supernatural elements, these devices are not presented as interrelated components of a specific alternative world order; instead, these elements are meant to achieve specific narrative goals (e.g. scare, distract, or confuse). In fantasy

¹⁸ Even when treated as a genre, fantasy often implies not only fiction, but film as well. While the cinematic aspect of the genre goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, it presents extensive opportunities for future investigation. This applies in equal measure to fantasy film in general and fairytale fantasy film in particular.

¹⁹ "Integrity" is meant as a synonym of the German term "Einheit" or the Russian "tselostnost'."

fiction, by way of contrast, the narrative is embedded in the supernatural: it tells a story that could have happened *only* within the unique narrative reality that constitutes the described secondary world — a unique narrative reality that is determined the character of its supernatural elements.

Fantasy fiction relies on the ontological contrast between the imaginary narrative space and our consensus reality. As a result, fantasy narratives elicit reoccurring comparison between the Primary World and the Secondary World. This process generates the “sense of wonder” that is a widely-discussed phenomenon in the field of fantasy studies.²⁰ It should be noted that even the absence of the supernatural can serve to maintain the integrity of the fantasy narrative, so long as it implies that a departure from consensus reality *might* be achieved in the future.²¹

To draw some contrasts: supernatural elements are crucial in classic European fairy tales, but the mechanics of world-building are not the center of attention. Fairy tales do not encourage readers to accept the fictional reality of the imaginary universe. Ancient myths, by way of contrast do not suggest a separation between the Primary and the Secondary World. Instead, the supernatural is subjected to religious belief: at the time when myths were conceived people regarded them as part of historical reality. These examples demonstrate how the proposed working definition separates fantasy from other forms of supernatural fiction and stresses its potency as an autonomous literary genre.

1.2.2. The Modes of Fantasy Fiction

There are numerous ways to categorize different works of fantasy fiction. For the sake of my argument, I shall focus on two. The first method differentiates between fantasy works based

²⁰ Several scholars, including Colin Manlove (1975) and Ann Swinfen (1984), consider the “sense of wonder” an integral component of fantasy literature.

²¹ The conditions described apply, among other things, to the liminal mode of fantasy that is introduced later in this chapter.

on their rhetorical strategies; the second method discriminates fantasy into different subgenres based on structural and plot elements.

In *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, the British historian Farah Mendlesohn divides fantasy fiction into four modes: *portal-quest* fantasy, *immersive* fantasy, *intrusive* fantasy, and *liminal* fantasy. The division is predetermined by the type of secondary world that is featured in each given fantasy novel. Mendlesohn points out that the classification is based on how the supernatural enters the fictional world (cf. *Rhetorics of Fantasy* xiv).

A *portal-quest fantasy* is a story in which the protagonist enters the secondary world through some kind of portal. The separation between the worlds is crucial to this mode: one world has to allow the supernatural, whereas the other should not. The protagonist is usually an outsider who has to find his/her ways around the mysterious new realm. According to Mendlesohn, “the portal fantasy allows and relies upon both protagonist and reader gaining experience” (“Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy” 173). The secondary world gradually reveals its secrets in the course of a portal-quest fantasy for both the protagonist and the reader to explore. Examples of portal-quests include *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C. S. Lewis and *The Labyrinths of Echo* (1996–2000) by Svetlana Martynchik.

The second mode suggested by Mendlesohn is *immersive fantasy*; it can be considered in opposition with the portal-quest. Immersive fantasy is set entirely in the secondary world that is unrelated to our consensus reality. For the protagonists of an immersive fantasy their world is the only existing reality. The world is described but not explained: the readers are expected to discover the rules empirically. Immersive fantasy domesticates the secondary world: one can recognize it by the close attention paid to details. Mendlesohn points out that immersive fantasies watch the world break apart, as opposed to portal-quest fantasies that tell the story of creation. The following

works can be attributed to immersive fantasy: *A Game of Thrones* (1996) by George R. R. Martin and *The Name of the Wind* (2007) by Patrick Rothfuss.

In the third mode, the *intrusive fantasy*, the supernatural is portrayed as a chaotic element that suddenly appears and disturbs the world. In Mendlesohn's words, "the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came from, or controlled" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 115). Intrusive fantasies create an atmosphere that is based on gradually escalating tension. This mode has much in common with ghost and horror stories; it requires a "clear line between the constructed 'normality' and the intrusion [...] that must be defeated" ("Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy" 187). Examples of popular intrusive fantasy works include *Nochnoy dozor* (*The Night Watch*, 1998) by Sergei Lukyanenko and *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003) by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean.

The fourth mode suggested by Farah Mendlesohn is *liminal fantasy*. Liminal fantasies are stories that feel like fantasies, but essentially are not; such narratives manage to construct a wondrous atmosphere while avoiding supernatural plot devices. Liminal fantasy often seems like it is set in our consensus reality, and yet an underlying perception tells the reader that something is off. Liminal fantasy "estranges the reader" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* xxiv) to the point where everything about the story and its characters raises suspicion. To quote Mendlesohn: "the fantastic exists because of the weight of expectation leaning against that space where the fantastic should be" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 241). In other words, it is not the supernatural itself, but the anticipation of it that makes this mode fantasy. Liminal fantasy depends on hesitation: the reader can never be sure whether or not the supernatural entered the narrative.²² The following works fall into the

²² Mendlesohn compares her category of liminal fantasy with Tzvetan Todorov's fantastic narrative, see Mendlesohn, Farah, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, 185–240. The parallels between the categories are discussed in more detail in the fourth chapter of this work.

category of liminal fantasy: *Wizard of the Pigeons* (1986) by Megan Lindholm and *Little, Big: or, The Fairies' Parliament* (1981) by John Crowley.

Each mode suggests a unique set of rhetorical strategies that situate the supernatural within the imaginary universe. Furthermore, each mode implies a different type of interaction between the secondary world and our consensus reality. Thus, in portal-quest fantasy, the secondary world has one or several entry points (i.e. portals) by which it connects to our world; these channels can be used to cross over between realms, but otherwise the worlds remain separate. In immersive fantasy, the secondary world is the only existing world, and, therefore, the only reality known to the characters. Intrusive fantasy is usually set in our world that is invaded by the secondary world; the secondary world can be visualized as a wave or a virus that gradually invades the mundane world. In liminal fantasy, the relation between our world and the secondary world is undefined; chaotic glimpses of the secondary world unsystematically appear throughout the narrative, but the reader does not have enough evidence to develop a clear understanding.

Farah Mendlesohn notes that the four modes are not meant as rigid structures. There are numerous works of fantasy fiction that combine the characteristics of different modes. Yet, this framework is instrumental in establishing patterns among otherwise hard to distinguish fantasy narratives.

1.2.3. The Subgenres of Fantasy Fiction

The other method of separation between different fantasy used in this work arises from the comparatist David Fishelov's genre analysis. Fishelov defines genre as "a combination of prototypical, representative members, and a flexible set of constitutive rules that apply to some levels of literary texts, to some individual writers, usually to more than one literary period, and to more than one language and culture" (8). He views genres as social constructs: they evolved in

ways to match different needs of the writers and readers. From that one might conclude that genres evolved under the influence of demand, to match the interests of particular social classes or communities.

In *Metaphors of Genre* (1989), Fishelov discusses the role of four influential metaphors used in contemporary genre theory: those that compare literary genres to biological species, families, social institutions, and speech acts. Fishelov argues that the respective analogies influence our perception and understanding of texts. Amongst the four metaphors suggested by Fishelov, correlating genres with social institutions is most appropriate for this study. As with institutions, genres should not be seen as rigid entities; they change over time, transforming in order to stay relevant.

Drawing from Margaret Gilbert's (1989) definition of convention and Jonathan Culler's (1975) understanding of generic functions, Fishelov argues that genres can be seen as constituted by a *quasi-agreement* or *quasi-contract* between reader and author. In Fishelov's words:

From the writer's perspective, the generic convention is a model to follow but also a challenge to overcome. In a complimentary way, the reader demands compliance with the established generic conventions so that he can integrate the new text, but at the same time he expects the writer to manipulate these established conventions so that the new text is more than a tedious repetition of the generic tradition (90).

Since both, social institutions and literary genres are guided by conventions, Fishelov claims that genres can be defined by the same categories as institutions. To illustrate: an institution is sustained because it fulfills a specific purpose; every institution has its unique means to attain

this purpose; social institutions also require particular types of behavior the transgression of which is normally considered unacceptable. In the same way, Fishelov argues, literary genres have their unique goals, means to realize these goals, and conventional norms (or generic roles) that can be used to differentiate genres from one another. In my view, Fishelov's model may be used to explain the popular division of fantasy fiction into *subgenres*.

Farah Mendlesohn's earlier discussed taxonomy arises from rhetorical and structural patterns traceable in different modes of fantasy fiction. The widely-used classification into subgenres of fantasy fiction, by way of contrast, does not have a single author. Rather, individual categories developed over time under the influence of numerous writers, critics, and, not least, marketing strategies. Fantasy subgenres congregate on the basis of shared themes, settings, narrative tropes, and character archetypes.²³

The unexpected and unprecedented popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* has led to the common belief that fantasy fiction is predominantly heroic, medievalist, and moralistic. In an effort to replicate Tolkien's success, many authors created secondary worlds similar or even identical to Middle-earth. The trend resulted in the appearance of the first subgenres of fantasy fiction, namely *epic*, *heroic*, and *sword and sorcery* fantasy.²⁴ These subgenres are inseparable from feudal landscapes and medieval settings; among their essential elements are knights, royalty, feudality, and elemental magic. Epic fantasy is notorious for its rigid conceptual frameworks with clear hero/ines and indisputable foes: the protagonists and their companions are commonly

²³ The system resembles classifications suggested by scholars in the 1950–60s, such as, for example, that of Peter Penzoldt (*The Supernatural in Fiction*, 1952). Penzoldt defines the weird tale by its typical characters, such as ghosts, vampires, and werewolves.

²⁴ Some scholars use the terms interchangeably, while others discriminate between them; I shall use “epic fantasy” as an umbrella term for epic, heroic, and sword and sorcery narratives.

depicted as good and the forces opposing them as inevitably evil.²⁵ In the words of Mark Fabrizi, epic fantasy “is an inherently conservative genre usually concerned with the restoration or preservation of a status quo” (*Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres* 4).

The numerous attempts to imitate classic fantasy authors have been deemed cliché, and led to severe criticism within the field of fantasy studies. The term commonly referenced by critics in this regard is “genre fantasy.” John Clute and John Grant define *genre fantasy* as follows: “on being confronted by an unread [genre fantasy] book, one recognizes it; one has been here before, and the territory into which the book takes one is familiar – it is fantasyland. The characters, too, are likely to be familiar: hidden monarchs, ugly ducklings, dwarfs, elves, dragons...” (396).²⁶ Clute and Grant argue that the formulaic and imitative nature of genre fantasy does not fulfill the chief purpose of fantasy fiction that is to challenge readers’ imagination. Certainly, not every work of epic fantasy is genre fantasy; nevertheless, many have been found to exhibit formulaic generic patterns.

Much has changed since Tolkien’s debut, including the orientation of fantasy fiction. Fantasy has been evolving, transforming, and branching into new subgenres, ultimately surpassing its original limitations. New character archetypes, alternative settings, and unexpected themes generated new subgenres that have little in common with traditional fantasy. In response to the change, the popular but problematic categories of “high” and “low” fantasy emerged.²⁷ *High*

²⁵ There has been extensive criticism of epic fantasy’s rigid moral paradigms. See, for example, McGarry, Neil, and Daniel Ravipinto, “In the Shadow of the Status Quo: The Forgotten in *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*,” 2016.

²⁶ “Fantasyland” is the recognizable, “basic venue in which much genre fantasy is set” that “displays [...] a selection [...] from a more or less fixed list of landscape ingredients” (Clute and Grant 341). Clute and Grant insist that fantasyland “is a secondary world which is fixed in place; it is inherently immobile; it is backdrop, not actor” (341). Most fantasylands can be compared to one-dimensional decorations that lack any meaningful substance.

²⁷ The term “high fantasy” was suggested by Lloyd Alexander in his essay “High Fantasy and Heroic Romance” (1971).

fantasy is used to refer to immersive heroic narratives associated with epic fantasy. *Low fantasy*, by way of contrast is a degrading term for all the other subgenres that diverge from the standard.²⁸

Today, works of fantasy fiction are classified into dozens of subgenres, including urban fantasy, comic fantasy, dark fantasy, erotic fantasy, romantic fantasy, and science fantasy. One might argue that fantasy fiction has been gradually retreating from nostalgic categories toward a more complex exploration of points of view, motives, and grey areas. In my opinion, the most interesting trend has been the switch from a medieval to an industrial setting: after decades of epic fantasy placing the supernatural behind portals and in alternative worlds, recent subgenres let the supernatural to cross over into mundane reality. The impossible, the uncanny, and the strange entered the shared universe of the reader. Here, one can easily draw parallels between the subgenres and the modes of fantasy fiction: at first, following Tolkien's example, many works remained within the limits of portal-quest and immersive fantasies; gradually, more intrusive and liminal fantasies gained recognition, thus giving birth to new subgenres.

1.3. The Hybrid Nature of the Fairytale Fantasy

David Fishelov proposes that particular genres have particular goals; these goals are met differently depending on the genre. The process of meeting goals throughout the narrative is influenced by implicit conventions associated with individual genres. Each subgenre of fantasy fiction has its individual goals, means, and roles. This dissertation focuses on the *fairytale fantasy*. As of yet, it is a lesser known subgenre of fantasy fiction than, for example, epic or urban fantasy,

²⁸ The term "low fantasy," defined by Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer in the collection *Fantasists on Fantasy* (1984), is not always used in a negative context. In my opinion, however, "low fantasy" entails a degrading implication that prevents me from using it in my research.

nonetheless I intend to show that it has a variety of unique features that are worthy of scholarly exploration.

Fairytale fantasy combines a fantasy fiction narrative framework with plot elements from classic fairy tales and folktale. The term “fairytale fantasy” has yet to enter popular usage but similar concepts have been observed in research before. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, John Clute and John Grant describe two phenomena that are directly related to the fairytale fantasy.

First, the *twice-told* tale. It applies to a work of fiction “whose telling incorporates a clear retelling of the inherent story – very often of a fairytale or folklore or myth or legend – foregrounding the existence of a previous version of the tale now being retold” (Clute and Grant 968). An exemplary twice-told tale is David H. Wilson’s *The Coachman Rat* (1985), which is a retelling of the classic “Cinderella” story from the perspective of one of the rats; more twice-told tales can be found in edited collections such as Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), Terri Windling’s *The Armless Maiden* (1995), and Karen Duve’s *Grrrimm* (2012). Many fairytale fantasies are retellings of already existing fairy stories and, thus, fall into the twice-told tale category.

Clute and Grant also introduce the term *revisionist fantasy*. The authors consider revisionist fantasy to be a positive force that exists in opposition to “genre fantasy”: “much of what is best in contemporary genre fantasy derives from a conscientious attempt to make standard genre tropes over, to make the condition of fantasy new” (Clute and Grant 810). Revisionist fantasies are essentially twice-told tales but with a stronger critical agenda; such narratives borrow scenarios from older supernatural works with the intent to reinterpret and reevaluate (i.e. “revise”) them from a more contemporary and critical standpoint. Revisionist fantasy belongs to the larger framework

of *fictional revisionism* that encompasses not only supernatural fiction but literatures of all genres.²⁹

Even though it shares traits with both the twice-told tale and revisionist fantasy, fairytale fantasy is a more restricted and, consequently, a more cohesive analytical category. As will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, the ability to clearly separate works of fairytale fantasy from other supernatural narratives is instrumental in understanding the phenomenon and its role in the popularity of revisionist literature.

Works can be and often are twice-told tales and revisionist fantasy simultaneously. Examples of such works include John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971), a recounting of the English poem *Beowulf* through the eyes of Grendel, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), a retelling of Arthurian legends from the viewpoint of Morgaine and other female characters, Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* (1992), which transforms the fairy tale princess into a Holocaust survivor, Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* (1995), a revisioning of L. Frank Baum's *Oz* universe, and Brian Azzarello and Lee Bermejo's comic book series *Lex Luthor: Man of Steel* (2005), a reconstruction of the events surrounding Superman from the perspective of his nemesis Lex Luthor. Neither twice-told tales nor revisionist fantasy have to be related to fairy tales. Such works can be reinterpretations of ancient myths, post-WWII comics, national legends, and even recent work of supernatural fiction.

To summarize: although "twice-told tale," "revisionist fantasy" and "fairytale fantasy" are related concepts, they must not be used interchangeably. A fairytale fantasy work can be a twice-

²⁹ The term "revisionism" or "revisionism" can be interpreted widely. There is no doubt that "revisionism" in its most basic understanding, as a practice of reconsideration and reutilization of prior ideas, has been part of literary production from the start. Revisionism is not in any way limited to the fairytale fantasy genre. But it does, or so I have argued, take on a unique form in fairytale fantasy works. My dissertation doesn't discuss the history of revisionism as a literary practice. Instead, I focus on a distinctive form of revisionism that appears in fairytale fantasy texts, enabled by their structural hybridity.

told tale, a revisionist fantasy, both, or neither. For the purpose of this dissertation, “fairytale fantasy” is defined as follows: it is a subgenre of fantasy fiction that builds on narrative tropes, character archetypes, and language devices derived from folklore, in particular fairy tale and folktale. A literary work must demonstrate substantial use of folklore-inspired elements to qualify as fairytale fantasy.³⁰

As of now, the term “fairytale fantasy” is rarely if ever used in literary scholarship. There are, however, studies that observe revisionist tendencies in folk- and fairy tales. To name only a few: Cristina Bacchilega’s *Postmodern Fairy Tales* (1997) and *Fairy Tales Transformed?* (2013), Stephen Benson’s edited collection *Contemporary Fiction and the Fairy Tale* (2008), Hilary Crew’s “Spinning New Tales from Traditional Texts” (2002), Veronica Schanoes’ *Fairy Tales Myth and Psychoanalytic Theory* (2014), and Claudia Schwabe’s edited volume *Fairy Tale and its Uses in Contemporary New Media and Popular Culture* (2016). These critical studies examine how contemporary fairy tale narratives revision classic tropes “by using such techniques as building on fairy-tale images, moving females from object to subject, displacing the truth of traditional narratives, making marginalized subjects central, and reversing intertexts’ norms or ideologies” (Benson 115). Building on earlier research, this dissertation seeks to explore national fairy tale traditions with the aim to establish an innovative interpretive framework for fairytale fantasy works.

Among other things, I argue that fairytale fantasy narratives take advantage of the impact classic fairy tales have on many readers from an early age.³¹ This work uses case-studies to draw

³⁰ Works that introduce original stories but noticeably replicate rhetorical strategies associated with fairy tales may also be considered within the category of fairytale fantasy. For example, *The 13 Clocks* (1950) by James Thurber and *The Ghost Drum* (1987) by Susan Price subscribe to this category. It should be noted, however, that this form of fairytale fantasy is not the focus of this dissertation.

³¹ On the cultural and social influence of fairy tales see Zipes, Jack, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 2006.

attention to the links between the genres, illustrating how the fairytale fantasy's hybridity allows to reevaluate and reinterpret traditional fairy tale scenarios.

Fantasy fiction is related to the fairy tale in many ways since the genres share similar historical origins. These genres evolved along one another within the larger framework of supernatural fiction, occasionally intertwining in literary forms such as, for example, the *Kunstmärchen*.³² In the course of the nineteenth century, the genres ultimately diverged into separate streams, growing apart substantially. The fairytale fantasy is the most recent intersection between fairy tale and fantasy. However, it should not be considered merely a deformation of either of the larger categories. This dissertation aims to demonstrate a variety of features that set the fairytale fantasy apart from its generic predecessors.

Fairytale fantasies uses the dynamic narrative features of the fantasy genre to reimagine classic fairy tale scenarios in ways that resonate with contemporary readers more even than the original tales. Utilizing recognizable settings and plot lines, the fairytale fantasy provides formidable ground for revision: it picks up narrative threads that are left undeveloped in traditional tales, gives voice to previously silenced characters, and engages with background characters who typically remain behind the scenes. The fairytale fantasy is a literary phenomenon that blends thematic, structural, and narrative elements from fairy tale and fantasy fiction, exploring familiar tropes in unexpected and often provocative ways.

Fairytale fantasy has been gaining international acclaim during the last decade. As a genre, it includes not only fiction but film as well. In fact, some of the most popular fairytale fantasies are film adaptations (e.g. Cedric Nicolas-Troyan's film *The Huntsman: Winter's War* or Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz's television series *Once Upon a Time*). Yet, due to limited space this

³² The topic is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

thesis only investigates literary works. The primary case studies here are Cornelia Funke's *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* and Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key*: two revisionist fairytale fantasies that reimagine familiar fairy tale scenarios in original and thought-provoking ways.³³

Reckless and *Yellow Metal Key* have been selected because of the national literary traditions associated with their prior stories. Folktales and fairy tale are known to have provided a foundation for the canon in many literarily traditions, including the German and Russian. The fact that most tales are embedded in the national tradition in which they originated influences our perception: we are inclined to interpret the narratives within their cultural and linguistic contexts.

Cornelia Funke claims that fairy tales are determined by their origins: "Wie Menschen haben auch Märchen ein Zuhause. Wenn man ihre Ursprünge ernst nimmt, muss man nach Russland reisen, um den tieferen Sinn der Baba Jaga zu verstehen, oder nach Skandinavien, um etwas über Trolle zu lernen" (Conrad, "Durch Schmerz lernen"). According to Funke, we can only fully understand tales through the lens of their respective cultures. Jack Zipes holds a similar view: "fairy tales are culturally marked: they are informed by the writers, their respective cultures, and the socio-historical context in which the narratives are created" (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 239). Fairytale fantasy is characterized by its generic relation to the fairy tale, it is, therefore, not surprising that it inherits parts of the fairy tale's cultural orientation.

To illustrate, an Anglophone fairytale fantasy that draws inspiration from a German fairy tale should be considered simultaneously within the Anglophone fantasy tradition and the Germanic fairy tale tradition. Similarly, works such as *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* must be

³³ Examples of other revisionist fairytale fantasy works may include Tanith Lee's *Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimm* (1983), a collection of compact retellings of Europa's most popular fairy tales, Karen Duve's *Die entführte Prinzessin* (2005), the story of an "ordinary" Sleeping Beauty, and Catherynne Valente's *Deathless* (2011), a tale that blends the aftermaths of the Russian Revolution with the symbolism of traditional folklore.

considered in the context of their respective national literatures, however, not only in the context of the corresponding fantasy tradition but also in the context of the appropriate fairy tale tradition. Only then, I argue, can the works be thoroughly investigated.

Germanic and Russian literatures have some of the strongest folk- and fairy tale traditions in the world.³⁴ Consequently, they also provide some of the strongest foundations for fairytale fantasy works, making German and Russian literary traditions into an ideal ground for research on the fairytale fantasy genre. In addition, a juxtaposition of works which draw from different mythological and linguistic backgrounds is intended to demonstrate that the means of understanding the fairytale fantasy introduced in this study are not limited to specific national literatures, but might be extended to various traditions.

1.3.1. Framing the Fairytale Fantasy within the Fairy Tale Context

A comprehensive interpretation of individual fairytale fantasy works requires an understanding of the components that constitute the genre. Now that fantasy fiction has been reviewed, the following section proceeds by considering some relevant aspects of the fairy tale genre.

“Fairy tale” can easily be as ambiguous of a concept as “fantasy.” There are three relevant terms to be defined here: “folktale,” “literary fairy tale,” and “wondertale.”³⁵ The *folktale* is the oldest of the three forms. The fact that folktales were not recorded systematically until the seventeenth century does not mean they did not exist long before that. Stith Thompson (*The Folktale*, 1977) and Charlotte Oberfeld (*Wie alt sind unsere Märchen?* 1992) argue in support of the ancient origins of folktales. According to a recent study by the anthropologists Sara Graça da

³⁴ See, for example, Haney, Jack, *An Introduction to the Russian Folktale*, 1999; and Zipes, Jack, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, 1988.

³⁵ The spelling of all three terms might vary depending on the source.

Silva and Jamshid Tehrani (2016), oral tales, including “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Beauty and the Beast,” and “Rumpelstiltskin” that were originally dated to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can now be traced back to the Bronze Age.³⁶ Graça da Silva and Tehrani remark how extraordinary it is that tales were able to survive for so long only through oral transmission.

According to the folklorist Jack Haney, the folktale must comply with three conditions: first, “the text must have been transmitted orally”; second, “it must be regarded as belonging to a particular tradition”; and third “it must be a profane, not sacred, narrative or story” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 4). The oral transmission is what distinguishes the folktale from the literary fairy tale. The literary scholar Mark Azadovskiy emphasizes that “the poetics of a folktale is the result of a collective work that is based on the interaction between the storyteller and his/her audience” (*Russkaya Skazka* 32).³⁷ It is important to keep in mind that oral folklore is a product of collective creation; it cannot be considered outside the context of a specific group of people that transmits it.

At the time when *literary fairy tales* began to appear, they were likely to be written recordings of traditional folktales. The influence of oral folklore on the development of literary fairy tales is remarkably strong:

Oral folklore [...] was shaped in the early Christian era through the repeated transmission of tales that were written down and retold and mutually influenced one another. There is no evidence that a [...] literary fairy tale tradition existed in Europe before the Medieval period. But we do have evidence that people told all kinds of tales

³⁶ See “Fairy Tale Origins Thousands of Years Old, Researchers Say,” *BBC News*, 20 Jan. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/uk-35358487. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016.

³⁷ Here and hereafter author’s translation of Mark Azadovskiy’s *Russkaya Skazka: Izbrannyye mastera* (*Russian Fairy Tale: Selected Masters*), 1938.

about gods, animals, catastrophes, wars, heroic deeds, rituals, customs, and simple daily incidents (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 240).

Although a literary fairy tale is likely to bear a strong resemblance to its oral prototype, it is ultimately the product of a singular or a group of authors, who collected the oral story and reproduced it in writing. Over time literary fairy tales grew apart from their oral predecessors, gradually forming an autonomous genre.

According to Jack Zipes, “groups of writers, particularly aristocratic women, who gathered in salons during the seventeenth century” were responsible for creating “the conditions for the rise of the fairy tale” (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 18). The term *fairy tale* (*conte de fée*) was coined by Madame d’Aulnoy (1650/1651–1705), a French writer, who became famous for publishing fairy tale collections and telling stories in her Parisian salon. Initially, fairy tales were written by adults and for adults; the genre became associated with children only much later.

The fairy tale went through a number of transformations. At first, fairy tales were performed as anecdotes by the aristocrats as a way of displaying skills in languages and manners; later, fairy tales took the shape of extensive semi-novels; at last, they became short stories, as we know them today. Some of the influential figures associated with the rise of the European fairy tale tradition are Giovanni Straparola (1485–1558), Giambattista Basile (1566–1632), Charles Perrault (1628–1703), and Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) Grimm.³⁸

³⁸ The history of the European folk- and fairy tale has been recited in scholarship numerous times. For that reason, I shall avoid an extended discussion unless it is deemed necessary by the argument of this dissertation. For more information on German fairy tales Haase, Donald, and Mary Primeau, *The Reception of Grimms*, 1993; on Russian fairy tales see Haney, Jack, *An Introduction to the Russian Folktale*, 1999.

The authors mentioned above gained popularity in particular for their *wondertales*: fairy tales in which the supernatural is an imperative attribute of the narrative.³⁹ According to Jack Haney, there exist at least ten different subcategories of the fairy tale, including the wondertale.⁴⁰ As opposed to other fairy tale categories, the wondertale must feature supernatural, impossible, or wondrous plot devices; which is why wondertales are occasionally referred to as *magic tales*.⁴¹ Following Haney, I consider the wondertale to be a subgenre of the (literary) fairy tale.

Wondertales are typically set in a family home where the father or any other figure of authority poses a problem that ultimately determines the trajectory of the narrative. The problem can be specific or general. To that Jack Haney remarks: “the reasons for [the] misfortunes are many. The cure is the same: to find a replacement for what is lacking or to restore what has been taken. All this requires a hero. How this is accomplished is the subject of the wondertale” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 93). In other words, the wondertale depicts a situation where the hero/ine experiences a disadvantage from the onset of the narrative, and then sets out to repair the aforementioned disadvantage.

The hero/ine is often the youngest, the poorest, or the dumbest. Despite the vulnerabilities, the wondertale protagonist usually displays some feature that helps him/her prevail (i.e. is kinder, braver, or luckier than everyone else and emerges triumphantly as the champion of the story).⁴² It is worth noting that such patterns allowed formalists to conclude that wondertales have a strong

³⁹ Scholars do not agree on the definition of the wondertale. Marina Warner (1994), for example, uses “wonder tale” as an umbrella term that encompasses folktales, fairy tales, and Märchen. Jack Zipes (1991), on the other hand, apply the term exclusively to oral tales.

⁴⁰ See Haney, Jack, *An Introduction to the Russian Folktale*, 8–11.

⁴¹ Although this dissertation deals primarily with “wondertales,” the term has yet to enter popular usage. For the purpose of convenience, I shall therefore refer to the primary works as “fairy tales.”

⁴² On the generic features of the wondertale, see Meletinsky, Eleazar M., *Geroy volshebnoy skazki (The Hero of the Wondertale)*, 2005; see also Neklyudov, Sergey, *Struktura volshebnoy skazki (The Structure of the Wondertale)*, 2001.

inclination toward formulaic generic structures.⁴³ Thus, the folklorist Vladimir Propp (1895–1970) showed that reoccurring plot devices can be traced throughout different tales, allowing wondertales to be easily distinguished from other literary genres.

Due to its supernatural orientation, the wondertale has been noted to have the most in common with fantasy fiction. Yet, apart from a few exceptions, such as, for example, “Folklore and Fantastic Literature” (2001) by C. W. Sullivan III and “Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern” (2003) by Maria Nikolajeva, comparative analyses of fairy tales and fantasy narratives are surprisingly rare. It is even more challenging to find research not only across genres but also across different national literatures. Apart from this, there is a wide variety of folk- and fairy tale scholarship in North America and Europe. Below, I limit my account to a brief survey of the most popular approaches relevant to this study. In the same way North American research is presented in this chapter, Germanic and Russian scholarship shall be discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

In *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2015), Robyn McCallum identifies six dominant approaches to analyzing fairy tales: the folklorist (Aarne and Thompson, 1987), the structuralist (Propp, 1928; Brooke-Rose, 2010), the literary (Lüthi, 1984), the psychoanalytic (Bettelheim, 1976), the historicist (Bottigheimer, 2009), the Marxist (Zipes, 1971), and the feminist (Tatar, 1987; Warner, 1999). These frameworks have proven to be instrumental to the formal study of folktales and fairy tales. My dissertation combines the structuralist approach with the historicist theoretical frameworks in order to expose the generic succession between classic fairy tales and fairytale fantasy works. I intend to show that the fairytale fantasy is not an isolated phenomenon;

⁴³ Here, I refer to Russian formalism, the school of literary criticism that examines narrative structures through the lens of their functional roles in texts.

instead, its revisionist potential and narrative features are shaped by the national literary tradition of its respective ancestor-genres.

The structuralist approach to fairy tales gained popularity in the 1930s, primarily due to the efforts of Vladimir Propp and other Russian formalists. Propp's main interest was to identify common features between different folk- and fairy tales. He developed a typology that aimed to define and interpret Russian folktales in terms of their shared structures.⁴⁴ In his pioneering work *Morfologiya skazki (Morphology of the Tale, 1928)*,⁴⁵ Propp determines “the constants and the variables” (Brooke-Rose 19) among the tales. He later classifies tales according to their characteristics: “the variables [of the tales] are the characters, and the constants are their actions or *functions*” (19). Among other things, the method shows that different characters can perform the same or similar functions in the story.

Vladimir Propp argues that a number of fixed functions (i.e. 31) are indispensable to wondertales. These functions include but are not limited to trickery, mediation, departure, guidance, and punishment. Characters, as opposed to functions, are interchangeable; their main purpose is to perform actions towards the protagonist that will advance the plot. Aiding or harming the hero/ine is the “assigned identity and destiny” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xivv) of most secondary characters in folktales. The research led Propp to the conclusion that wondertales tend to be relatively predictable. Russian formalists significantly advanced the formal understanding of folk- and fairy tales. At the same time similar to the folklorist approach, structuralism's excessive focus on formulas at the cost of meaning is also its most notable weakness.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Propp primarily works with the tales from Alexander Afanasyev's (1826–1871) collection *Narodnyye Russkiye Skazki (Russian Fairy Tales, 1855–1863)*.

⁴⁵ The work has also been published under the title *Morfologiya volshebnoy skazki (Morphology of the Wondertale)*. It has been first translated into English in 1958 and published under the title *Morphology of the Folktale*.

Jack Zipes (*Fairy Tale as Myth*, 1994) and Ruth Bottigheimer (*Fairy Tales and Society*, 1989) have been influential among the advocates of the historicist and sociological approaches. Bottigheimer examines the influence of the Grimm Brothers on the development of the fairy tale genre and “the ideological implications of the tales, especially their reflection of social construction of gender” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 21). Zipes, conversely, is known for using the Marxist model and focusing on “the relations between fairy tales and historical, cultural, and ideological change” (21). He shows particular interest in tracing how “the meanings of fairy tales have been progressively re-shaped as they have been appropriated by various cultural and social institutions through history” (21). While doing so in distinct ways, both scholars argue for the importance of folk- and fairy tales as socio-historical testimonies.

This work employs the critical theories that have been summarized above in order to illuminate various aspects of the fairytale fantasy and fairy tale dynamic. Among other things, I propose that our perception of fairytale fantasy narratives is influenced by previous experiences of reading classic fairy tales. At the heart of my argument is the hypothesis that by revising fairy tale tropes, fairytale fantasy challenges readers to reinterpret and reevaluate traditional tales. As I will show in the following chapters, this dynamic generates a number of consequences, including, among other things, innovative applications of fairy tale and fairytale fantasy works in educational settings.

1.3.2. Relating Fairytale Fantasy to Fairy Tale through Language

Some of the popular themes in folk- and fairy tale scholarship are: the moral aspect of fairy tales, the genre’s transformation in the nineteenth century, the role of fairy tales in children’s education, and the fairy tales’ impact on the culture industry. Most critics acknowledge the vital

role fairy tales play in European and North American history. Along with myths, fairy tales demonstrate how influential supernatural narratives can be. Jack Zipes remarks:

As metaphorical tales were told and circulated thousands of years before print, they served social functions, were retained through memory, and were passed on from generation to generation. When oral wonder tales originated, it is difficult to say, but there are traces, signs, patterns, and plots in early ancient manuscripts that reveal how all people came to know the world through metaphor, ritual, custom, and transformation. Tales were not named or categorized according to genre, but it is clear that most of the fairy-tale motifs, topoi, characters, plots, and conventions existed in oral traditions (and some continue to do so) long before learned people learned how to write and categorize narratives (“Sensational Scholarship” 141).

As Zipes points out, for thousands of years, stories have been told about miraculous transformations, rebirth, and the triumph of good forces. Moreover, these scenarios continue to captivate readers even today. Scholars have suggested different explanations for the popularity of fairy tales; many (e.g. Robinson, 2004; Tatar, 2010) believe that it is the unique language associated with the fairy tale tradition that is the key to its power.

The language of fairy tales has a long history of scholarly exploration. Siegfried Schödel suggests that fairy tales are remarkable for their “pictorial language” that aims to provoke the reader’s imagination by summoning vivid associations and detailed visual images. In Schödel’s words:

Märchen müssen als eine, und zwar sehr wichtige und wirksame Art des bildhaften Redens und Erzählens erkannt werden. Diese Bilder können aber daher zusammen gesehen werden mit: Vergleich, Metapher, Allegorie, Symbolsprache [...], Fabel, Sprichwort, Redensart bis hin zum Einzelwort (69).

To paraphrase the point: by using a variety of figurative narrative devices fairy tales speak to the reader's subconscious, evoking an emotional rather than a rational response.

Our attachment to fairy tales develops throughout childhood and adolescence. Maria Tatar emphasizes the role of fairy-tale language in teaching children to have a more meaningful perception of the world. Tatar talks about “gateways,” “open portals,” and “alternate realities” that are created by the unique language of fairy tales:

The words with which [the fairy tale] is told, in the end, furnish an escape into the opportunity offered by access to language. Every word becomes a source of wonder, a gateway to the discovery of adult knowledge and words, a land that provides opportunity through an understanding of the words used by adults (“Why Fairy Tales Matter” 60).

One could argue that the rich vocabulary of the fairy tale offers both children and adults an entrance into an alternative realm. For children, it is the realm of a grown-up life that is yet unknown to them, whereas, for adults, fairy tales address the bittersweet realm of their juvenile memories.

Fairy tales can be a formidable tool for children to discover the power of language. Observing how it transforms the imaginary space of the fairy story, children internalize the idea

that language evokes transformation. At the same time children are confronted with the power of metaphors: a spell does not work in our consensus reality in the same way it does in a story, but it nevertheless has a meaning. In Maria Tatar's words:

The child reading fairy tales enters Elsewhere to learn language and master the linguistic conventions that allow adults to do things with words, to produce effects that are achieved by saying something. [...] Fairy tales help children move [...] to a condition that may not be emancipation but that marks the beginnings of some form of agency ("Why Fairy Tales Matter" 63).

In fairy tales, it is often the case that protagonists have to name particular words, or refrain from saying them in order to gain advantages. Consequently, words acquire double or even triple meanings. The right phrases reach the level of spells, yielding singular power. Verbal mistakes, on the other hand, can have severe consequences. Tatar refers to this phenomenon as "magical thinking": it creates the impression that "change comes less through the force of magic wands than through spells" ("Why Fairy Tales Matter" 61). Put differently, not only the supernatural but more so the language has the power to induce change.

Various narrative techniques enable to create a wondrous, for the lack of a better term, atmosphere in the story. I shall use the umbrella term "figurative language" to refer to them. Literary devices, including metaphor, irony, anthropomorphism, flashback, foreshadowing, allegory, oxymoron, satire, and personification encourage readers of supernatural narratives to shift from the regular into a more magical kind of thinking.

A certain fascination with language is typical for German, Russian, and other fairy tale traditions from around the world. It is my belief that fantasy fiction shares this quality. A big part

of what attracts readers to fantasy narratives is, arguably, the ability to use figurative language to depict foreign worlds as strangely familiar yet distant and wondrous. Some scholars, among them Tzvetan Todorov, go as far as to suggest that all supernatural “is born of language, it is both its consequence and its proof: not only do the devil and vampires exist only in words, but language alone enables us to conceive what is absent” (*The Fantastic* 82). This statement corresponds with J. R. R. Tolkien’s argument about language being the primary tool of subcreation. I agree with the claim in that the supernatural has no physical presence in consensus reality, otherwise it would not be “supernatural.” Consequently, supernatural phenomena are purely conceptual; they are manifested in the imagination and in language since both are unrestricted by states of matter.

The fairy tale is recognized by its language. Fairytale fantasy takes advantage of this feature by incorporating distinctive narrative devices in the same way it borrows typical fairy-tale settings and character archetypes. In this way, the fairytale fantasy taps into the stream of images readers associate with traditional fairy tales.

1.4. Conclusion: Chapter 1

This chapter introduced a variety of working definitions that are meant to help navigating this study. It offered a survey of the history of and research on European and North American fantasy fiction. Considering the historically dominant position of Anglophone fantasy tradition, it does not come as a surprise that fantasy fiction in other national literatures was unable to develop completely unrestricted. Instead, many international works, including German and Russian fantasy novels carry a heavy imprint of British and North American classics. The following chapters shall demonstrate that fairytale fantasy, more than any other subgenre of fantasy fiction, has a unique

foundation in the German and Russian literatures, which arises from the formidable fairy tale tradition embedded in both national traditions.

In addition, the following chapters shall draw attention to fairytale fantasy's ability to revise conventional fairy tale scenarios. Classic fairy tales focus on protagonists finding their happiness, which typically means accumulating wealth, moving up in social ranks, marrying successfully, establishing an income, and acquiring property. Such tales depict the supernatural as a tool that either aids or prevents protagonists from achieving their goals. While drawing from classic fairy tales, fairytale fantasy narratives seek to reevaluate old paradigms by questioning and challenging established values. "Happiness forever" that is signified by wealth and romantic love is one of the assumptions commonly confronted by fairytale fantasies.

The remaining chapters introduce a range of narrative characteristics that enable the fairytale fantasy to exceed the limitations of its generic predecessors. The study contrasts selected German and Russian fairy tale and fairytale fantasy case-studies. Along with thematic and structural features, the analysis focuses on reoccurring language devices, shared character archetypes, the portrayal of transformation, and the role of magical objects in the narratives. Following the assumption that understanding the evolution of the genre is instrumental in interpreting individual works, each case-study is examined in the context of the corresponding national literary tradition.

Chapter 2. Cornelia Funke's *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* (2010)

The first chapter defined fantasy as a genre of fiction that encompasses narratives in which the violation of natural laws, otherwise known as the supernatural component, is indispensable to the integrity of the narrative. The previous chapter also defined supernatural fiction, and provided a brief historical account of the fantasy and fairy tale genres. The aim was to contextualize the fairytale fantasy phenomenon within the larger framework of European and, partially, North American supernatural literature. The fairytale fantasy, which is the primary focus of this work, has been characterized as a subgenre of fantasy fiction that is defined by its explicit use of folk- and fairy tale tropes.

The dissertation proceeds by analyzing the first set of case studies. This chapter examines Cornelia Funke's fairytale fantasy novel *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* (*Reckless: The Petrified Flesh*, 2010) in the context of its relation to the Grimm Brothers' classic *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, edited from 1812 to 1857).⁴⁶ *Reckless* borrows various recognizable elements from classic fairy tales collected and edited by the Grimm Brothers. Funke places her original characters in a secondary world that resembles that of the tales. But instead of simply retelling the stories, the author infuses them with new meanings, often by exploring topics only implied in Grimms' works.

In the spirit of revisionist fantasy, which strives to reinvent old tropes, Funke's *Reckless* offers a new outlook on Grimms' fairy tales. This chapter highlights the ways in which the novel encourages readers to critically engage with outdated scenarios. I shall demonstrate that *Reckless* is a remarkable example of the revisionist potential inherent in works of the fairytale fantasy genre.

⁴⁶ Cornelia Funke's novel is hereafter referred to by its shortened title *Reckless*.

2.1. Fairytale Fantasy in German Literary Tradition

Germanic literary scholarship on supernatural fiction might be not as widely known internationally as the Anglophone, but nonetheless it has a vibrant and potent history. Influential scholarly works include *Erzählte Phantastik* (1978) by Renate Lachmann, *Deutsche Phantastik* (1999) by Winfried Freund, and *Phantastik: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (2013) by Hans Richard Brittnacher and Markus May.

In respect to terminology, Germanic scholars tend to use the terms *phantastische Literatur*, *Phantastik*, and less often *Fantasy* to describe supernatural fiction.⁴⁷ Seemingly alike, the terms have considerably different meanings in Germanic and Anglophone criticism. Ulrike Schnaas is, in my opinion, correct to point out that “sich die angloamerikanische Literaturwissenschaft durch ein weiter gefaßtes Phantastikverständnis [auszeichnet]” (15). As discussed in the first chapter, Anglophone criticism is likely to use “fantastic literature” (i.e. “supernatural fiction”) to signify a wide range of works that feature non-memetic elements to a varying degree. Germanic scholarship, by way of contrast, defines “phantastische Literatur” or “Phantastik” in an unrelated and comparatively more restricted way.⁴⁸

“Phantastische Literatur” might be considered as a subcategory of supernatural fiction with its unique range of narrative features. It does not equal horror fiction, ghost story, or fantasy fiction.⁴⁹ In my understanding of the concept, I rely on the literary scholar Winfried Freund’s definition of the “Phantastik” as:

⁴⁷ To draw a clear separation between the concepts, I maintain the use of original German terminology throughout this section.

⁴⁸ For a more elaborate discussion see Fischer, Jens, and Christian Thomsen, *Phantastik in Literatur und Kunst*, 1980; see also Durst, Uwe, *Die Theorie der phantastischen Literatur*, 2001.

⁴⁹ Although it should be mentioned that there might be occasional overlaps between these genres.

Die Literatur, [...] die in negativer Dialektik den Aufbruch durch das Ende und die Entwicklung zum Höheren durch das Abgründige aller Existenz entwendet, die alle Sinnstiftungen in die Sinnlosigkeit, alle Hoffnungen in die Verzweiflung und jeden Fortschritt in die Katastrophe münden läßt, die das Ideal wie den Glauben desillusioniert und das Gestaltete ins Formlose, das Sein ins Nichts, die Fülle des Daseins in die Leere und die Ordnung in Chaos auflöst (*Deutsche Phantastik* 14).

In other words, “phantastische Literatur” represents a more specific concept than that of supernatural or fantastic fiction.⁵⁰ At the same time it cannot be used synonymously with “fantasy fiction.” Freund illustrates the discrepancy between the Anglophone and the Germanic concepts.⁵¹ The author considers the “Überwältigung des Menschen durch das Unerklärliche und Unkontrollierbare” (*Deutsche Phantastik* 194) to be a fundamental narrative component of any work of the Phantastik. Other key elements of the genre are fear, loss, destruction, and disorientation. Clearly, this does not apply to either supernatural fiction or fantasy: it is too narrow for the former and inaccurate for the latter. Conceptually, “phantastische Literatur” is, perhaps, more related to *dystopian fiction*.⁵² The Anglophone term “fantasy” (usually left untranslated) and

⁵⁰ For more information on “phantastische Literatur” see, for example, Wörtche, Thomas, *Phantastik und Unschlüssigkeit*, 1987; see also Zondergeld, Rein, *Lexikon der phantastischen Literatur*, 1998.

⁵¹ It is debatable whether *phantastische Literatur* (i.e. *Phantastik*) is an extensive or a narrow category. Winfried Freund views the Phantastik as an independent genre of fiction, and so does this study. Other scholars use “phantastische Literatur” as a synonym of “supernatural fiction” (i.e. as a blanket term for all non-mimetic works, including myths, fairy tales, and science fiction). Yet other scholars trace “the Phantastik” or “das Phantastische” back to Tzvetan Todorov, using the term as a German equivalent of the French “*fantastique*” that is applicable only within Todorov’s narrow theoretical framework.

⁵² When discussing the fantastic young adult novel (i.e. *phantastischer Jugendroman*), Freund proposes that the genre of the “Phantastik” correlates with the genre of utopia (i.e. *Utopie*) in the same way as “fear” (*Angst*) correlates with “hope” (*Hoffnung*). For an elaborate discussion of the topic see Freund, Winfried, *Deutsche Phantastik*, 234–6.

the concept that stands behind it have a much smaller presence in Germanic scholarship than that of “phantastische Literatur.”

In any event, the excursus into linguistics was meant to show that when it comes to different national fantasy scholarships parallels should be drawn with caution. The literary discourse is so strongly influenced by the concept of “phantastische Literatur” that the genealogical development of Germanic supernatural fiction would look substantially different depending on whether it is composed from the perspective of Anglophone-oriented “fantasy studies” or the Germanic “Phantastikverständnis.”⁵³ Below is a comparison of the two approaches.

In *Deutsche Phantastik* (1999), Winfried Freund divides the history of German “phantastische Literatur” into four periods according to narrative form (*Gattung*): the fantastic ballad (*die phantastische Ballade*), the fantastic story (*die phantastische Geschichte*), the fantastic novella (*die phantastische Novelle*), and the fantastic novel (*der phantastische Roman*). Freund remarks:

Allzu einseitig aber ist die Einengung auf die Prosaformen des Romans und der Erzählung. Ein solch einseitiges Genre-Verständnis muß als verantwortlich angesehen werden für die weitgehende Nichtbeachtung phantastischen Erzählens in Gattungen, die man mit ihm auf Grund von Voreingenommenheit nicht in Verbindung brachte (*Deutsche Phantastik* 9).

The author discusses the respective events and attitudes that influenced the development of German “phantastische Literatur” at various stages in history, such as, for example, the break from traditionalism inspired by the French Revolution in 1789, or the thirst for exploration during

⁵³ For a survey of the development of Germanic supernatural fiction see Bloch, Robert, *Bibliographie der Utopie und Phantastik 1650–1950 im deutschen Sprachraum*, 2002.

the Romantic period, or the fear of anonymity in the face of technological progress. Freund concludes that “die phantastische Literatur der Gegenwart inszeniert das Finale des Menschen” (*Deutsche Phantastik* 13). *Deutsche Phantastik* offers an account of Germanic non-mimetic fiction with barely any references to fantasy fiction. It would be challenging to find a survey like Freund’s in the current Anglo-American scholarship in the light of fantasy’s prominent place in Anglophone fiction.

2.1.1. A Historical Survey of Germanic Supernatural Fiction

For the sake of the argument, I shall comply with a more fantasy-centric survey of Germanic supernatural fiction provided by John Clute and John Grant in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the purpose of the historical survey is to trace the development of supernatural literature in the Germanic tradition. The overarching goal of the analysis is to contextualize the fairytale fantasy within its genealogy first, in order to later show how the new genre emancipates from old structures.

According to Clute and Grant, Germanic fantasy can be argued to have originated from the late eighteenth century “Ritter-, Räuber- and Geister-Roman” or the Schauerroman, in English known as the Gothic novel. These stories were set in the Middle Ages and told about knights, robbers, and ghosts. The founder of the German Schauerroman is considered to be Christian Heinrich Spiess (1755–1799) with his best-known work being *Das Petermännchen* (1791). Spiess’ style of writing was imitated by Karl Gottlob Cramer (1758–1817) and the Austrian Joseph Alois Gleich (1772–1841) in his ghost stories.

After the Gothic novels, German supernatural fiction was largely dominated by *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen* or folktales and fairy tales.⁵⁴ Among the most favourably

⁵⁴ See Tismar, Jens, *Das deutsche Kunstmärchen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, 1981.

received authors was Johann K. A. Musäus (1735–1787) with his collection of German folklore *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (1782–1786). Adelbert von Chamisso's (1781–1838) novella *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1814) made an important contribution, as well as the works of several leading authors of the German Romantic movements including Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) and Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781–1831).

The great Romanticist E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) has, arguably, influenced the development of German as well as international fantasy the most. His works include the short horror story “Der Sandmann” (1816), the Kunstmärchen *Der goldne Topf. Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit* (1814) and *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober* (1819).

A separate note should be made on the German term “Märchen.” It is vaguely related to the English “fairy tale.” Sometimes *Märchen* is translated as fairy tale, other times it is used exclusively to refer to “fairy and folk tales with marvelous or supernatural occurrences” (Wolfe 140), turning “Märchen” into a synonym for wondertale. The distinction is made between *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen*, the former vaguely translated as folktale and the latter as literary fairy tale. According to Diana Waggoner, the “Kunstmärchen”: “was the product of the German Romantics in their effort to turn away from the realms of rational experience” (14). As “Kunstmärchen” are typically describe “sophisticated” literary fairy tales by particular authors who diverge from regular tales in style and themes as well as by their more elaborate account of the setting and the characters. Unlike in “Volksmärchen,” in “Kunstmärchen” characters have significantly deeper psychological dimensions. Such tales rely less on a strict “good versus bad” dichotomy, instead complicating the characters’ moral dilemmas. Kunstmärchen also often lack the typical fairy-tale “happy ending.”

As with the early folktales and fairy tales, Kunstmärchen were aimed at an adult audience. Among the best-known Kunstmärchen are Novalis' (1772–1801) “Klingsohrs Märchen” (within *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, posth., 1802) and “Das Märchen von Hyacinth und Rosenblüthe” (1802), Clemens Brentano's (1778–1842) *Italienische Märchen* (written between 1805 und 1811) and *Die Rheinmärchen* (written between 1810 and 1810),⁵⁵ and E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* (1816). Although they are not always categorized accordingly, many of the world's most prominent fairy tales are representative of the Kunstmärchen genre; so, for example, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (1837), Alexander Pushkin's entire collection of verse *Skazki (Fairy Tales)*, on some of which more below), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943). In terms of generic similarity, Kunstmärchen come the closest to modern fairytale fantasies by sharing a variety of corresponding plot structures and narrative strategies.

Along with the Grimm Brothers, other forerunners of modern German fantasy fiction from the Romantic Era include Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843) with *Undine* (1811), Ludwig Bechstein (1801–1860) with the collection *Deutsches Märchenbuch* (1845), and the Baltic German novelist Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg (1806–1868) with *Braune Märchen* (1850) and *Die Nachtlampe* (1854).

Following the decline of Romanticism, Germanic supernatural fiction started to gain momentum once more with the rise of weird fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁶ Influenced by the American writers Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft, the Austrian author of *Der Golem* (1914) Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932) became especially popular.

⁵⁵ Clemens Brentano's tales were published posthumously in 1846.

⁵⁶ John Clute and John Grant (1997) consider “weird fiction” to be a loose term for works that deal with “transgressive material: tales where [...] the uncanny predominate, and where subject matters like occultism or Satanism may be central, and doppelgängers thrive” (1000).

Plenty of pre–and post–WWI writers, including Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915), Hermann Esswein (1877–1934), and Willy Seidel (1887–1934), regularly juxtaposed mimetic and non-mimetic elements in their works. Representative and widely recognized were the works of Franz Kafka (1883–1924), such as, for instance, “Die Verwandlung” (1915). Although many authors experimented with supernatural motifs (e.g. Anna Seghers, 1900–1983; Irmtraud Morgner, 1933–1990), original works of fantasy fiction, as we know the genre today, did not make a notable appearance in the German literary tradition until after the Second World War.

After a period of stagnation inflicted by the Nazi regime,⁵⁷ translated works of modern fantasy fiction flooded the German market. Predominantly Anglophone authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Lloyd Alexander (1924–2007) greatly influenced the development of Germanic supernatural literature in the post–WWII period.

Michael Ende (1929–1995) authored some of the first original works of modern fantasy fiction in German. Ende remains one of the best internationally recognized Germanic fantasy writers. The most popular among his works is *Die unendliche Geschichte* (1979) closely followed by *Momo* (1973) and *Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivführer* (1960).

Urged by Tolkien’s and Ende’s popularity, numerous German authors committed to fantasy fiction in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Examples of modern German fantasy include *Märchenmond* (1982) by Wolfgang and Heike Hohlbein, *Zamonien–Romane* (1999–2011) by Walter Moers, *Die Zwerge* (2003) by Marcus Heitz, *Die Elfen* (2004) by Bernhard Hennen, and *Die Insel der Stürme* (2006) by Heide S. Göttner. Despite the growing number of domestic works, to this day translated Anglophone novels constitute a major share of the fantasy market in German-speaking countries.

⁵⁷ Except, maybe, for Alexander Lernet-Holenia’s novel *Der Baron Bagge* published in 1936 that is considered among the most important works of Austrian fantasy fiction.

From the moment fantasy fiction appeared in its contemporary form, the genre has been predominantly associated with Anglophone literature. To me this is a paradox, considering the leading role supernatural narratives played throughout most of the Germanic literary history. Considering that an attempt to explain this strange phenomenon could easily produce enough material for another dissertation, I shall leave the question open for future investigation. I will claim, however, that the fairytale fantasy genre might become a source of opportunities for Germanic fantasy to retrieve some of the popularity known to other types of supernatural fiction within the tradition. Thus, along with Cornelia Funke's *Reckless Series*, other known Germanic fairytale fantasies are Hans-Joachim Gelberg's *Neues vom Rumpelstilzchen und andere Haus-Märchen* (1976), Hans Bemann's *Stein und Flöte* (1983), and Walter Moers' *Ensel und Krete – Ein Märchen aus Zamonien* (2000). Many of these books are part of extensive series.

Some of the most frequently retold fairy tales in the world belong to Wilhelm (1786–1859) and Jacob (1785–1863) Grimm, arguably the most prominent storytellers and collectors in the Germanic literary tradition. Numerous modern filmmakers, storytellers, artists, and writers from various national and linguistic backgrounds choose to revisit and reinterpret Grimms' work. To name only a few examples: Jane Yolen's novel *Briar Rose* (1992), Michael Buckley's fantasy series *The Fairy-Tale Detectives* (2005), Karen Duve's collection of short stories *Grrrimm* (2012), Tommy Wirkola's dark comedy *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013), Walt Disney Animation Studios' blockbuster *Frozen* (2013), Cedric Nicolas-Troyan's adventure film *The Huntsman: Winter's War* (2016), National Broadcasting Company's (NBC) supernatural crime drama *Grimm* (2011–present), and American Broadcasting Company's (ABC) TV show *Once Upon a Time* (2011–present).

While in most subgenres of fantasy fiction original Germanic works remain submerged in the Anglophone tradition, I argue that in the case of the fairytale fantasy the worldwide popularity of Germanic prior stories (i.e. Grimms' fairy tales) is unmatched. It is my belief that extending the canon of fantasy fiction to include more fairytale fantasy works is a crucial step toward recognizing the influence of non-Anglophone traditions on the historical development of the fantasy genre that will benefit the larger community of fantasy scholars.

2.1.2. *Grimms' Fairy Tales: The History of Reception*

The Grimm Brothers are among the most influential fairy tale collectors in the German tradition as well as on the international arena. Their best-known work is the fairy tale collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (KHM)*. In the course of the nineteenth century folklore became the subject of interest for many, perceived as a pure form of national literature naturally created by the people or *Volk* as opposed to individual authors. The Grimms were among "the first systematic scholars of folk literature who consciously documented the sources of their material" (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 446).⁵⁸

For a while it was presumed that the Grimm Brothers collected their tales directly from the people of Germany, assembling the national spirit bit by bit through their collections. This assumption was disproven when literary scholars recognized that the Brothers "did not arrive at their world-famous fairy-tale collection by slogging through the fields, woods, and villages of German-speaking Europe, eliciting age-old folktales from peasant farmers and old spinning ladies"

⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the Grimm Brothers were not the only collectors of German folk- and fairy tales at the time, but, arguably, the most influential. The Grimms were preceded by Johann K. A. Musäus, who published the collection *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* between 1782 and 1787, as well as by Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) with their collection of traditional German poems and folk songs entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* (1805). In addition, various authors were collecting Germanic folklore simultaneously with the Grimms. Thus, interestingly enough, Ludwig Bechstein's (1801–1860) folk- and fairy tale collection *Deutsches Märchenbuch* (1845) was more popular at the time than the Grimm Brothers' collections.

(Robinson 47). In fact, Wilhelm and Jacob rarely travelled themselves, but worked from home, collecting their tales from “educated friends and colleagues, or from books” (*The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* xxi). The spurious belief that the Grimms amassed their tales directly from the German people contributed to their nationalistic reputation, even though their tales were in fact derived from an assorted national background.⁵⁹

Fairy tales that were considered direct descendants of folktales were treated like testimonies to the national character of the people to whom they belonged. For the Grimms, it was of crucial importance that their tales were specifically German, and, furthermore, belonged to the cultural heritage of the German people. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were highly invested in understanding the German culture through and beyond its folklore. They worked with German language, its customs, and its laws, gradually developing a substantial scholarly reputation.⁶⁰ This is how Jack Zipes describes the Brothers:

Jacob was the leader of the family. Now, Wilhelm was also rather brilliant, but it was Jacob who wrote Grimm’s Law, a law in linguistics named after him involving a consonant shift that is extremely important for understanding the evolution of language. He wrote thirty or forty books. Neither of them thought they would be famous today for their fairy tales (Merriam, “The Unvarnished Tales of the Brothers Grimm”).

In the 1840s, the Grimms became members of Berlin’s Academy of Science and even taught at the Humboldt University.

⁵⁹ See Rölleke, Heinz, *Grimms Märchen und ihre Quellen*, 2004.

⁶⁰ See Haase, Donald, and Mary Primeau, *The Reception of Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, 1993.

The Grimms believed the fairy tales they were collecting “were remnants of ancient German’s culture” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 263). Collecting German folklore was a way for the Brothers to preserve the cultural identity of their nation at a time when the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) was conquering major parts of Germany and other European countries. The desire to break free from the French’s territorial and cultural domination inspired the Grimm Brothers to use fairy tales to advocate for a unified national consciousness among German people. Over time Grimms’ tales became the foundation of the canon of German literature. Grimms’ tales came to represent the canon not least due to their extensive use of national dialects, aphorisms, and poetry. The Brothers developed a unique style that reminded of traditions, rituals, and the countryside.

Yet, Grimms’ fairy tales are not folktales. Although derived from an oral tradition, they were too strongly modified by its creators to be considered folktales in their authentic form. To quote Jack Zipes:

The Grimms’ tales are definitely not folktales [...] they must be studied individually with regard to the changes they underwent, and they must be considered as artistic products of a dialectic process shaped by both the oral and literary traditions in which peasants, middle-class informants, and the Grimms as artists/scholars played an immense role in defining a new genre of the literary fairy tales (*The Brothers Grimm* 114–5).

The Grimms, especially Wilhelm, kept heavily revising and altering the collected tales between 1812 and 1857; seven editions appeared overall. According to Zipes, one of the most notable stylistic changes was “adding and inventing proverbs to give the tales a *volkstümlich* tone”

(*The Brothers Grimm* 114). Grimms reinforced the idea that their collected tales arose directly from the people, and, therefore, were representative of German mentality. In the words of Heinz Rölleke: “für das Publikum sollte die Sammlung sozusagen den anonymen Volksgeist repräsentieren, hinter dem die Einzelbeiträge und die Umstände der Textgewinnung zurückzutreten hatten” (*Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm* 74). It is somewhat of an irony that the Grimms deliberately edited their tales to make them appear more authentic.

In addition to the national character of their collection, the Grimms insisted on the character-building qualities of their tales. The first *KHM* edition (first volume published in 1812 and second in 1815) was the only one not intended for children.⁶¹ Already when revising the second edition of their volume, the Grimm Brothers decided “to cater to young readers as well as a growing middle-class reading audience of adults” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 245). The Grimms believed that children should be familiarized with national lore from an early age, as a way of teaching younger generations appropriate middle-class values and beliefs.⁶²

The Brothers meant for their fairy tale collection to be seen as an *Erziehungsbuch* (i.e. educational manual) that would “address children with good bourgeois upbringing” (*The Brothers Grimm* 114). The reception of the Grimm Brothers’ work was heavily influenced by its suitability for children. Especially in the later volumes, the Grimms tried to strip their tales from any “sexual, vulgar, and offensive” (144) references that would be considered inappropriate by their middle-class readers. Heinz Rölleke remarks: “diese Tendenz wurde besonders seit der 1825 vornehmlich im Blick auf kindliches Publikum zusammengestellten Märchenauswahl durch Wilhelm Grimm

⁶¹ The three volumes of the second edition appeared in 1819 and 1822 respectively. The third edition appeared in 1837, the fourth in 1840, the fifth in 1843, and the sixth in 1850. There is a total of 211 tales in the seventh and final edition of *KHM* from 1857. Over the years, some tales were added and others were omitted.

⁶² This attitude reached its culmination in the 1930s, when Grimms’ fairy tales caught the attention of the National Socialist propaganda machine: the tales were utilized as ideological tools to “uphold the racist and nationalist supremacy of the German people” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 248).

[...] beherrschend und ist ein wesentlicher Faktor für den sich stetig steigenden Verkaufserfolg” (*Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm* 25). The Grimm Brothers contributed to the tendency to consider fairy tales as primarily children’s literature.

The Grimms also contributed to the worldwide popularity of fairy tales today. There exists plenty of scholarship on the Brothers themselves as well as on their oeuvre. Some of the influential scholars referenced throughout this dissertation are Heinz Rölleke (*Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, 1985; *Es war einmal*, 2011), Jack Zipes (*Happily Ever After*, 1997; *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 2006), and Maria Tatar (*The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 1987).

Ever since the fairy tale became predominantly children-oriented, its popularity only increased. In the course of the twentieth century, the fairy tale established its influence through newly developed media, such as television and video games. If one were to choose two figures that contributed the most to the popularization of tales and, specifically, Grimms’ fairy tales, in media and in scholarship, these leading figures would be the entrepreneur Walt Disney (1901–1966) and the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990).⁶³

Both men underlined how fairy tales have a specific didactic function. Walt Disney started an entertainment revolution by bringing fairy stories on screen and, subsequently, enchanting audiences of all ages. Since his first fairy-tale based film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), there does not seem to be one year that has elapsed without fairy tale adaptations. Zipes argues that “the Grimms’ tales, either in their translated literal editions or in multifarious adaptations, play a crucial role in the socialization of children over much of the modern world” (*The Brothers Grimm*

⁶³ Walt Disney and Bruno Bettelheim are both responsible for popularizing fairy tales and shaping our current perception of the genre; for this reason, they are included in the historical survey. Since neither Disney nor Bettelheim worked with literary fairytale fantasies directly, the account is kept brief.

110). After the launch of the films, the fairy tale became further entrenched with concern to its contemporary image as educational material for children.

Coming after Disney's efforts, Bruno Bettelheim describes the therapeutic value of fairy tales in the process of children's maturation. He points out that "fairy tales both delight and instruct; their special genius is that they do so in terms which speak directly to children" (Bettelheim 53). Bettelheim insists that "the greatest merit of fairy story is that it gives answers, fantastic though these may overtly be, even to questions to which we are unaware because they perturb us only in our unconscious" (218). There is little scientific explanation as to why we care about fairy tales so passionately. Jack Zipes comments on the controversial appeal of fairy tales:

What is interesting about [...] canonical fairy tales in the Western world is that we have no idea why we care about them, know them so well, are attracted to them, and are apt to pass them on to other people without a second thought. Certain fairy tales have become almost second nature to us and not simply because they have become part of an approved hegemonic canon that reinforces specific preferred values and comportment in a patriarchal culture—something that they indeed do—but rather because they reveal important factors about our mind, memes, and human behavior ("What Makes a Repulsive Frog so Appealing" 110).

The idea can be summarized in one short sentence: "we never abandon fantasy" (*Happily Ever After* 1). Fairy tales accompany us, entertain us, instruct us, and soothe us throughout our lives, and this gives them an invaluable quality.

Disney and Bettelheim both emphasize the value of fairy tales, but in distinct ways. Disney highlighted positive thinking, by encouraging his audience to believe in the possibility of a “happy ending,” which one might compare to the fulfillment of the American dream. Bruno Bettelheim, by way of contrast, concentrates on more problematic psychological concerns associated with fairy tales. In Bettelheim’s view, fairy tales transmit a certain philosophy, “which [...] any child can derive”: it implies that “life is not only a pleasure but a kind of eccentric privilege. It is a view of life very different from that which ‘true-to-reality’ stories convey, but one more apt to sustain one undaunted when meeting the hardships of life” (Bettelheim 64). Contrary to Disney, Bettelheim shows that the engagement with the supernatural not always leads to positive desired outcomes; instead, it can reveal a lot about our fears and anxieties.

In the most creative ways, fairy tales teach readers of all ages about the importance of self-development, the need to acknowledge one’s desires and resist destructive basic instincts. Tales in general and Grimms’ fairy tales in particular have been influencing readers for centuries, remaining inordinately significant in shaping our world perception from an early age. As formulated by Zipes:

Fairy tales [...] incorporate a moral code that reflects upon the basic instincts of the human being as a mortal animal and suggest ways to channel these instincts for personal and communal happiness. [...] What fairy tale does – and it does this perhaps more efficiently and effectively than any other genre – is represent basic human dilemmas in tangible metaphorical forms that reflect how difficult it is for us to curb basic instincts (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 130–131).

Contemporary works of fairytale fantasy build on this potential to “represent human dilemmas” inherent in fairy tales, and, arguably, go beyond it. Cornelia Funke’s *Reckless*, I argue, is a formidable example of this tendency. The novel problematizes issues that are only incidentally mentioned in Grimm’s tales by critically examining themes of self-identification and alterity perception, parental problems, representation of gender, and treatment of material objects.

It should be noted that Funke is not the only contemporary author to critically revise Grimms’ fairy tales. In fact, her work seems to follow a trend that has been gaining momentum in recent decades. Thus, the folklorist Claudia Schwabe notes that “although fairy tales are constantly migrating into new cultures and different media, reinventing themselves along the way, recent years in particular have seen a wave of [...] fairy-tale retellings in popular culture” (*Fairy Tale and its Uses in Contemporary New Media and Popular Culture* 1).

As examples might serve Terri Windling’s (*The Armless Maiden*, 1995) and Carmen Giménez Smith’s (*My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me*, 2010) edited collections of folklore-themed short-stories, many of which are thought-provoking reflections upon and revisions of the Grimm Brothers’ narratives. Contrary to the fairytale fantasy *Reckless*, Windling and Smith’s collections are comprised of stories that are predominantly twice-told tales, revisionist tales, or both. Although Windling, Smith, and Funke explore comparable topics, the structural distinctions between the works significantly influence their revisionist potential. I argue that by retaining the fairy-tale format retellings from *The Armless Maiden* and *My Mother She Killed Me* bypass the benefits granted to the fairytale fantasy by its generic hybridity.

2.2. Revising Fairy Tales: The Case-Study of *Reckless*

The first chapter discussed David Fishelov's analysis of literary genres as social institutions. By analogy to institutions that can be defined by "its goals, the means by which these goals are achieved, and the institutional roles that assign certain modes of behavior" (Fishelov 98), Fishelov applies the same categories to literary genres. Thus, Fishelov argues, each genre has its *goals*, the *means* to achieve these goals, and specific *generic roles* associated with it. I use this approach to examine the novel *Reckless* and its corresponding prior stories.

In order to discuss the goals, the means, and the generic roles of fairytale fantasy, I look at a variety of narrative structures that emerge throughout Funke's *Reckless*. Narrative structure is one of the primary aspects that allow readers to navigate between various kinds of fiction. Thus, Robert Chandler notes that the fairy tale "is remarkable both for its stability and for its fluidity. The central plots of most tales [...] vary little from country to country. What changes are the surface details, the ways in which the tales reflect different social, climatic and geographical realities" (xv). There are narrative patterns that are more typical for one tradition than for others, but, overall, most fairy tales share a set of basic structures.

What that means is that fairy tale narrative patterns are easily recognized by readers familiar with them. In other words, most readers know the goals, the means, and the roles associated with fairy tales. Funke makes use of this prior knowledge to establish a connection between her works and the fairy tale tradition. Which does not, however, mean that *Reckless* displays the same goals, means, and roles as traditional fairy tales. In fact, there is an additional level of generic expectations that arise from the fact that Funke's novel is considered fantasy. The discrepancy between readers' expectations and narrative reality, makes Funke's work a rewarding case study of generic fluidity.

The following sections examine the goals, the means, and the generic roles essential to the fairytale fantasy by means of a comparative close reading of *Reckless* and Grimms' fairy tales "Der Eisenhans," "Der Froschkönig oder der eiserne Heinrich," "Der goldene Vogel," "Dornröschen," "Hänsel und Gretel," and "Schneewittchen." The analysis focuses on the portrayal of characters and locations, the role of artifacts, and the use of figurative language.

This dissertation draws on a close reading analysis of the Grimm Brothers' last edition of the *KHM* collection. The 1857 volume encompasses, arguably, the most canonized and, consequently, influential versions of the tales. The majority of adaptations, including Walt Disney's, have been inspired by the final edition of the tales. Although I agree with Heinz Rölleke and Jack Zipes, that the last version is also the most altered from the original folktales, it is best suited for my purposes since this study is concerned with the influence of Grimms' fairy tales on contemporary works of fantasy. To keep the analysis firmly grounded, I shall provide original German quotes from the tales.⁶⁴

The scope of this study does not allow for a comprehensive reading of all 211 tales, included in the last edition. The analysis is, therefore, limited to the fairy tales with the most traces in Cornelia Funke's *Reckless*. To contextualize individual tales within the Grimms' oeuvre, each work is given a brief history of publication.⁶⁵

2.2.1. *Reckless* as a "Portal-Quest" Narrative

Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch (*Reckless: The Petrified Flesh*, 2010) is the first book in Cornelia Funke's ongoing *Reckless Series* that is occasionally also referred to as the *MirrorWorld*

⁶⁴ This chapter uses the citations of Grimms' fairy tales from the first and second volumes of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Nach der grossen Ausgabe von 1857* edited by Hans-Jorg Uther (1996).

⁶⁵ It must be noted that tales selected for this analysis display structural patterns widely shared by numerous fairy tales, including but not limited to other narratives from the *KHM* collection. I decided to focus on the Grimm Brothers' work because it is representative of the structures and themes that constitute the fairy tale genre but also because it is widely recognized on an international scale.

Series. As of today, the series includes two sequels: *Reckless: Lebendige Schatten* (*Fearless*, 2012) and *Reckless: Das goldene Garn* (*The Golden Yarn*, 2015); and two accompanying collections: *Mein Reckless Märchenbuch* (*My Reckless Fairy Tale Collection*, 2012) and *Spiegelwelt* (*The Reckless Anthology*, 2015).⁶⁶

The British producer of *Harry Potter*, Lionel Wigram is typically credited as a co-author of *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh*. He inspired Funke in the process of imagining the secondary world, but did not participate in the sequels. Below is Cornelia Funke's account of Wigram's role in the project:

Die ursprüngliche Idee einer Märchenwelt, die erwachsen werden will, ist in einem Filmprojekt aufgetaucht, an dem ich mit Lionel gearbeitet habe. Dabei haben wir festgestellt, dass wir zusammen Geschichtenfäden spinnen können. Und als ich mich dann entschied, einen Roman aus dem Stoff zu machen, wollte ich Lionel nicht ausschließen. [...] Wir haben uns monatelang jeden Tag sechs bis sieben Stunden lang zusammengesetzt und die Charaktere, die Handlung und einzelne Szenen diskutiert. Danach habe ich mich hingesetzt und geschrieben, und mein Cousin hat, was ich geschrieben hatte, ins Englische übersetzt, damit Lionel es überhaupt lesen konnte (Freund, "Cornelia Funke knöpft sich reaktionäre Märchen vor").

⁶⁶ This study is limited to the first volume of *Reckless Series*; but it is worth mentioning that *Reckless: Lebendige Schatten* and *Reckless: Das goldene Garn* are remarkable fairytale fantasy narratives as well. It is my intention to extend the scope of my research to these works in a future book project.

As pointed out by Funke, Lionel Wigram contributed to the world-building process of the MirrorWorld universe, but not to the act of writing *Reckless*. For the purpose of convenience, I shall predominantly reference Cornelia Funke as the first author of the novel.

In addition to *Reckless Series*, Funke's best-known works include *Drachenreiter* (1997) *Herr der Diebe* (2000), and *Tintenwelt-Trilogie* (2003–2007). There has been only limited scholarly inquiries into Funke's oeuvre. An exception is Daniela Pfennig's *Parallelwelten: Raumkonzepte in der fantastischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Gegenwart* (2012), where she investigates Funke's works in the context of postmodern fiction: exploring migration, identity loss, and social integration (cf. 11). Building on and expanding the existing scholarship, I suggest that the *Reckless* novels deserve critical attention, inter alia, for their complex notions of identity formation built on individual emancipation and resistance to authority.

Jacob Reckless, the protagonist of *Reckless Series*, is raised, along with his younger brother Will, by a depressed single mother in present-day New York City.⁶⁷ The story begins with a glance to the past, where twelve-year-old Jacob suffers from the absence of his father. John Reckless disappeared from the family, and left behind his study (i.e. *Arbeitszimmer*), a deserted room full of abandoned things. Against his mother's orders, Jacob enters this room to look for answers that otherwise no one is willing to give. The protagonist begins his adventure by transgressing against a figure of authority. Commonly for a work of fantasy, the magic begins with an ancient-looking artifact, a mirror: "an abyss of glass which distorted everything in reflection that John Reckless has left behind" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 9). The Mirror comes with a riddle, it "will open

⁶⁷ By naming the characters after the Grimm Brothers, Cornelia Funke further embeds her characters in the Germanic fairy tale tradition.

only for he who cannot see himself” (9). Jacob discovers that he has to cover up the reflection of his face for the Mirror to turn into a portal.⁶⁸

The action suggests an act of sacrifice: the protagonist’s former identity has to vanish in order for new possibilities to open up. Cornelia Funke describes Jacob in the following words: “Jakob hat für mich etwas Befreiendes: Er entdeckt eine neue Welt, ohne zurückzuschauen. Über nichts nachdenken, keine Verantwortung mitschleppen [...] Jakob ist mein verantwortungsloses Alter Ego” (Conrad, “Durch Schmerz lernen”). Funke emphasizes the protagonist’s free spirit that allows him to transcend seemingly insurmountable boundaries: a character feature that has a significant role throughout the series.

The Mirror-Portal leads Jacob into a strange shadowy world that he names the “World behind the Mirror,” or “MirrorWorld.” From there, the narrative jumps twelve years ahead. It shows a grown-up Jacob, who is forced to face the consequences of his brother Will finally following him into the MirrorWorld. Immediately after crossing over into the secondary world, Will is attacked and infected with a rapidly spreading curse cast by the Dark Fairy (*Dunkle Fee*), the main antagonist of the first volume of *Reckless Series*. Unless Jacob finds a cure, his brother will turn to stone, or, more precisely, transform into what is called a “Menschengoyl.”⁶⁹ The plot revolves around Jacob and his vixen companion Fox (aka *Fuchs* aka Celeste Auger) trying to lift the curse.

Jacob’s situation in the MirrorWorld is not simple. He arrives uninvited: he is an immigrant with nothing to offer except his wits and a desire to survive. Despite the hazards, he returns to the parallel realms over and over again. Jacob lacks idealism and high ethical standards; his personality

⁶⁸ To avoid confusion with other magical artifacts, the mirror that allows interdimensional travel in the *Reckless* universe is hereafter referred to as the “Mirror-Portal.”

⁶⁹ “Menschengoyls” are hybrids between humans and Goyls, one of the original anthropomorphic species of the MirrorWorld—a topic on which more shortly.

corresponds to the title of the novel, Jacob is self-centered, courageous, and often impatient. His bravery borders on folly, prompted by narcissism and over-confidence.

In contrast to Jacob, Will does not look for an adventure when entering the Mirror-Portal. He merely repeats the gesture after his older brother. Will is a conformist (i.e. happy to accept his quiet life in the modern world), and yet he attempts to restore the lost connection to his brother (cf. Spisak 75). There is an opposition in the ways Will and Jacob participate in the communities around them. Will uses the Mirror-Portal in hope to reconnect with his brother, while Jacob employs it to escape responsibility. It is worth noting that Will only follows Jacob after the death of their mother; her health has been increasingly failing triggered by Jacob's withdrawal and John Reckless' disappearance.

Funke's *Reckless Series* utilizes the rhetorical strategies of "portal-quest fantasy." According to Farah Mendlesohn, portal-quest is the mode most commonly associated with the genre of fantasy fiction:

Characteristically the quest fantasy protagonist goes from a mundane life, in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist) to direct contact with the fantastic through which she transitions, exploring the world until she or those around her are knowledgeable enough to negotiate with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 2).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ It should be mentioned that Farah Mendlesohn uses a broad definition of the term "fantastic": it corresponds with the definition of the term "supernatural" in this dissertation.

Put differently, the protagonist finds him- or herself in an unknown world, where their first goal is to adapt and resolve a number of quests on the way to accomplishing an even bigger goal. The reward is moral growth, redemption, or admission into the unfamiliar world.

Mendlesohn argues that there is a sharp distinction between the factual, non-magical world and the supernatural world of fantasy, which is why in the portal-quest mode we are invited into the fantastic, rather than the fantastic entering the real world. The portal opening serves as an invitation into the unfamiliar world where both reader and characters gain new experiences. Portal and quest fantasy resembles the journey of self-development from the Bildungsroman. This type of fantasy is a closed narrative, since “it demands that we accept the interpretation of the narrator and interpretive position of the hero” (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 5). The reader is taken away from their familiar context and placed in a new reality where all natural and social laws have to be rediscovered. Moreover, there is no evidence against whichever claims the characters may make; this allows the author, what the scholar W. R. Irwin calls “a direct and simple control of the reader’s intellectual response” (184).

Traditionally, in portal-quest fantasy “the fantastic is *on the other side* and does not leak” (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 1). Although the fantastic mostly stays “behind the mirror” in the first part of *Reckless Series*, it inevitably begins “to leak” in the sequels. In addition, I like to point out that when comparing fairytale fantasy to other subgenres of fantasy, it is ultimately unique in its portrayal of the supernatural: in some ways, it is never entirely “out of the picture.” After all, the essence of a fairytale fantasy is in its references to fairy tales that are predominantly associated with imaginary realms and supernatural elements.

Classic fairy tales do not go as far as to question the validity of the characters’ quests. In fairy tale universes, there is usually a problem at the beginning of the narrative that only the

protagonist can solve; and the problem can be solved only after the hero/ine sets out on a journey and fulfills the quest. The tale does not see the journey as an escape, but as a way to solve the problem; in the aftermath, the protagonist returns home to live a better life. Classic fantasy portal-quests, by way of contrast, depict the protagonist as unhappy with consensus reality, providing him or her with an escape into a different realm in form of a portal; the resolution is usually leaving the problem behind, as opposed to solving it and returning.

For that reason, portal-quests are often linked to escapism. Portals are created for characters to transcend between familiar reality and new wondrous worlds. Most of the time the characters have something to run from, be it boredom, sadness, trouble, etc. In other forms of fantasy fiction, the secondary world is typically a newly-invented realm that is a product of the author's imagination. In a fairytale fantasy, by way of contrast, the secondary world is likely to carry traits that are familiar to the reader from his earliest reading experiences with fairy tales. The escape is thus less abstract; the characters escape from a mundane reality into the fairy tale realm of their childhood. The following sections shall demonstrate that its generic flexibility allows the fairytale fantasy to challenge escapist tendencies promoted by many portal-quest narratives.

2.2.2. The Atmosphere of "Once Upon a Time"

Fairy tales typically begin with a "Once upon a time..." With slight variations (e.g. "In old times when wishing still helped" or "There was once"), this opening indicates that the reader is about to enter an imaginary realm. Many of the Grimm Brothers' tales begin in this way, including "The Frog King, or Iron Henry," "Iron Hans," "Little Briar-Rose" and "Little Snow-White." As pointed out by the German literature and language scholar Heinz Rölleke, "man ist diese Art des Märchens, bruchlos in die Welt des Wunders überzugehen, in der Regel [...] von Kindheit an gewohnt" (*Es war einmal* 39). "Once upon a time" designates a space and a time that, if at all,

existed long ago, and bears only superficial relation to the actual world: it “bedeutet [...] nicht nur ein Vergangenes, sondern ein buntes oder leichteres Anderswo” (Schödel 33).

By suggesting that the story took place “once upon a time,” authors encourage readers to distant themselves from the narrative, and, consequently, become more receptive to the supernatural that is about to follow. Everything that will come after the “once upon a time,” including the princes and princesses, magical animal helpers, material objects with supernatural powers, is likely to be taken with less skepticism from the reader because it does not claim to be plausible. “Once upon a time” is one of the most effective narrative techniques used to highlight the border between the primary and the secondary worlds. Although fairy-tale secondary worlds are rarely as detailed as those in fantasy fiction, they come from a similar category of imaginary spaces.

“Once upon a time” has a unique subjunctive purpose and style. Subjunctive language has the power to create a unique perception of an estranged space for the readers. An imaginary space where anything is possible is a key element of a supernatural narrative. Subjunctive mood allows readers to engage with the “might be, could have been, perhaps will be” (“Why Fairy Tales Matter” 56). In the words of Maria Tatar, fairy tales “open up a theater of possibilities and create an unparalleled sense of immediacy, at times producing somatic responses with nothing but words” (“Why Fairy Tales Matter” 56). In addition, by using “once upon a time,” or “when wishing still helped” or any other similar idiomatic expressions, fairy tales provoke feelings of nostalgia.

Compared to works of fantasy fiction, fairy tales are less explicit when it comes to “setting the stage” for the events of the narrative, be it the very first scene or the end of the story. Instead, tales tend to use key words to suggest relatively vague images to the readers. To illustrate: “Hansel and Gretel,” begins with “a poor woodcutter who lived with his wife and his two children on the

edge of a large forest” (*The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* 53). “Iron Hans” has a similar opening: “Once upon a time there was a king who had a large forest near his castle, and in the forest, all sorts of game could be found” (*The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* 443).⁷¹ This is as much as the reader learns about the “where and how” of the story. Following such remarkably brief introductions, the narratives move on to the events. In tales such as “Little Snow-White” and “The Frog King or Iron Heinrich,” slightly more time is spent on conveying a particular atmosphere. Thus, in “Little Snow-White” the text focuses on the contrast between pure white snowflakes and vividly red blood. “The Frog King,” by way of contrast, suggest a grounding atmosphere that is composed of the “large, dark forest,” the “old linden tree,” and the “cool well.” The reader can easily visualize such vibrant imageries. This is to say, even the fairy tales that provide more details regarding the setting still avoid any distinctive temporal or spatial indicators.

As for locations, fairy tales are prone to being set in or near a forest, in a poor village, or at the royal court. Tales rarely take places in cities, favoring rural landscapes. It is safe to assume that most Grimms’ fairy tales are set in the proximity of a forest. Occasionally, the forest is replaced by or complimented by a garden as in “The Golden Bird”: “Es war vor Zeiten ein König, der hatte einen schönen Lustgarten hinter seinem Schloß, darin stand ein Baum, der goldene Äpfel trug” (“Der goldene Vogel” 287). Other tales such as “The Magic Table, the Golden Donkey, and the Club in the Sack,” “Fitcher’s Bird,” and “Little Briar-Rose” avoid opening with environmental details altogether.

In fairy tales, “Once upon a time” functions to estrange readers from everyday reality and transport them to a distinct unfamiliar space. In David Fishelov’s terms, the traditional opening is the *means* by which fairy tales achieve the defamiliarizing effect, which, in tis turn, is the *goal*.

⁷¹ I provide a separate discussion of the “Once upon a time” phenomenon later in this chapter.

Most subgenres of fantasy fiction rarely feature this or similar fairy tale-sounding openings, unless there is a clear desire to create a fairy tale atmosphere; fairytale fantasies, by way of contrast, frequently feature them in a variety of configurations.

Reckless' first chapter is entitled "Es war einmal," the German analogy of "Once upon a time." Funke plays on the contrast: although the phrase reminds of fairy tales, the story begins in present-day New York, a space generally not associated with fairies and magic. As a result, readers are torn between their expectations associated with the opening and its implication in Funke's novel.

"Once upon a time" in fairy tales refers to an unknown imaginary place; the "Once upon a time" in *Reckless*, on the other hand, is a reference to a specific location, namely Jacob's apartment in the modern world. Furthermore, "Once upon a time" in fairy tales is timeless: it might refer to hundred or thousand years ago—all the same, as long as it implies the past. Funke's "Once upon a time," by way of contrast, has a concrete timeline: it dates back twelve years before to the events of the main storyline. This is one of many instances where Funke uses conventional fairy tale narrative devices (i.e. *means* in Fishelov's definition) in order to achieve *goals* different from those in Grimms' tales. *Reckless* offers an assortment of such and similar transgressions of generic structures emblematic for the genre of fairytale fantasy.

Funke pays close attention to conveying a particular atmosphere to her readers. The scene where Jacob invades his father's study is written in a manner that suggests that something supernatural is about to happen. Seemingly regular objects, among them a mirror, a door, and a book appear wondrous due to Funke's narrative style and choice of vocabulary. The author

estranges her readers from familiar objects, in accordance with Viktor Shklovsky's concept of "ostranenie," in order to maintain a wondrous atmosphere in her narrative.⁷²

According to Shklovsky, when immersed in artistic texts, readers stop seeing "objects only as shapes with imprecise extensions," but recognize their essential characteristics instead (Shklovsky 3). Defamiliarization allows to examine the familiar more deeply, appreciating it as if seeing for the first time. In the context of fantasy studies, the use of supernatural elements has been noted as an effective method to induce estrangement.

As another way of maintaining the wondrous atmosphere, Funke draws on symbolism when describing her characters. Jacob is brave and rebellious; he is determined to get caught up in an adventure. His brother Will, by contrast, appears reserved and timid. Symbolically speaking, Jacob's element is the darkness (e.g. he is described as a night owl, feeling most comfortable surrounded by shadows); Will, on the other hand, depends on the light: "Im Zimmer seines Bruders brannte immer noch Licht – Will hatte Angst im Dunkel" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 8). Here Funke uses "pictorial language" as defined by Siegfried Schödel, a technique that has been described in Chapter 1. Through carefully chosen wording, Funke helps readers to visualize an oppressive, colorless, and silent space; the image serves to illuminate the protagonist's desire to escape.

Funke utilizes the fairytale fantasy framework to juxtapose the generic characteristics of portal-quest fantasy with those of the fairy tale. The reference to "once upon a time" frames the events of *Reckless*: as with many traditional fairy tales, the story begins with a situation of distress.

⁷² The Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky (1893–1984) is known for describing the concept of "ostranenie" also referred to as "estrangement" or "defamiliarization." Shklovsky does not speak of supernatural narratives per se; instead, he claims that it is every art's fundamental principle to destabilize "automatic" perception of everyday phenomena with the aim to prompt creative ways of comprehending reality (cf. Shklovsky 3–10). An important aspect of defamiliarization is to reinforce an epistemic break from preconceptions.

At the same time as the narrative progresses, we learn that Jacob does not use the Mirror-Portal to find a solution and repair his home. Instead, he uses MirrorWorld to distance himself from his family members and, consequently, from the problems.

The combination of fairy tale and fantasy features allows Funke to stress the escapist element of the portal-quest narrative. An example would be Clara (i.e. Will's girlfriend, who followed him into MirrorWorld) confronting Jacob about his escape from the modern world:

Ich weiß warum du hier bist [...] Diese Welt macht dir nicht halb so viel Angst wie die andere. Du hast hier nichts und niemanden zu verlieren, außer Fuchs, und die macht sich mehr Sorgen um dich als du um sie. Alles, was wirklich Angst macht, hast du hinter dem Spiegel gelassen. Aber dann ist Will hergekommen und hat alles mitgebracht (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 185).

Clara observes that Will's appearance in the MirrorWorld forces Jacob to face issues that he was hoping to forget. In response, the protagonist begins to question his actions: "Clara ließ ihn allein, bevor er ihr antworten konnte. Und Jacob wünschte sie weit fort. Und war froh, dass sie da war. Und sah sein Gesicht in dem dunklen Glas der Nacht. Unverzerrt. Wie sie es gemalt hatte" (186).⁷³ Jacob realizes that while the Mirror-Portal gave him and his father the chance to seek better lives for themselves, his mother and brother did not have the same opportunity. Funke uses the interaction between Clara and Jacob to challenge the protagonist's decisions, exposing him as vulnerable, insecure, and even cowardly.⁷⁴ This type of dialog prompted by extensive self-reflection is hard to find in Grimms' fairy tales, making Funke's interpretation fresh and appealing.

⁷³ This is a reference to the first chapter of *Reckless* where Jacob looks into the Mirror-Portal and sees his "distorted image" (*verzerrtes Gesicht*).

⁷⁴ This is one of many instances where Cornelia Funke takes advantage of the allegorical qualities of the Mirror-Portal itself and the MirrorWorld in general. In addition to the Mirror-Portal within the narrative reality of *Reckless*,

2.2.3. Differentiating between Character Portrayal in Fairy Tales and Fairytale Fantasies

As with the ambiguous setting, a typical fairy tale protagonist is anything but specific. Fairy tale hero/ines rarely have distinctive given names (unless it is something very typical); their physical appearance and age are uncertain. Fairy tale narratives are likely to start with an introduction similar to “[t]here was once a miller, a soldier, a farmer, a king” (“Tale Spinners” 142). Instead of names, characters have titles that correlate with their social rank or role in the household (e.g. prince, Cinderella, fisherman, wife, sister, or stepmother). It is worth pointing out that these ranks are “only story initiators, [...] for the miller does not grind, nor does the soldier bear arms, nor the farmer plough, nor the king rule” (142). In other words, millers, soldiers, and farmers are just as interchangeable, as kings, counts, and princes. It is not the title that matters but the implied level of responsibility or particular associated skills. For this reason, fairy tales are often associated with archetypes. Instead of hero/ines with individual features, different fairy tales feature corresponding character archetypes that readers can easily recognize.⁷⁵

To a certain degree, the absence of information compels readers to actively use their imaginations: fairy tales become personal through identification and lead to a deeper emotional involvement. This phenomenon, as noted by Bruno Bettelheim, extends even to gender. The gender of fairy tale protagonists does not prevent the child reader from associating with them. In Bettelheim’s view, this is the reason why many fairy-tale characters have gender-neutral names.

the story itself becomes a mirror: the protagonist’s adventures in the World behind the Mirror not only bring the plot forward but reflect Jacob’s increasing capacity for self-awareness (i.e. self-recognition).

⁷⁵ For an exploration of traditional literary archetypes in myths and fairy tales see Meletinsky, Eleazar M., *O literaturnykh arkhetypakh (On Literary Archetypes)*, 1994.

By leaving character identities open, flexible, and fluid, the fairy tale allows reader to identify and follow the protagonist as though readers themselves participate in the story.

This points toward a major contrast between mythical and fairy tale protagonists. The mythical hero/ines are unique, their stories “could not have happened to any other person, or in any other setting” (Bettelheim 37). Their circumstances and abilities are exceptional enough that readers have difficulty to identify with such hero/ines. In fairy tales, by way of contrast, “although the events which occur [...] are often unusual and most improbable, they are always presented as ordinary” (37). The fairy tale hero/ine is a person like everyone else whom readers can understand and, thus, to whom they can relate. Similar to fairy tales, fantasy narratives often have ordinary protagonists with whom readers can identify. Such protagonists are “everyday hero/ines,” they remind readers of themselves and inspire compassion.⁷⁶

Fairy tales are known to be extremely vague in regard to the feelings and thoughts of their protagonists; such narratives are action-oriented as opposed to character-oriented. As a result, readers do not get to know the characters very closely. In the words of Schödel: “das europäische Märchen ist handlungsfreudig. Es neigt zu raschem Fortschreiten und zu knapper Benennung der Figuren und Requisiten; Beschreibungen und Schilderungen der Umwelt oder Innenwelt seiner Gestalten sind selten” (51). Generally speaking, fairy tales are stories about adventures where the plot matters more than the features and reflections of the protagonists:

Aufgaben, Verbote, Bedingungen [...], Gaben, Ratschläge und
Hilfen aller Art bezeugen, daß die Handlung der Märchens nicht von
innen gelenkt wird, sondern von außen. Eigenschaften werden mit

⁷⁶ By “everyday hero/ines” I mean fictional characters that come from an average background and do not have superior (e.g. heroic) abilities or personality traits. It is crucial that despite their lack of outstanding traits and circumstances, everyday hero/ines still accomplish heroic deeds.

Vorliebe in Form von Handlungen ausgedrückt [...], Beziehungen in Form von Gaben [...]. Das heißt, es wird alles möglichst auf die gleiche Fläche projiziert, auf die der Handlung; alles dahinter Stehende bleibt so gut wie unbeleuchtet (Schödel 53).

Fairy tales hardly ever include inner monologues of the hero/ines, observing actions and responses instead of thoughts and desires. Fantasy fiction, on the contrary, is remarkably thorough with its portrayal of hero/ines and their intrinsic worlds. Although a captivating plot is central, fantasy also offers an exploration of the hero/ines' internal experiences, which can range from personal growth to emotional abuse.

As a fairytale fantasy, *Reckless* fuses fairy tale scenarios with the narrative structures of a fantasy novel. On the one hand, Jacob resembles a fairy tale protagonist: he encounters a problem that prompts him to leave home. Nevertheless, the simplicity of the setting is quickly overridden. Readers turn the page to learn that the protagonist has spent twelve years bouncing between MirrorWorld and New York. By the time Jacob finally gains a sufficient level of self-awareness to question his actions (i.e. once he is transformed by the journey), the status quo has already changed too much: Jacob's mother had died and Will had left to live his own life. Funke thereby revises conventional fairy tale dynamics. Instead of coming home after his adventures, Jacob is trapped in-between realms: he has nothing left to which to return.

2.2.4. Problematizing Authority through Fairytale Fantasy

Cornelia Funke combines fairy tale and fantasy features to explore a fundamental theme in classic fairy tales: the relationship between parents/guardians and their children. Many fairy tales begin with a parental figure posing a problem of some sort for the protagonist to solve. In "The Golden Bird," for example, the father wants his sons to find out who steals golden apples from his

garden⁷⁷; in “Hansel and Gretel” the parents abandon their children in the forest forcing them to develop survival skills⁷⁸; in “Little Snow-White,” the stepmother puts the protagonist of the tale in a similar position. As a fairytale fantasy, *Reckless* does not only examine the everlasting conflict between generations, but does so from a unique perspective: by reimagining and reevaluating relationships between familiar fairy tale characters. While Grimms’ tales tell stories about problems and their resolutions, *Reckless* goes further by reflecting upon the individual experience of all the partakers. To illustrate, below is an analysis of the relationships between Jacob and his guardians contrasted with examples of parental relations in selected Grimms’ fairy tales.

Funke puts a new spin on an old concept: Jacob has multiple parental figures to deal with in the course of his journey. First and foremost, his missing father. Like a ghost, John Reckless haunts Jacob and impacts every decision he makes. Although, John does not physically enter the narrative until the second volume of the series, he is, nevertheless, the driving force behind many of Jacob’s actions. After all, it was his absence that brought the protagonist to MirrorWorld in the first place.

To a certain extent, although less than by John, Jacob is impacted by his mother. He is mostly overwhelmed by guilt when reminded of her. Finally, the most important parental figure in Jacob’s life is his MirrorWorld mentor Albert Chanute, with whom he shares a complicated relationship. The following section intends to demonstrate that a character like Chanute is Funke’s revisioning of the “wicked parent” archetype associated with classic fairy tales.

⁷⁷ “The Golden Bird” or “Der goldene Vogel” is tale number 57 in Grimms’ collection. It begins with the mysterious disappearance of magic fruits from the royal garden, an event that becomes the first of several challenges for the protagonist to overcome in the course of the story.

⁷⁸ “Hänsel und Gretel” is tale number 15 in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. It was first narrated to the Grimms by Henriette Dorothea Wild, who later became Wilhelm’s wife. While in the first edition of the collection from 1812 both birth-parents agree to abandon the children, in the 1857 version the decision is inflicted by the “wicked” stepmother. An analysis of parental relations in classic European fairy tales, including “Hansel and Gretel” can be found in, for example, Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 1976.

From the age of twelve, after he steps through the Mirror-Portal, Jacob hunts for magical treasures and experiences adventures with his short-tempered mentor. Chanute is known throughout MirrorWorld as a famous treasure hunter. He becomes Jacob's teacher and guardian for many years to come. At first, Chanute seems to be a typical "mentor to the hero" figure readers often encounter in fantasy fiction. A closer look, however, reveals that the treasure hunter is nothing like the supportive mentors from young adult novels.

Jacob does not experience the luxury of kind parental-like supervision. Instead, the treasure hunter is an egocentric alcoholic, who does not shy away from physically abusing his pupil. In traditional fantasy, a character like Chanute's usually performs the *role* of the protagonist's sympathetic caretaker. Chanute, by way of contrast, often uses the boy as a bait for witches and monsters. Jacob quickly learns to keep his guard up around his mentor, until he is old enough to fight him off. After years of rough training, Jacob overcomes his teacher and continues to hunt treasures by himself. Chanute's character disrupts reader's generic expectations of what a fantasy mentor figure should be like (e.g. wise and kind), ultimately encouraging critical reflection upon the nature of authority in heroic narratives. Funke uses fairytale fantasy's generic hybridity to problematize the idealistic depiction of mentorship in traditional fantasy narratives.

In addition, I argue that Chanute represents Funke's attempt to revise parent-child relationships as depicted by the Grimm Brothers. For once, the treasure hunter reminds of Hansel and Gretel's "wicked" stepmother who abandons her children in the forest. Chanute's circumstances might be different, but he certainly does not hesitate to sacrifice Jacob for his personal benefit.

In "Hansel and Gretel," the children return home after their terrifying encounter with the witch to find out their stepmother has died and their father deeply regrets abandoning them: er

“hatte keine frohe Stunde gehabt, seitdem er die Kinder im Walde gelassen hatte” (“Hänsel und Gretel” 90). There is no mentioning of the children struggling with their emotions, which indirectly reinforces the idea that one can move on unharmed after a traumatic event such as parental betrayal.

Funke picks up where the Grimm Brothers finished, and depicts Jacob’s frustration in response to Chanute’s cruelty. In the following quote, the protagonist recalls the day when Chanute forced him to enter the child-eating witch’s house, thus illuminating central aspects of their relationship:

(Jacob) — Die Hexe im Schwarzen Wald war eine Kinderfresserin, oder?

(Chanute) — Sie war eine der schlimmsten. Ich hab in ihrem Haus mal nach einem dieser Kämmen gesucht, die dich in eine Krähe verwandeln, wenn du sie ins Haar steckst.

— Ich weiß. Du hast mich vorgeschickt.

— Tatsächlich? — Chanute rieb sich verlegen die fleischige Nase. Er hatte Jacob weisgemacht, dass die Hexe ausgeflogen war.

— Du hast mir Schnaps auf die Wunden gegossen. — Man sah die Abdrücke ihrer Finger immer noch an seinem Hals. Es hatte Wochen gedauert, bis die Brandwunden geheilt waren (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 38).

The generic flexibility of the fairytale fantasy genre allows Funke to revise the scenario from “Hänsel und Gretel,” uncovering its, arguably, unrealistic portrayal of trauma management.

Aside from the characters in “Hansel and Gretel,” Chanute and Jacob’s bond resembles that of the Queen and Snow White in “Schneewittchen.”⁷⁹ Both the Queen and Chanute are guardians and not biological parents to the children. Both characters develop a jealous attitude toward their wards with respect to a feature or skill that is most precious to them: the Queen loathes that Snow White outmatches her beauty and Chanute resents the fact that Jacob becomes a better treasure hunter than himself.

“Little Snow-White” was heavily revised by the Grimms during the 40-plus years of editing. Among other things, the tale is notorious for setting the precedent for transforming cruel birth-mothers into “evil” stepmothers. Thus, only in the 1812 version is the “evil” Queen the biological mother of Snow White; in subsequent volumes, the birth-mother dies and is replaced by the king’s new wife, who then becomes the instigator of the conflict. In *Folktales of Germany* (1966), Kurt Ranke claims that this change reflected the desire to banish corruption from the “family circle” (cf. xviii).⁸⁰

Reading and rereading “Little Snow-White,” one cannot help but wonder why the girl chooses to interact with her evil stepmother every time she appears at her door. Is it that Snow White was stupid and did not recognize her mother over and over again? Or was the Queen’s masquerade convincing enough for the girl to not be able to see past it? From a psychological perspective, the scenario where Snow White recognizes her stepmother but, nonetheless, repeatedly allows the

⁷⁹ “Schneewittchen” or “Little Snow-White” is tale number 53 in *KHM* and indubitably one of the most famous fairy tales of all time. Its narrative is ubiquitous and has connections to fairy tales and folktales from around the globe. Similar tales can be found in traditions as widespread as Africa, Russia, and the Caribbean. An extensive historic-geographic, structural, and psychoanalytical examination of Snow White’s tale can be found in Jones, Steven S., *The New Comparative Method*, 1990.

⁸⁰ The portrayal of female characters in fairy tales has been extensively explored and problematized by feminist scholarship, most prominently by Andrea Dworkin (1946–2005) in the pioneering work *Woman Hating* from 1974. In response to the rising popularity of feminist fairy tale criticism, scholars put together collections of tales and critical with empowering feminist messages, such as, for instance, Jack Zipes’ *Don’t Bet on the Prince* (1986) and Marina Warner’s *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1999).

exchange is surprisingly plausible. In this context, Shuli Barzilai (1990) observes that, given the situation, Snow White is likely to be suffering from “separation anxiety”: the heroine’s perception is clouded by “the fear of being cut off from parental love and protection” (527).

The Queen visits Snow White while she is alone; she brings along magical objects that are meant to assassinate her stepdaughter. First, the Queen uses strings from a silken corset to strangle Snow White. When the corset fails, she comes back with a poisonous brush. Lastly, the Queen offers her daughter a poisonous apple; she even eats a bit of it herself to win the girl’s trust. This last of the Queen’s attacks proves successful: Snow White appears to have died.

So why does Snow White, assuming she recognizes her stepmother, continue to open the door? It strikes me that the interactions offered by the Queen symbolize parental care: a mother tightens her daughter’s corset, she lovingly brushes her hair, and nourishes her with sweet food. Each of these actions represents a positive exchange between mother and daughter. Naturally, Snow White fails to ignore her stepmother’s visits: as any child, the princess is tempted by expression of parental care even though she knows from experience that it is better not to trust.

The Grimms do not give an account of Snow White’s reflections; the tale does not explore the heroine’s thoughts in response to having her trust broken time after time. After giving in to jealousy and spite, the Queen transforms basic expressions of parental care into acts of punishment. To rephrase from Shuli Barzilai, for the daughter the “old nurturing gestures” become imminent threats (cf. 534). In other words, the social interactions between Snow White and the Queen are distorted replications of mother-daughterly exchanges in a healthy relationship. The heroine’s separation anxiety is a possible explanation as to why she chooses to interact with her mother despite the likelihood of harm. Snow White is unable to process the trauma of parental betrayal: she refuses to acknowledge the abusive nature of her guardian’s actions, instead opting for denial.

Jacob Reckless is another example of a distressed child repeatedly returning to an abusive parental figure. Although he admits that Chanute has been “a miserable substitute for a father figure” (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 36), the protagonist continues to seek his advice and even store his personal belongings at his tavern. Upon his arrival in MirrorWorld as a foreigner and a minor, Jacob did not have many other options than to tolerate Chanute’s abusive behavior. For several years the protagonist learns the art of treasure hunting from his mentor, collecting beatings in the process. Jacob recalls:

Früher war er so oft betrunken gewesen, dass Jacob die Flaschen vor ihm versteckt hatte, obwohl Chanute ihn dafür jedes Mal verprügelt hatte. Der alte Schatzjäger hatte ihn oft geschlagen – auch wenn er nüchtern gewesen war –, bis Jacob eines Tages seine eigene Pistole auf ihn gerichtet hatte (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 35).

In the Grimms’ tale, Snow White’s reflections remain concealed and her final confrontation with the Queen is limited to watching the letter be tortured: “eiserne Pantoffeln [...] wurden [...] vor sie hingestellt. Da musste sie in die rotglühenden Schuhe treten und so lange tanzen, bis sie tot zur Erde fiel” (“Schneewittchen” 271–72). Funke, by contrast, describes how Jacob’s traumatic childhood experiences impacted him and continues to influence his present interactions with Chanute.

Jacob’s relationship with his mentor is not the only instance where Funke uses fairy tale tropes to explore her characters’ emotions. She also examines Jacob’s grief over his missing father. Midway through the first book, Jacob discovers that John Reckless has indeed traveled to MirrorWorld and eventually become one of its chief industrialists. After abandoning his family, John quickly came to fame while introducing modern-day technologies to the locals and pretending

they were his own inventions. Jacob accidentally runs into one of his father's most striking creations when searching for Will.

Jacob discovers that John Reckless has built MirrorWorld's first airplane. Locals who never saw to such progressive industrial machines compare the plane to a dragon:

Es waren Doppeldecker, wie man sie im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert in Europa gebaut hatte. Ein gewaltiger Sprung in die Zukunft für die Spiegelwelt – weiter als alles, was in den Fabriken von Schwanstein oder von den Ingenieuren der Kaiserin entwickelt wurde. Zwei der Maschinen glichen den Einsitzern, die die Kampfpiloten im Ersten Weltkrieg geflogen hatten, aber die dritte glich der Junkers J 4, einem Zweisitzer, der als Bomber und Erkundungsflugzeug konstruiert war (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 252).

The image of the airplane triggers Jacob's long-suppressed childhood memories of flying and building airplane models with his father. Although, Jacob is obviously distressed by the memories, he collects himself and uses the airplane to rescue his group from immediate danger. Funke uses the episode with the "dragon" to focus on the protagonist's personal transformation. As a child, Jacob felt helpless and abandoned when thinking of John's airplane models; as an adult, the protagonist overcomes his pain, and finds a way to benefit from his prior knowledge. In short, Funke depicts the progression of her character learning to benefit from his traumatic childhood in a way that is inaccessible to traditional fairy tale due to structural limitations.

2.2.5. Magical Objects as Tools of Critical Reflection

Material objects or artifacts have a special place in supernatural narratives, in particular in fairy tales and fantasy. On the surface level artifacts, for example mirrors, amulets, and clothing serve as a means of conflict resolution, advance plots by representing the goal of the struggle or become a last-minute salvation of the protagonists. In addition, magical objects often mark the entry points into alternative worlds, which will be explored during the hero/ines' journey, thus becoming the basis of identity formation in general. Artifacts strongly influence relationships between the protagonist and other characters, as well as with the surrounding world.

Artifacts have a wide array of uses and have distinct levels of impact on the story. Most importantly, the question is whether an object has magical properties or not: "die Dinge scheiden sich in Zauberdinge und Alltagsdinge, wobei wiederum allgemeine Repräsentanten der Dingwelt erscheinen, Tisch und Kleid und Schwert und Haus, und zwar vom Schloß bis zum kleinen Häuschen [...] mit Vorliebe Dinge von stark geprägter, eindeutiger Gestalt" (Schödel 51). A level of uncertainty is typical for supernatural narratives, especially for fairy tales: there are multiple levels to the meaning of things. Whenever an object appears in the plot, the reader cannot be sure whether it has any hidden supernatural qualities or not. Even the most common material objects, like houses for example, can suddenly turn around and become bonded with the protagonist (e.g. Baba Yaga's chicken-legged hut).

Things in supernatural narratives are usually different from how readers are used to seeing them in the real world. Even the simplest artifact can acquire strange and supernatural properties in fairy tales: "a key concept here is Freud's notion of the uncanny, by which he meant the way in which familiar objects and events and people can suddenly seem strange and vice versa" (Spitz "The Irresistible Psychology of Fairy Tales"). It correlates with Viktor Shklovsky's concept of

estrangement. The most important artifacts have simple, familiar shapes; an apple, for example, can help to find a way out of the dark forest; a mirror can reflect one's personality; and a needle can let one sleep for a century. Fairy tales are full of magical objects: "lauter Wunschmittel, lauter via regia, um auf kürzestem Weg (im Märchen) zu erlangen, was die Natur selber, außerhalb des Märchens, dem Menschen verweigert" (Schödel 38). Material objects infused with magical qualities and powers allow characters to achieve what otherwise would have been impossible.

Artifacts can have various functions, which either help or distract the hero/ines from achieving their goals. In certain cases, possession or loss of a particular material object can mean death or survival of the characters. The process of operating material objects also relates to relationships that characters form with one another. Artifacts are equally important to fairy tales and fantasy fiction. Although it should be noted that objects often have separate functions in the genres.

Characters in classic European fairy tales are defined by the way they engage with the material world (including things and animals): the moral standing of a character is reflected by his/her way of operating objects. Thus, hero/ines demonstrate moral virtuousness by being hardworking and kind, and moral flawlessness by being lazy and self-centered. Based on how they manage the objects around them, the characters can be either rewarded or punished. Intending to provide ethical guidance for its readers, fairy tales favor the brave, selfless, and pure characters, as opposed to the greedy, selfish, and malicious.⁸¹

Fairy tales also display a correspondence between the characters' personal features and the functions magical objects perform for them. Put differently, the same artifact can bring joy, aid, and benefit to a "good" character, and destruction to the "evil." Often, evil-minded characters are

⁸¹ Similar parallels have been discussed by scholars, such as, for example, Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Tale*, 1928) and Max Lüthi (*The Fairy Tale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*, 1984).

not even not able to find the magical objects in the first place. It can be presented as two conditions: first, the character's personality is reflected in how s/he operates material objects; second, the nature of the artifacts that the character encounters depends on her/his personal qualities.

Objects in fairy tales might create associations or hint toward the characters' personalities, as, for instance, a spindle might indicate a wise woman (cf. "Tale Spinners" 143) or a golden ball could symbolize the innocence of a young girl (cf. Bettelheim 116). Yet, a fairy tale rarely provides readers with more than basic descriptive characteristics needed to visualize an artifact. The language of the fairy tale is symbolic and ambiguous, which is simultaneously the genre's strength and weakness.⁸² As a result, I argue that despite the crucial role artifacts play in Grimms' tales their narrative potential is not entirely fulfilled due to the generic features of the fairy tale.

There is a distinction in how fairy tales and fantasy narratives depict material objects. Fairy tales might occasionally mention the color or shape of an artifact, but hardly ever go into more elaborate descriptions of the object's history or significance. As mentioned earlier, Russian formalists believed that different character archetypes in fairy tales can have similar functions; for instance, both the old wise man and the witch can function as transitional examiners on the hero's journey to the ultimate battle. In both cases, the secondary characters' purpose is to navigate the narrative toward its climax. In regard to fairy tales, this mechanism applies not only to characters, but to objects as well. For example, an apple, a needle, and a plate—all can serve as a compass that guides the protagonist out of the forest. As a rule, in fairy tales both secondary characters and objects represent functions that advance the plot; consequently, their description is nonspecific.

⁸² There has been plenty of scholarship discussing the strengths of the fairy tale's symbolic language, see, for example, Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 1976. My concern is rather with the advantages that fantasy fiction, specifically fairytale fantasy demonstrates in this regard.

Fantasy fiction, contrary to the fairy tale, typically gives a comprehensive description of the shape, the location, and the historical origin of magical objects. Furthermore, fantasy narratives connect the artifacts to characters' personal history and experiences. As a result, artifacts in fantasy tend to have more complicated functions than advancing the plot; some of them are analyzed below.

Fantasy fiction as a genre has a long and rich history of dealing with magical and non-magical objects. Depending on which subgenre of fantasy is in question, the depiction of artifacts will differ. Combining the features of fairy tales and fantasy fiction, fairytale fantasy has its unique way of portraying magical objects. It has access to various magical objects already familiar to the reader (from tales). By depicting them in innovative ways, fairytale fantasies create new experiences and give more grounds for reflection to the readers. For example, multiple similar artifacts with distinct functions appear in *Reckless* and in Grimms' fairy tales, thus highlighting the diverse goals pursued by the works.

The first important object to appear in the fairytale fantasy novel is the magic mirror or Mirror-Portal that serves as the portal between Jacob's primary and secondary worlds. Along with windows and doors, mirrors serve as symbols of transition, exchange, and replication. Mirrors are popular narrative devices featured in supernatural fiction of various time periods, and, as a result, have been discussed in fairy tale and fantasy scholarship numerous times.⁸³ Contrary to other studies that focus on artifacts, this work uses mirrors, along with other magical objects, with the intent to illustrate how the hybrid generic structure of the fairytale fantasy allows specific narrative elements to acquire additional revisionist properties.

⁸³ See, for example, Maria Botelho and Masha Rudman, *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors*, 2009.

In *Reckless* the Mirror-Portal serves as a gateway between realms and signifies Jacob's break from his familiar world. The artifact plays a key role in shaping the protagonist's rebellious nature: Jacob enters his father's study and dares to inspect the Mirror-Portal despite his mother's explicit prohibition. Grimms' fairy tale collection has a notorious mirror of its own, namely the Queen's "Talking Mirror"⁸⁴ from "Little Snow-White." Although equipped with alternative supernatural powers, the Queen's Talking Mirror and Funke's Mirror-Portal share an important feature: in both stories, the artifacts create a connection between the children-protagonists and their guardians.

At the start of the fairy tale, the Talking Mirror is a symbol of the Queen's potency as the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. For years, she uses the artifact as a means of psychological empowerment; the object also prompts the Queen's narcissism along with her obsession with beauty. Time after time it confirms that the Queen and only she is "die schönste im ganzen Land" ("Schneewittchen" 262).

Once the Talking Mirror declares that Snow White has surpassed her stepmother, it triggers a mechanism of self-loathing and ultimately puts the Queen on a path to self-destruction. Instead of focusing on being a better parent, the Queen uses the Talking Mirror to succumb to her weakness of character. Absorbed with her beauty and status, the Queen loses touch with reality to the extent that the only solution left is to murder her stepdaughter. The Talking Mirror becomes the catalyst of the toxic relationship between parent and child. Yet, the fairy tale never addresses the artifact's role directly. Despite its significant role in the plot, readers do not learn any details about it beyond the fact that the Queen talks to it repetitively every morning. Neither the Mirror's size, nor its

⁸⁴ Although in Grimms' text the artifact in question is simply called "mirror," I will from here on refer to it as "Talking Mirror" to avoid confusion with Funke's "Mirror-Portal."

shape is revealed; not to mention the mechanisms of its magic or its origins. We do not learn how the Queen obtained it, and how long it has been affecting her.

The Queen's progressing obsession with beauty reflected in and by the artifact *could* be seen as the central motif of the story; Grimms' fairy tale has the potential to problematize rivalry tendencies in mother-daughter relationships. But because there is not sufficient information about the artifact, the potential for psychological reflection remains unrealized, with the reader left to read between the lines.⁸⁵ This shows that when the fairy tale fails to describe its featured magical objects beyond the most basic features, it loses valuable narrative potential as a result.

The Talking Mirror in "Little Snow-White" has the potential to provoke critical reflection but does not to the full extent it could. The Mirror-Portal in *Reckless*, on the other hand, proves to be different. The artifact is described in detail on various occasions throughout the series; it even has a side-story "The Mirror" in *The Reckless Anthology* (2015) dedicated to it.⁸⁶

After reading the first three books of *Reckless Series*, many questions remain unanswered, especially those concerning Jacob's parents and their relationship before John's disappearance. The short-story "The Mirror" gives extended background information on the Mirror-Portal and the story of Jacob's parents. John married Rosamund (Jacob and Will's mother) out of convenience, attracted to her family's money rather than to the woman herself. John is depicted as overly ambitious and self-absorbed. At the start of their relationship, Rosamund was distracted by her

⁸⁵ This is, in my view, the reason "Little Snow-White" has been consistently inspiring contemporary visual and literary reinterpretations. In the spirit of revisionist fantasy, various authors and filmmakers have taken up the plot of "Little Snow-White" and reinterpreted it in unexpected ways, building on the motives that are hinted but not fully developed in the Grimm Brothers' tale. Many of these works focus on the Queen, her obsessive nature and struggles with parenthood. I am specifically referring to Kate Bernheimer's *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* (1998), Terri Windling's *The Armless Maiden and Other Tales for Childhood's Survivors* (1995), and Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz's TV series *Once Upon a Time* (2011–present).

⁸⁶ The central case study in this chapter is *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh*. I shall, however, make a number of references to *The Reckless Anthology* (2015) as it is instrumental in drawing out the revisionist ambitions embedded in the original work. Funke positions the anthology as a collection of side-stories and memories that provide additional information about the characters and the secondary world of *Reckless Series*.

feelings towards the man, but eventually began to notice his unpleasant nature. Her changing attitude towards him is what essentially inspired John's escape into the World behind the Mirror. John and his then infant son Jacob found the Mirror-Portal by accident in the basement of their house:

Of course it was Jacob who found the Mirror. It was wrapped in a heavy blanket, and when John untied the cord that held it, a swarm of moths fluttered out of the dusty wool. They made Jacob jump back in fright, but when he saw the Mirror he was back at John's side. The faces they saw in the dark glass were at once strange and familiar. As if their twins were staring back at them from another world. Jacob reverently touched the silver blossoms on the Mirror's frame (*The Reckless Anthology* 81–83).

Funke uses the artifact to explore John's identity crisis. It is mostly through his internal monologue that we learn about the Mirror-Portal and its significance in John's life.

A decade later, when Jacob covers up his face to open the portal he does so because of the note written by his father. In John's case, the gesture has more meaning: John covers his face because he is tired of seeing the man he became, someone who is far less brilliant and unique than he likes to be. Upon discovering MirrorWorld, Jacob's father reflects: "Another world where he could forget the man he'd seen in the Mirror-Portal. A place where he might reinvent that man" (*The Reckless Anthology* 125–126). To summarize: Funke's Mirror-Portal is not a plot device that only serves to advance the story; instead, it is a narrative element that helps to examine Jacob's and John's personalities. The characters have a different attitude toward the portal and hope to use

it in distinct ways. Although, Jacob ultimately falls into a similar pattern to his father, such as using the Mirror-Portal as an escape opportunity from his struggles in the modern world.

The comparison between *Reckless* and “Little Snow-White” demonstrates the substantial differences in the portrayal of artifacts and its consequences in fairy tales and fantasy fiction. The Talking Mirror in “Little Snow-White” and the Mirror-Portal in *Reckless Series* are, in my view, of equal importance to its retrospective narratives. In contrast to the Mirror-Portal, which is among the main narrative devices used to explore John and Jacob Reckless’ behavior, the Talking Mirror has less impact on the characterization of the Queen than it could have had. The example shows how fairytale fantasy narratives use artifacts in an efficient way to increase their revisionist potential and narrative strength.

Another striking example of the distinct treatment of magical objects in fairy tales and fairytale fantasy works is the portrayal of the “golden ball” (*goldener Ball*) artifact in “Iron Henry and the Frog King” and in *Reckless*.⁸⁷ In the Grimms’ tale, the golden ball is the favorite toy of a young princess. It is not entirely clear, whether the object has magical properties. Some scholars (e.g. Bruno Bettelheim) even suggest that the ball is not to be understood as a physical object altogether, but a symbol of the princess’ innocence and egocentrism. For the purpose of my argument, I consider the ball to be a material object.

As the story goes, the princess carelessly drops the ball and watches it disappear into a pond near her castle. There, an ugly frog offers to retrieve it for her in exchange for a personal favor. The princess runs away as soon as she has her toy back thinking she can avoid fulfilling her reckless promise. The tenacious frog, however, finds the princess and reclaims his reward. After

⁸⁷ “Der Froschkönig oder der eiserne Heinrich” or “Iron Henry and the Frog King” is the first tale of the Brothers Grimm’ *KHM* volume. Wolfgang Mieder defines it as “a didactic lesson for children” that simultaneously can be interpreted as an “erotic tale for adults” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 223).

feeding and interacting with the frog for some time, the princess loses her temper and attempts to kill the animal helper. Instead of the expected murder, her actions break a spell and transform the frog into a prince, who then becomes the princess' companion to their mutual delight.

The golden ball plays a vital role in the fairy tale. It absorbs the heroine's attention: the game itself and the subsequent loss of the artifact are described meticulously. From the inception, the princess indicates how valuable the golden ball is to her. She is willing to give away "anything" (i.e. her jewelry and clothes) to get it back. This leads to an interesting contrast: the girl tries to bribe the animal helper with things, whereas the frog ultimately requests a non-material favor. The scene highlights the princess' fixation on material goods: she cannot imagine desire to be directed at anything other than physical possessions. The exchange juxtaposes the girl's attraction to objects and the frog's yearning for interpersonal connection.

It should be noted that despite the role of the golden ball in the development of the story, the narrative provides extremely little background information about the artifact. As with the Talking Mirror in "Little Snow-White," the reader learns neither of the origins of the golden ball nor of the reasons why it is cherished by the princess. Put differently, although the artifact serves as the catalyst for the relationship between the protagonists, the missing backstory makes the connection a matter of conjectures rather than actual narrative facts.

As with various other objects known to the reader from Grimms' fairy tales, Cornelia Funke uses the golden ball to enrich her story. Jacob Reckless is known to have obtained the golden ball for the Empress of Austrien somewhere along his career as a courtier treasure hunter. In *MirrorWorld*, the artifact has a secret function—it is not only a toy, but also a trap-mechanism: "jeder, der ihn auffing, wurde in sein Inneres gezogen und erst wieder freigelassen, wenn man das Gold polierte" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 303).

Jacob decides to use the golden ball to incarcerate his brother Will after the latter fully transforms into a Goyl as a result of the Dark Fairy's curse. To realize the plan, the protagonist is forced to break into the royal treasure chambers to retrieve the golden ball that he once sold to the Empress. Funke ensures that readers can easily envision the object in question:

Der Goldene Ball, nach dem er suchte, lag in der fünften Kammer auf einem Kissen aus schwarzem Samt. Jacob hatte ihn in einer Wassermannhöhle neben der entführten Tochter eines Bäckers gefunden. Er war kaum größer als ein Hühnerei (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 300).

Once the image is conveyed, Funke offers an explicit intertextual reference to the Grimms' fairy tale:

Die Beschreibung, die auf den Samt geheftet war, klang fast wie das Märchen, das in der anderen Welt von einem Goldenen Ball erzählt: "Lieblingsspielzeug der jüngsten Tochter Leopolds des Gutmütigen, mit dem sie ihren Bräutigam [...] fand und von einem Frosch-Fluch befreite" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 300).

Funke uses the artifact to reflect upon Jacob's relationship with the Empress and his professional success as a treasure hunter in the World behind the Mirror. In addition, the reference to "Iron Henry and the Frog King" might be interpreted as an encouragement to compare Jacob to the princess: the fascination with material objects is an imperative feature of both characters.

When Jacob pursues Will with the golden ball in hand, he is reminded of the time when they were children in New York City. The narrative alternates between the present chase and Jacob's memory of playing tag with his brother: "wollen wir Fangen spielen, Will?" (*Reckless:*

Steinernes Fleisch 335) The golden ball simultaneously reminds Jacob of how much and how little his brother and himself have changed. The protagonist still feels responsible for Will's wellbeing, but nowadays his emotions are intensified by the guilt for abandoning his family. As with Jacob, Will is shown to have retained many of his features despite transforming into a Goyl. Among other things, he still intuitively follows his older brother's lead. Caught by surprise, Will catches the golden ball purely on reflexes: "die Hände hatten ihr eigenes Gedächtnis" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 335–6).

In Funke's novel, the function of the golden ball is not limited to driving the plot; instead, it is a multifaceted narrative device that illuminates the complex power dynamics between the Reckless brothers. To compare, the Mirror-Portal serves to give the reader a glimpse into Jacob's past, into his damaged relationship with his father, and to draw a contrast between the two men. The golden ball, on the other hand, helps to reflect upon Jacob's present, his current self-identification, and his role in their relationship with Will.

The relics Jacob discovers, collects, and sells as a treasure hunter not only serve as plot devices to advance the story but rather help constructing Jacob's personal history. In Funke's universe finding treasures is the protagonist's daily occupation. One might read it as an allusion to classic fairy tale protagonists that go on quests to retrieve magical objects (as in "The Golden Bird," for instance). Funke takes it further, however, by drawing readers' attention to Jacob's problematic attitude towards material goods. The narrative emphasizes that his preoccupation with objects often stands in the way of Jacob forming authentic relationships with the people around him. Thus, Jacob avoids returning to the modern world, to his mother and his brother, for the sake of exploring the secondary world: "there is always something or someone that one could be searching for in this world" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 68). Artifacts provide the protagonist

with a valid place in MirrorWorld's community, but they also prevent him from resolving his issues back home. Jacob is drawn by material artifacts, their value, and the status that they can ensure. Will's sudden appearance in the MirrorWorld and its consequences force Jacob to reconsider his set of priorities.

The Mirror-Portal and the golden ball are only two of many artifacts Funke uses throughout *Reckless* to aid her readers in exploring the personalities and experiences of the characters. Artifacts indicate what relationships exist between the characters, they influence the hero/ines' perception of the surrounding world, and drive the plot forward. Furthermore, magical objects symbolize the possibility of change and transition, which the hero/ines might not have seen on their own. Magical objects in fairy tales, and even more so in fantasy, are important because they indicate the possibility to transcend circumstances, but also provide a challenge. Some characters rise up to the challenge and others fail to do so. In the case of *Reckless* artifacts provide an additional layer of meaning to the narrative's status on the borderline between the fantasy and fairy tale traditions. In my view, Funke's readers are trapped between recognition and estrangement throughout the story. To illustrate: on the one hand, readers identify many of the elements and even some characters of Funke's secondary world because of their relation to fairy tales. At the same time, however, these elements have unusual characteristics that violate readers' expectations, thus reinforcing the defamiliarizing effect.

An example of such a conflict of expectations is the episode when Jacob and his companions stumble upon Briar Rose's castle (i.e. *Dornenschloss*). As we know it from the Grimm Brothers' *KHM* collection, "Little Briar-Rose" tells the story of a beautiful princess who is cursed by a "wise woman" to prick her finger on a spindle on her fifteenth birthday and to fall asleep for

one hundred years.⁸⁸ When the curse expires, a prince arrives and kisses Briar Rose awake. The entire palace comes back to life and the happy couple marries. “Little Briar-Rose” is commonly associated with hope. The moral of the tale seems apparent: no matter how bad a curse, true love will find a way to overcome it.

Funke works closely with the prior story. She provides a detailed description of the original setting that features various key objects of the tale, including the spinning wheel, the bed, and roses:⁸⁹

Das Spinnrad stand neben einem schmalen Bett, das nie für eine Prinzessin gedacht gewesen war. Der Körper, der immer noch darauf schlief, war bedeckt mit Rosenblättern. Der Fluch der Fee hatte ihn in all den Jahren nicht altern lassen, aber die Haut war wie Pergament und fast so vergilbt wie das Kleid, das die Prinzessin seit zwei Jahrhunderten trug. Die Perlen, mit denen es bestickt war, schimmerten immer noch weiß, aber die Spitze, die es säumte, war inzwischen ebenso braun wie die Blütenblätter, die die Seide bedeckten (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 94).

After the link is established, Funke challenges the readers’ expectations. Jacob’s reaction to the castle strikes as excessively materialistic in the context of a romantic tale: upon discovering

⁸⁸ “Dornröschen” or “Briar Rose” (i.e. “Sleeping Beauty”) is tale number 50 in *KHM*. The Grimm Brothers’ version originated from an oral retelling of Charles Perrault’s tale “The Beauty Sleeping in the Wood,” which was first published in 1697 in French as part of the collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités* (*Stories or Fairy Tales from Past Times with Morals*, also known as *Mother Goose Tales*).

⁸⁹ It should be noted that some readers would not recognize the references to these fairy tales, as a result bypassing the intertextual seduction taking place in the novel. I believe that whether or not readers are familiar with Grimms’ fairy tales prior to reading *Reckless* has a tremendous impact on their perception of the work. The argument is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Briar Rose' bed (i.e. *Dornröschens Bett*),⁹⁰ Jacob mostly worries about the profit he would make from selling the artifact to the Empress of Austrien.⁹¹

Readers' expectations are unsettled further by learning that Briar Rose's fate has taken a turn for the worse compared to how they might remember the story from the Grimm Brothers. In *Reckless*, the prince never came to kiss the princess awake. Instead "er war wie ein aufgespießter Vogel in den Dornenranken verendet. Zwischen den Rosen ragte eine mumifizierte Hand hervor" (93). It is not unusual for Funke to deny her characters the typical fairy-tale "happy ending." In the spirit of revisionist fantasy, *Reckless* reevaluates old plots, contemplating what might have been left behind the scenes.

My study demonstrates that providing more detailed information on artifacts (e.g. about their history of origin or personal connection to the characters) can be a source of additional revisionist potential. I argue that because of its borderline position, fairytale fantasies open up a deeper level of understanding of the roles played by artifacts in supernatural narratives.

2.2.6. *Exploring Alterity Perception through the Lens of Magical Transformation*

Fairy tales draw our attention to the dynamic nature of life: their goal is to make us realize how aggravations and tragedies are not permanent, on the contrary, the lack of power and possessions can become advantages that open the path to success. By letting hero/ines experience transformation and move up the social ladder, fairy tales provide readers with comfort and hope for a better future. Many scholars (e.g. Propp, 1928; Haney, 1999) have discussed the role of transformation in fairy tales, especially stressing its significance in the wondertale. Transformation implies the possibility of unlikely, astounding changes; it sets the wondertale apart from other

⁹⁰ The artifact supposedly brings true love to anyone who sleeps in it (cf. *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 93).

⁹¹ The country of "Austrien," the capital of which is "Vena," is a reference to nineteenth century Austria. The wordplay provides an additional layer of intertextual meaning.

narrative forms such as, for example, the legend, the anecdote, the moral story, and the novella (cf. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xviii). Various forms of transformation, be it material such as shapeshifting, or spiritual, such as personal growth, rest at the foundation of the classic European fairy tale.⁹²

Maria Tatar adds to the insights on transformation: “metamorphosis is central to the fairy tale” (*Why Fairy Tales Matter* 55). Characters transform into beasts and animal helpers turn out to be enchanted princes and princesses. Frequently, fairy tales include at least some kind of transformation that must be accomplished before the protagonist can reach the “happily ever after” ending. I agree with Tatar when she suggests that “the idea of personal transformation emerges logically from a genre that draws ceaselessly on shape-shifting and metamorphosis” (*Why Fairy Tales Matter* 60). Fairy tales teach us that the status quo must be unsettled for a positive ending to emerge. The protagonist is encouraged to go out and seek transformation.

As with other matters, instead of reflecting upon the necessity of change, the fairy tales depicts an adventure that influences the characters into transforming. Here it stays true to its action-oriented approach. Fairy tale hero/ines are commonly portrayed as opportunistic: “they are encouraged to be so, and if they do not take advantage of the opportunity that will benefit them in their relations with others, they are either stupid or mean-spirited. Only the ‘good’ opportunistic protagonist succeeds because he or she is open to and wants a change” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xix). From that one might infer that fairy tales offer a critique of passivity and lack of initiative: one must show resourcefulness to prosper in the fairy tale realm. Scholars attribute this inclination in folk- and fairy tales to the inability of peasants (and other early narrators of tales) to control their lives (cf. xix). They knew that there was little they could do to improve their dreadful

⁹² For a broad discussion of the European fairy tale and its historical evolution as a genre see Schacker, Jennifer, and Christine A. Jones, *Marvelous Transformations*, 2013.

conditions, but still tried to reinforce hope through their stories by giving hero/ines the power of will and the ability to change.

Transformation in fairy tales can be divided into several categories. The most radical is physical transformation also known as shapeshifting: animals turn into humans and back (“The Twelve Brothers”) or objects turn into humans (“Cinderella”). Another kind of transformation concerns social standing: characters rise from lower to higher social classes (“Brother and Sister”), move up in rank (“The Brave Little Tailor”), or simply improve their financial situation (“Hansel and Gretel”). Last but not least, fairy tales feature internal transformation: this ranges from maturing with age, improving particular skills, or developing positive personal qualities.

Fairy tale characters are “obliged to fulfill specific tasks to gain [their] reward” (*Happily Ever After* 81). The idea is that hero/ines have to face an impossible or hardly achievable quest. Usually, a helping force comes along to aid the hero/ine in accomplishing different tasks, each subsequent task more complicated than the previous. The crucial part is that the activities transform the protagonist into a new person: braver and stronger, a better version of their older selves. Later when the hero/ine returns home, his/her new personality enables them to take on a new role (e.g. be the ruler of a kingdom). Everyone who does not rise to the challenge or tries to get in the way of the hero/ine is punished.

Not only protagonists undergo transformation. When hero/ines return from their quests, the world around them changes as well. Sometimes it is a change in power distribution that occurred while they were away (e.g. the “wicked” stepmother died and the children safely return to their loving father); other times new villains make an appearance and protagonists have to deal with them.

Transformation is a central theme in *Reckless*. At the beginning, we learn that the country of Austrien is at war with the Goyls, an anthropomorphic species that has been mercilessly persecuted by humans for centuries. Goyls are stone creatures differentiated by the colors of their outer surfaces, or “skins,” which are drawn from the names of precious stones (e.g. onyx, carnelian, jasper). The Goyl-society is dominated by onyx-skin Goyls, until, one day, an underdog named Kami’en overthrows the common order.

In Funke’s universe, Goyls have their own civilization with its rulers, towns, and cultural traditions. The Goyls are not only prosecuted by humans because of their appearance, but they also exhibit appearance-based discrimination among themselves. The Goyl-society has a racial fixation on skin color, it is treated as a symbol of status and power. Thus, onyx-skin Goyls are the group’s conventional leaders, until Kami’en, a Goyl of carnelian-skin, comes to power. Kami’en’s skin tone is a matter of serious controversy among his people: “nie zuvor war Karneol die Hautfarbe eines Anführers gewesen. Bei den Goyl war Onyx die Farbe der Fürsten” (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 22).

Funke employs the Goyls’ social order to criticize racism and segregation based on skin color or appearance instead of abilities. In her own words: “die Spiegelwelt in *Reckless* ist nicht einfach eine Phantasiewelt, sie soll helfen, unsere Realität klarer zu sehen. Ich möchte zu einem Bewusstsein beitragen, dass wir ganz selbstverständlich miteinander leben – verschieden in Hautfarben, Nationalitäten, sozialen Klassen” (Conrad, “Durch Schmerz lernen”). Funke uses Kami’en’s character not only to condemn appearance-based stratification, but also to envision what might happen when individuals try to overcome these problems.

Kami’en is a talented warlord, who quickly rises to power and gathers a massive army of Goyls. The main purpose of the army is to take revenge on humans. It does not take long for the

war to confirm the superior position of invincible Goyl-warriors' toward "soft-skin" humans. At the point when Jacob's brother arrives in the MirrorWorld, Goyls have done enough damage conquering the country of Austrien to force its Empress to negotiate. It is important to note that the Goyls' military success does not come without help: Kami'en's immortal lover, the Dark Fairy (*die Dunkle Fee*), casts a spell that transforms any being into a "Menschengoyl" (*human-Goyl*) if their blood happens to be touched by a Goyl's claw. One of the central Goyl-characters of the novel, Hentzau, describes this new hybrid-species as follow:

Menschengoyl. Früher hatte [er] seine Klauen zum Töten benutzt, doch nun ließ der Zauber der Fee sie Steinernes Fleisch säen. Wie alle Feen konnte sie keine Kinder gebären, also schenkte sie Kami'en Söhne, indem jeder Klauenhieb seiner Soldaten einen seiner Feinde zum Goyl machte (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 23).

Hentzau stresses the significance of "Menschengoyls" in the relationship between Kami'en and the Dark Fairy comparing the hybrids to their children. Goyls are commonly a source of repulsion and fear for most of Funke's characters. Jacob's account helps to clarify the group's social standing in the MirrorWorld:

Ihr schlimmstes Verbrechen war schon immer gewesen, dass sie allzu menschlich aussahen. [Die Goyl] waren die verabscheuten Zwillinge. Die steinernen Vettern, die im Dunkeln hausten. Nirgendwo hatte man sie gnadenloser gejagt als in den Bergen, aus denen sie stammten, und die Goyl zahlten inzwischen mit gleicher Münze zurück. Ihre Herrschaft war nirgends mitleidloser als in ihrer alten Heimat (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 188).

The protagonist emphasizes that it is the resemblance between the human and the Goyl species that sparks hatred. Ironically, in a world full of supernatural creatures such as dwarfs (*Zwerge*), mermen (*Wassermänner*), and witches (*Hexen*), the Goyls are detested the most for their anthropomorphism.

The resentment toward Goyls is exhibited by several central characters in the novel, including the Empress of Austirien, Therese. The heroine considers the stone-creatures to be nasty intruders that should be eliminated at all cost. Nonetheless, she is forced to negotiate a peace agreement with them: a desperate measure to protect her country from overwhelming war losses. Observing the arrival of the Goyl-generals, Therese of Austirien ruminates angrily:

Wie zivilisiert sie taten. Sie trugen nicht mal Uniform. Was für eine Genugtuung es wäre, sie von den Wachen auf den Hof zerren und erschlagen zu lassen, wie ihr Großvater es noch mit ihnen getan hatte. Aber dies waren andere Zeiten. Nun besorgten die Goyl das Erschlagen. Sie würden sich mit ihren Beratern an einen Tisch setzen, Tee aus silbernen Tassen schlürfen und Kapitulationsbedingungen verhandeln (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 86).

Even though the Goyls have proven their combat and strategy skills, the Empress cannot imagine them as her equals. Instead, Therese dwells on the memories of her family's and her species' erstwhile domination over the stone-creatures.

Funke uses Goyls in two important ways. First, depicting the Goyl-society allows the author to offer an insight into the historical and political realities of the secondary world in question. Second, and more importantly, Goyls help to explore how Funke's characters perceive

and react to otherness. In particular, when it concerns accepting, rejecting, and simply dealing with radical change that occurs when characters transform into Goyls or interact with them.

When Jacob and Will begin their joint adventure, humans in MirrorWorld transform into Goyl-hybrids on a daily basis. Considering the Goyls' problematic status, the question of alterity perception becomes more relevant than even to the population of MirrorWorld. The critical theorist Joshua Wexler defines alterity as that which "enables the classification of groups of individuals into categories like class, gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity to mark differences and similarities among people" ("Alterity"). I claim that Wexler's approach to alterity can be used to explore the representation of otherness in Cornelia Funke's works.

Reckless Series demonstrates that Joshua Wexler's definition of alterity can be expanded to include supernatural abilities as one of the marks of difference and similarity between humans and non-humans. The inclusion of supernatural abilities and supernatural creatures in the definition widens the spectrum of differences that characters have to deal with, which in its turn leads to a more comprehensive study of alterity perception from unfamiliar angles.

The conflict between humans and Goyls makes alterity perception an important topic in the story. Funke takes the issue even further by letting one of the protagonists, Will, transform into a Menschengoyl. Immediately upon his arrival in the MirrorWorld, Jacob's brother falls victim to the Dark Fairy's curse. While observing Will gradually change, Funke explores various stages of estrangement between him and his beloveds. In addition, the author provides an account of Will's experience of being exposed to forced physical and emotional conversion.

This study considers Will's transformation into a condemned creature with rock-like skin to be a reference to Grimms' fairy tale "Der Eisenhans."⁹³ It is a story about a wild man with iron skin who was captured, ridiculed, and eventually redeemed from his curse. Many consider "Iron Hans" to be a tale of maturation or of a boy becoming a man, which also resonates with Will's experience.

Iron Hans is an enchanted nobleman who is condemned to spend his days as an ugly beast with iron skin unless somebody finds a way to break the spell. Typically for fairy tales, readers do not learn many details about the situation, including the reasons for Hans' enchantment. One day, Iron Hans is captured by the soldiers of a nearby kingdom and placed in an iron cage to amuse the courtiers. Many years after the incident, the king's son makes a deal with the creature and sets Hans free.

Afraid to face the consequences of his actions, the prince follows Iron Hans into the woods. The wild man asks the prince to watch over his treasures, but warns him not to touch anything. The prince obeys at first, but eventually becomes bored, starts playing in the well, and accidentally turns all his hair into gold. Disappointed, Iron Hans sends the prince away but not without granting him permission to ask for Hans' aid in moments of need. After helping the prince to find happiness, Iron Hans is freed from the curse and transforms back into the human he once was.

Reckless, I argue, revises Grimm's tale by contemplating what might have happened if the prince and the beast had more in common than the coincidental arrangement that brought them together. Thus, Funke shows how the story might have unfolded if the prince were to blame himself for Hans' enchantment. In "Iron Hans" readers do not know what motivates the characters' actions.

⁹³ "Der Eisenhans" or "Iron Hans," tale number 136 in *KHM*, first appeared in the sixth edition of the collection from 1850. Earlier versions, beginning with the second volume of the first edition (1815), included a shorter version of this tale under the title "Der wilde Mann" ("The Wild Man").

Among other things, we do not know whether the prince knew about Iron Hans' curse from the beginning or his assistance has been a lucky coincidence. In the same way, readers can only guess whether Hans was helping the prince selflessly or he had a hidden agenda that predetermined his actions.

Where fairy tales like "Iron Hans" only describe the act of transformation itself, fairytale fantasy works like *Reckless* go further by examining the transformation's consequences for the characters and their surroundings. Funke reveals Will's emotions after he fully transforms into a Goyl: "Will liebte die Unempfindlichkeit seiner Haut und die Kraft und Unermüdlichkeit seiner Glieder, die alle Goyl den Weichhäuten so überlegen machten – auch wenn er wusste, dass er aus ihrem Fleisch erschaffen worden war" (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 313). Will's fascination with his newly acquired powers appears in sharp contrast with his initial fear of the enchantment.

In "Iron Hans" readers do not see the stages of Hans' transformation, we only observe its physical consequences. Fairy tale characters, as a rule, get to move on with their lives once the transformation occurs or reverses. Cornelia Funke uses fairytale fantasy's generic hybridity to contemplate how their transformations might have affected familiar fairy tale characters, adding an extra layer to the revisionist potential of *Reckless*.

Funke uses Will's positing as a hybrid to investigate what it means to become a "monster" in the eyes of one's friends and family. It adds an extra layer of complexity that Will transforms into a Goyl of not just any color, but in a "jade Goyl" (*Jadegoyl*). The jade Goyl is a legendary warrior, a prominent figure in Goyl mythology:

Alte Frauen trugen sie als Glücksbringer um den Hals und knieten heimlich vor Götzen, die daraus gemacht waren. Mütter nähten sie ihren Kindern in die Kleider, damit der Stein sie furchtlos machte

und beschützte. Aber nie hatte es einen Goyl gegeben, dessen Haut aus Jade war [...] Doch dann gebar die Tiefe einen König, und in einer Zeit großer Gefahr erschien ein Goyl aus Jade, geboren von Glas und Silber, und machte ihn unbesiegbar (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 74).

As a result of him being considered the “jade Goyl,” Will’s transformation impact not only his family. After standing in Jacob’s shadow for most of their lives, Will suddenly became a symbol of hope and strength for an entire community. Sandra Straubhaar notes that “Goyls embody a major [...] theme of the novel—namely, the clash of civilizations” (398): Will finds himself in the middle of this conflict, as hybrids often have the bad fortune to be.

Besides shedding light on the relationship between Iron Hans and the prince, *Reckless* suggests a revision of the prior story where Iron Hans is not “one of a kind” but a member of an alternative antagonistic species. *Reckless* makes use of the fairytale fantasy format to explore what might have happen if Iron Hans was one of many “monsters” prosecuted by humans in the course of centuries. From this angle, *Reckless* is a retelling of the tale “Iron Hans” through the eyes of a secondary character that does not have a voice in the traditional version of the story. In my understanding, this shows Funke’s determination to challenge the inflexible hero-villain paradigm depicted in Grimms’ tales.

As demonstrated in this chapter, Funke’s exploration of group dynamics and alterity perception goes beyond what readers commonly encounter in traditional fairy tales. Although Goyls are considered to be a source of pain and destruction by most of her characters, Funke avoids falling back into rigid binary categories.⁹⁴ The narrative form of the novel *Reckless* allows readers

⁹⁴ Restricted binary thinking is a common source of criticism expressed by scholars in relation to fantasy fiction and, particularly, “genre fantasy” (John Clute and John Grant 396).

to engage not only with the protagonist's, but with various other characters' points of view. Thus, several chapters of the book are narrated by Goyl characters. These chapters are particularly instrumental in explaining the reasons for the group's hostility and aggression. The author does not offer a universal verdict about the Goyls. Instead, she uses characters from inside and outside the marginalized group to voice a range of contradicting perspectives on the issue. *Reckless* depicts alterity perception as a complex process.

Reckless is a powerful example of recent fairytale fantasy fiction that juxtaposes individual accounts of a conflict in an effort to provoke a more critical perception of ideological differences. The novel suggests a multidimensional reading of alterity, as it is interpreted not only by the protagonist, but also by various other characters around him. Funke makes sure to give voice to alternative marginal opinions. As a result, the protagonist's world view is constantly challenged and contested. Funke's depiction of alterity comes across as a strong moral statement: in *Reckless*, all supernatural forces and all markers of difference are ambiguous, none is entirely "good" or "evil."

The opposition between humans and Goyls is not the only theme by which *Reckless* explores alterity perception. The ability to travel through realms by means of the Mirror-Portal is a major ground of separation in the *Reckless* universe. As opposed to Jacob, who has travelled the MirrorWorld for many years and has done so by choice, Will and his girlfriend Clara arrive in the parallel realm circumstantially. Watching Fuchs (i.e. Jacob's loyal shapeshifter-companion) transform from a woman into an animal catches Clara in deep reflection:

Was ist das für eine Welt?, fragte ihr Gesicht, als sie sich zu Jacob umsah. Wenn Fell zu Haut oder Haut zu Stein werden kann, was bleibt dann? Angst. Fassungslosigkeit. Und Verzauberung. Es war

alles in ihrem Blick zu finden. Sie trat auf Fuchs zu und strich sich dabei über die eigenen Arme, als fühlte sie dort auch schon einen Ansatz von Fell (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 93).

Clara and Will both see the MirrorWorld in a different light than does Jacob. They are less charmed but rather confused by it. For example, when the party is forced to spend a night in the house of a child-eating witch, Jacob admits that he knows “zu viel über Lebkuchenhäuser, um unter ihren Zuckergussdächern ruhig schlafen zu können” (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 67). Will, by contrast, knows little to nothing about the dangers of the World behind the Mirror and sleeps undisturbed “als schliefe er im Bett eines Prinzen und nicht in dem einer Kinderfresserin” (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 70).

It appears, Funke uses the episode to contrast the heroes’ perspectives, drawing attention to the fact that while Jacob and Will might face similar events their perceptions have little in common. It is tempting to draw a parallel between the Reckless brothers and the readers of *Reckless*: readers who are familiar with Grimms’ tales and readers who have not read *KHM* are likely to interpret the novel as distinctively as Jacob and Will perceive their adventures.⁹⁵

Confusion and disorientation are rarely portrayed in classic fairy tales. More often than not, fairy tale hero/ines exhibit no surprise or unease when confronted with the supernatural, even when the experience is new. At least partially this can be attributed to the fact that fairy tales are set in a removed secondary world. In the words of the children’s literature scholar Maria Nikolajeva: “although fairy tales often include transportation to some other realm by means of a magical agent, they take place in one imaginary world, which does not have any connection with

⁹⁵ Reader perception of and reader response to fairytale fantasy works are more comprehensively discussed in Chapter 5.

reality” (“Fairy Tale and Fantasy” 147). Put differently, travel between different worlds as depicted in fantasy narratives is unlikely to occur in traditional fairy tales.⁹⁶

Funke stresses that it is the fusion of the two worlds that disorients *Reckless*’ characters the most. On several occasions, heroes and heroines are bewildered when their memories of the modern world clash with their experiences in the MirrorWorld. Clara’s observations of her dream-like state might serve as an example:

Das kuchenbedeckte Haus, der rote Mond über den Bäumen – alles, was sie sah, schien so unwirklich, dass sie sich wie eine Schlafwandlerin fühlte. Alles, was sie kannte, war fort [...] Das einzig Vertraute war Will, aber ihm wuchs das Fremde schon in der Haut (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 58).

Similarly, Jacob, too, finds himself doubting the reality of the world around him:

Alles um ihn herum schien unwirklich. Die Feen und verwunschenen Wälder, die Füchsin, die ein Mädchen war—alles nichts als die Fieberträume eines Zwölfjährigen. Jacob sah sich wieder in der Zimmertür seines Vaters stehen und Will neugierig an ihm vorbeistarren, auf die staubigen Flugzeugmodelle, die alten Revolver. Und den Spiegel (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 239).

⁹⁶ While characters might not be travelling between worlds, it should be noted that transitions between different realms occur in certain types of tales, including Russian wondertales collected by Alexander Afanasyev, such as “Tsarevna Lyagushka” (“The Frog Princess”) and “Poryshko Finista yasna sokola” (“Fenist the Bright Falcon”). In these stories, the protagonists traverse between the land of the living and the land of the dead (also known as the “thrice-tenth kingdom” or “*tridesyatoye tsarstvo*”) that can be interpreted as separate realms within a single secondary world.

Through these reflections Clara and Jacob demonstrate their respective perception of alterity that is directed inward, different from the kind of alterity perception evoked by physical transformation discussed earlier.

Both characters use categories such as “dream” and “sleep” to draw a line between the modern world (*das Vertraute*) and the MirrorWorld (*das Fremde*). As a result of the juxtaposition, *das Fremde* begins to appear surreal, even unbelievable. For Clara, the contrast between the worlds is a source of nostalgia and sorrow. Her perception of alterity is marked by caution, even fear. The fact that Will, the heroine’s source of familiarity, immerses himself in the MirrorWorld destabilizes Clara’s emotional well-being in the course of the story. Jacob’s perception of otherness is rather different from Clara’s: although coming from a similar background, the protagonist engages with the unfamiliar world around him on every level without holding back.

Characterized by an increasing loss of control, Clara’s experience in the MirrorWorld results in a state of powerlessness that one recognizes from nightmares. Jacob, by way of contrast, appears to be living the life of his dreams. He progressively obtains control in the course of his adventures “behind the mirror” by mastering one challenge after another. An irresponsible youngster at the beginning of his journey, Jacob is shown to thrive and mature due to his willingness to understand the unfamiliar world. He develops empathy and thoughtfulness by adapting to and learning from the MirrorWorld.

As I have noted before, classic fairy tales tend to focus on actions rather than reflection (e.g. readers do not know about Hansel’s mental state following his incarceration or about Iron Hans’ reaction to his transformation). By taking advantage of the generic hybridity of the fairytale fantasy, Cornelia Funke is able to explore fairy tale character-archetypes and settings in inventive ways. She reflects upon the characters’ experiences more thoroughly and ultimately adds critical

depth to familiar fairy tale scenarios. Problems that are implied but not fully developed in Grimms' fairy tales (e.g. self-alienation, xenophobia) become the focus of Funke's revisionism.

2.3. Conclusion: Chapter 2

This chapter focused on the German fairytale fantasy tradition, in particular on the genre's historical evolution and its characteristic features. Based on examples from Cornelia Funke's *Reckless* and from selected Grimms' fairy tales, I explored the goals, means, and roles inherent in fairytale fantasy and fairy tale narratives. In addition, I drew attention to the ways in which contemporary fairytale fantasy narratives reimagine traditional fairy tale tropes. The comparisons aimed to highlight the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy genre by showing how Funke utilizes the generic hybridity of the fairytale fantasy in order to reimagine conventional narrative forms and linguistic devices commonly associated with classic fairy tales.

This chapter demonstrated that Funke's *Reckless* incorporates numerous elements from Grimms' fairy tales into the narrative. The novel draws on familiar settings, character archetypes, and magical objects; it even links the protagonists to the Grimm Brothers. I claimed that *Reckless* takes the issues raised in the prior stories a step further by offering a critical reading of several shared themes, including alterity perception and authority construction. In addition, the conventional "happy ending" that is emblematic of fairy tales is repeatedly challenged by Funke. Thus, despite Will's cure and return to the modern world, the protagonist Jacob remains in the MirrorWorld with a deadly curse of his own.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ It should be noted that *Reckless: The Petrified Flesh* is only the first volume of the presently ongoing *Reckless Series*. The lack of a "happy ending" might therefore be part of a marketing strategy that aims to keep readers intrigued. Nonetheless, this does not invalidate the fact that an unresolved conflict complicates the finale of Funke's novel.

Fairytale fantasy works are able to perform revisionist functions because, together with structural and thematic patterns, these narratives partially adopt the generic goals, means and roles associated with classic fairy tales. The mechanism relies on readers being able to recognize classic narrative elements in order then to be confronted with them in original ways. To quote C. W. Sullivan, “instead of confirming the traditional values inherent, if not explicit, in the folk narrative, [fantasy] is using those traditional materials in ways that may actually force the reader to re-examine those values” (288). Cornelia Funke takes advantage of the narrative format of the fairytale fantasy to challenge established generic expectations. On a broader scale, her work serves as an illustration of features that make supernatural narratives thoughtful, demanding, and self-reflexive.

Chapter 3. The Fairytale Fantasy as a Pedagogical Tool

Fairytale fantasy fiction is a powerful genre: it touches a wide range of subjects from self-development to identity, alterity, war, adventure, romance, and friendship. As with other subgenres of fantasy, fairytale fantasy is often considered a somewhat shallow genre of entertainment. Yet, its popularity does not allow us to simply dismiss it. The influence of supernatural fiction, among them fairy tales and fantasy, on young and adult readers is undeniable. According to Jack Zipes, “through the fictive projections of our imaginations based on personal experience [...] we [...] grasp, explain, alter, and comment on reality” (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much” 2). In other words, supernatural narratives give readers a unique space where they can more fully explore their creativity and examine diverse solutions that are not limited by the boundaries of reality.

Supernatural narratives encourage us to reflect on, critique and imagine changes to our world. All these practices are inherent to successful classroom interactions. Ideally, teachers are meant to inspire their students to redefine and reimagine the world around them. For that reason, I argue that works of fairytale fantasy can and should be brought into literature and language classrooms on various levels of education.

This chapter draws on examples from Cornelia Funke’s *Reckless* to demonstrate how the genre of fairytale fantasy can be used in the classroom to critically examine several aspects of popular culture. I evaluate the teaching of fairytale fantasy works from a critical perspective by asking the following questions: does fairytale fantasy have a unique sensibility that can be explored in the classroom? Can the genre provide valuable means to explore contemporary or historical social issues through interdisciplinary study? Is fairytale fantasy an appropriate vehicle to engender critical literacy skills? At the heart of my argument is the assumption that their

generic hybridity allows works of fairytale fantasy to promote critical consciousness among students.

Despite its popularity, works of fantasy fiction only gradually find their ways into the classroom. While there has been much scholarship devoted to analyzing fantasy texts, little time has been dedicated to exploring the educational value of fantasy literature. In this chapter, I show that, if examined through the lens of critical pedagogy, teaching fairytale fantasy works can be remarkably beneficial for students.

Critical pedagogy offers ways to bridge the gap between the literary and the social. By demonstrating to students how fictional works can address issues of equality and social justice, critical pedagogy can help teachers to open up space for a socially engaged dialogue with their students. This chapter is conceptually rooted in a range of studies on critical pedagogy, among them Paulo Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973), Pam Green's "Critical literacy revisited" (2001), and Maria Nikolakaki et al.'s *Critical Pedagogy in the New Dark Ages* (2012). These studies demonstrate a unique approach to help promote individual agency, social justice, and political engagement in students alongside essential literacy skills.

Drawing from a variety of critical pedagogy studies, I focus on two aspects depicted in Funke's *Reckless* that, in my view, can be used to raise students' critical awareness. These aspects are educational practices and images of heroism portrayed throughout the novel. In both instances Funke's work takes advantage of the historical context of its prior stories and the inventive framework of a fantasy narrative in order to reinvent conventional paradigms. It is my belief that exploring educational forms and portrayal of hero/ines in *Reckless* can illuminate how supernatural scenarios can be used to engage students' understanding of socio-political

phenomena, such as, for example, the power dynamics of mentorship, the mechanisms of community formation, and the nature of ideology.

3.1. An Overview of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy

Critical pedagogy is a philosophical approach to teaching that stresses the role of education as a mechanism of social change and prioritizes students as active participants of the learning process. The concept has been developed by the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970; *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 1973) in the 1970s. Critical pedagogy sees its purpose in empowering silenced voices, emphasizing marginalized perspectives, and addressing social justice concerns. The critical theorist Maria Nikolakaki gives the following definition to the approach:

Critical pedagogy [...] signals how questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students, institutions and society, and classrooms and communities. Pedagogy in the critical sense illuminates the relationship between knowledge, authority, and power [...] It is at this place where critical pedagogy becomes an important vehicle for social resistance and social transformation (Nikolakaki et al. 20).

Freire's core argument is that education cannot remain "neutral." It can either be a tool of oppression or of liberation. Critical pedagogy aims to cultivate education that empowers and liberates students, who, as a result, gradually become thoughtful participants of a democratic society. The overarching goal of such training is to nurture members of society that use their

knowledge as a tool to recognize, understand, and challenge the mechanisms of dominant social and political forces.

Paulo Freire proposes his approach as an alternative to the conservative so-called “banking” model of education in which the student represents an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. Banking education treats students as “receiving objects” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 77), deprecating any kind of expertise they might exhibit. The educator, by way of contrast, assumes the role of an epistemic authority. Freire argues that the banking model of education results in students failing to develop critical thinking skills and, consequently, them conforming to oppression.

Whereas the purpose of banking education is to subordinate, critical pedagogy aspires to empower learners. According to Joe Kincheloe, critical pedagogy encourages teachers to become “researchers of their students—as researchers, teachers study their students, their backgrounds, and the forces that shape them” (*Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy* 10). Freire’s model promotes educators to adopt a learner centered approach that favors the interests of students as opposed to some abstract curriculum goals.

Critical pedagogy arises from the premise that education is a process in which students and teachers are equals, as opposed to the traditional paradigm that gives the educator the superior role. Freire’s approach considers students’ individual experience a valuable resource that should be utilized in educational practices. As remarked by Nina Wallerstein (1987), critical pedagogy rests on the assumption that “true knowledge evolves from the interaction of reflection and action” (34). The idea is that teachers should not impose rigid dogmas on students, but provide them with tools to make their own judgements. Nikolakaki et al. argue that “through linking teaching to the political, critical pedagogy aims to create individuals who will fight to eliminate

injustices in this world [...] Critical pedagogy is about cultivating the critical consciousness and empowering the creation of the citizen as social agent” (27). To summarize, critical pedagogy seeks ways to promote democracy.

A primary instrument of critical pedagogy in a literature classroom is critical literacy. Critical literacy concerns itself with the interrelations between language, ideology, and power (cf. “Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 24). It is an approach to reading literary texts that results in comprehending not only meanings that have been openly presented by the author, but also intentional and unintentional underlying meanings that can be found in texts. Such meanings appear under the influence of, for example, the author’s social class, race, or gender. Among other things, critical literacy entails that readers consider “the author’s intent, bias, and purpose for writing” (McLaughlin and DeVogd 62). In respect to critical literacy, Mark Fabrizi observes:

Critical literacy arises from the premise that all texts promote—either consciously or unconsciously on the part of the author—a particular worldview, that the text attempts to persuade the reader to accept that perspective, and that these persuasive elements often exist below the surface of the text which must be studied closely (i.e., critically) to uncover these biases (“Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 15).

Critical literacy demands active readers, who are willing to problematize literary texts. As Fabrizi puts it, “in adopting a critically literate approach, the reader resists being manipulated, or ‘positioned,’ by the text to adopt the ideas and perspectives presented” (“Teaching Critical

Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 16). Critically literate readers are able to uncover and challenge socio-political agendas implanted in works of literature.

Critical literacy can be exercised on any type of fiction including the various subgenres of fantasy. Although the area of research is relatively new, there are studies that show how works of fantasy literature can serve as platforms to advance students’ critical literacy skills and promote the ideals of critical pedagogy formulated by Freire, Giroux, Kincheloe, and others. The existing research includes James Prothero’s article “Fantasy, Science Fiction and the Teaching of Values” (1990), Mark Fabrizi’s dissertation “Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature: Case Studies from Three Connecticut High Schools” (2012), and a collection of essays on teaching fantasy entitled *Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres* (2016) by the same author.⁹⁸

While there might not be many theoretical analyses of critical literacy and its impact on fantasy fiction as a genre, there are numerous scholars who have used critical literacy as a means to examine popular fantasy texts. Examples of such works include Elizabeth Heilman’s collection of critical observations *Harry Potter’s World* (2003), Boris Kupriianov and Vladimir Surkov’s study of political implications of urban fantasy *Dozor kak simptom (The Watch as a Symptom,* 2006), Melissa Hatcher’s feminist investigation “Finding Woman’s Role in The Lord of the Rings” (2007), Daniela Pfennig’s exploration of migration psychology *Parallelwelten* (2012), and Christopher Bell’s edited volume on identity formation in Harry Potter entitled *Wizards vs. Muggles* (2016). Drawing on the results of these and other similar works, this chapter discusses the possibilities of using works of fairytale fantasy fiction in the classroom. Most importantly, I

⁹⁸ It should be noted that fairy tales also gradually find their ways into classrooms. Research on the topic includes, for example, the recent collection of essays on how to utilize folk- and fairy tale to educate students entitled *New Approaches to Teaching Folk and Fairy Tales* (2016) by Claudia Schwabe and Christa Jones.

argue, the fairytale fantasy genre's revisionist features provide a unique platform to perpetuate critical literacy skills and, consequently, to reach the objectives of critical pedagogy.

3.2. Another Kind of Heroism in *Reckless*

Fantasy fiction might be considered a leading source of heroic images today. I agree with the media scholar Lance Strate's assessment of the essential role of heroism in society: "heroes are our ideal selves, the selves that inspire us, the selves that we aspire to, the selves that we desire" (Strate 19). Ideas about heroism have been evolving over the centuries. In myths and legends, classical hero/ines came from aristocratic or even divine backgrounds: they were expected to have "extraordinary physical and personal qualities, such as strength, beauty, and courage" (Powell 113). Similarly, in Northrop Frye's classification such hero/ines were superior to both the readers and the laws of nature (cf. 33). The combination of noble origins, extraordinary powers, and superior personalities is what allowed mythic hero/ines to perform heroic acts.⁹⁹ Their main ambition was to perform essentially impossible feats that only they were capable of accomplishing. Ordinary humans were rarely the protagonists of such heroic narratives.

The triumph of the "everyday hero/ine" came later, with the rise of Romanticism and the increasing popularity of fairy tales.¹⁰⁰ Romantic hero/ines challenged the traditional representation of heroism: as a rule, they were outcasts, people who rejected social conventions.¹⁰¹ Romantic hero/ines were still superior to ordinary humans, but no longer to the laws of nature (cf. Frye 34). They focused their attention on "the emotional side of experience," guided by "intense feelings,

⁹⁹ Mythic heroes include, for example, Achilles, Odysseus, and Samson.

¹⁰⁰ Classic fairy tales are regularly discussed in classrooms of all levels. As a rule, educators tend to focus on fairy tales' historical and cultural function in the context of nineteenth century European literatures, emphasizing the genre's influence on the formation of respective national consciousness.

¹⁰¹ Romantic heroes such as, for instance, J. Austen's Mr. Darcy and A. Pushkin's Eugene Onegin.

awareness of powerful but obscure forces, abnormal states, and a direct intuitive relationship to nature” (Powell 30). As opposed to mythic hero/ines, Romantic hero/ines were not destined to benefit society; instead they developed heroic identities gradually, as a result of their struggles.

One effective way to problematize different notions of heroism in the classroom can be through a critical pedagogy lens. Demonstrating that favoring certain depictions of heroism over others is traditionally a means of reproducing particular values among younger generations can help to raise critical consciousness toward socio-political structures among students. Critical pedagogy aspires to aid students to become “conscious of being in some ways ‘constructed’ by the social and political hegemony represented in one’s historical era” (“Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 3). An exercise in contrasting notions of heroism can provide many effective examples of these cultural constructs.

To illustrate, mythic hero/ines, for example, are predetermined to achieve greatness by birthright and prophecies: such heroism is, arguably, elitist, available only to a few. Mythic hero/ines promote role models with rigid identities whose development is constrained by their destiny. Romantic hero/ines, on the other hand, become hero/ines by coincidence and/or personal choice: such heroism is more attainable. Romantic hero/ines encourage role models whose identities are malleable. Deconstructing existing notions of heroism can be a way for teachers to inspire students to challenge the meanings created by popular culture.

Cornelia Funke’s *Reckless Series*, is, in my view, an example of contemporary supernatural fiction that challenges traditional notions of heroism. Jacob is somewhat like a Romantic hero: he lacks idealism and high ethical standards. Although he is certainly not a coward, his bravery borders on folly, prompted by over-confidence. Jacob gains experiences from mistakes, losses, and suffering. Readers are torn between empathizing with him and resenting his attitude. And yet,

Jacob Reckless is not a typical fairy tale Romantic hero. In *Happily Ever After*, Jack Zipes criticizes children's and young adult literature for regularly portraying young people as passive, subordinate, and abused (cf. 63). Cornelia Funke goes to great lengths to resist this tendency.

Jacob is an erratic rebel, who struggles to become a hero independently; he and his companions are notorious for their relentless desire to discover the world through personal experience. Funke's *Reckless Series*, as I will show, promotes a heroism that arises from the manifestation of free will.¹⁰² As opposed to many other fairy tale and fantasy hero/ines that demonstrate unique powers or have some kind of special "destiny" to fulfill, Jacob starts off as average.¹⁰³ In *Reckless* it is above all personal strength and the importance of learning through experience that guides Funke's characters to success.

Jacob begins his journey by transgressing against a figure of authority: he enters John Reckless' abandoned study against his mother's instructions. Jacob comes to the MirrorWorld uninvited: he is an immigrant with nothing to offer except his wits and a desire to survive. The skills he eventually acquires are learned, which is, in my opinion, an important message about the type of heroism Cornelia Funke tries to endorse. It is chiefly through the protagonists' relationship with artifacts that Funke transmits her understanding on heroism. *Reckless* is exemplary in depicting how magical objects influence the formation of heroic identities.

Magical objects or artifacts can be seen as an attempt to address readers' fears and desires through the narrative. Bernd Wollenweber refers to such creatures as "Verdichtungen" or symbols, incarnations, and signs for "Wunsch- und Angstvorstellungen," arising from both the consciousness and the unconsciousness (cf. Schödel 69). On their journey of self-development,

¹⁰² This chapter examines only a small portion of heroic images depicted in Cornelia Funke's *Reckless Series*. A stimulating topic for further investigation would be, for example, an analysis of female heroic identities depicted in the novels.

¹⁰³ This is not to say that there are no exceptions; my intent is merely to problematize a common trend.

protagonists of fairy tales, fantasy, and fairytale fantasy encounter various magical creatures and supernatural artifacts; some of them are helpful, and others are destructive.

The idea that possession of particular material goods can bring happiness or lead to an internal transformation is frequently reflected in supernatural narratives. The same belief also happens to be embedded in the ideology of a consumerist society. Some fantasy narratives go as far as to have their entire narratives devoted to the acquisition of particularly valuable objects. As a result, heroism often becomes associated with material possessions. In Cornelia Funke's work the functions of magical objects go beyond basic wish fulfillment.

In contrast to Grimms' fairy tales where magical objects mainly serve to advance the plot, Funke uses them to give insights into her characters' backstories and personal development. Funke shifts the attention from the magical object to its user's abilities: her heroism is enterprising and knowledge-based. *Reckless* emphasizes the role of objects as tools that can only help to achieve goals if the characters reveal enough strength, courage, and resourcefulness. Artifacts are nothing but devices for testing the characters' skills. The notion that by themselves even the most magical objects remain useless becomes an effective commentary on the contemporary perception of consumption as well as a promotion of proactive heroism. In my view, introducing such works as *Reckless* in the classroom can encourage students' awareness of consumer culture's effects on modern society and provide a platform for discussion of social justice concerns. Thus, the depiction of magical objects in *Reckless* is Funke's attempt to influence her readers' concept of heroism.

Funke's protagonist depends solely on his wits when using artifacts. Whenever anyone complements Jacob they talk about how well thought-out his equipment is (cf. *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 203). The reference is to the magical objects Reckless uses, such as, for instance, a

Rapunzel-hair (i.e. an infinite rope), a handkerchief (i.e. a source of gold), or waneslime (i.e. turns one invisible). When speaking of artifacts, Jacob typically remarks on their “usefulness” (*Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch* 202). Jacob’s use of magical objects is an important part of his heroic identity. Funke focuses on independence and resourcefulness as the crucial traits a hero/ine must possess: Jacob’s ability to quickly make use of his tools and prior knowledge is what usually saves his life. The work illustrates how magical objects play a vital role in enabling and limiting the characters’ growth.

Jacob’s main identifying feature is his skill as a treasure hunter. He is fully in control of the objects in the MirrorWorld, he mastered the art of finding them. In a classic tale hero/ines “are endowed with magical agents enabling them to [...] metamorphose into [...] better human beings” (“Harry Potter—A Return of the Romantic Hero” 127). Put differently, the emphasis is on the magical object and what good it can do, as opposed to the character and what use he or she in particular can make of the object. *Reckless* offers a noticeably different depiction of objects. Not to say Jacob does not have magical tools at his disposal, but they are just *tools*, not turnkey solutions. Jacob treats magical objects with the same ambition as machines: to solve problems. The terms are identical, too: no matter how powerful the object is, if the user does not know how to operate it, it is useless. Funke’s protagonist is an example of a clever and inventive hero. Funke’s characters’ interactions with material objects are restrained only by themselves and their willingness to take risks, which tremendously impacts the proactive heroism promoted in the novel.

Ironically, John Reckless, Jacob’s missing father, is one of MirrorWorld’s chief industrialists. After abandoning his family, he quickly came to fame by introducing modern-day

technologies to the locals and pretending they were his own inventions. One might argue that Funke contrasts Jacob and John's heroic identities by their attitude towards artifacts.

Jacob focuses on learning and experimenting, whereas his father takes the reliable safe route. John builds his reputation of a brilliant engineer on replicating other peoples' inventions; he is depicted as a narcissistic coward who fled to the MirrorWorld to achieve fame that he could not have in the modern world. Jacob, by way of contrast, is brave enough to follow his own path in the World behind the Mirror. For example, when the protagonist accidentally discovers one of John's most striking creations, the dragon-airplane, he is forced to confront traumatic childhood memories. The episode highlights Jacob's personal growth: airplanes were a long-time source of frustration related to his father that the hero learns to overcome in order to save his friends. When Jacob uses the dragon-airplane to escape, for a moment it seems as if he succeeds due to his father's assistance. The situation quickly turns around once John's amateur invention starts falling apart in the air, and it becomes a matter of Jacob's skills to prevent a crash; he does so by utilizing his knowledge as an aviation enthusiast.

The dragon-airplane episode shows the protagonist overcome his traumatic childhood experience, thus proclaiming that heroism originates in character strength. In Funke's universe, hero/ines are not superior beings; what makes them heroic is not the absence of personal flaws or painful memories, but the ability to raise above the circumstances and continue improving. *Reckless*, in my view, attempts to suggest a new kind of Romantic hero/ines that represent a heroism that is attainable by anyone. To rephrase, heroism is shown as a skill that can be acquired in stages.

Another aspect of Jacob's heroic identity is his independence. A common archetype in many fantasy narratives is the "wise man/woman" character that guides the protagonist through

their journey.¹⁰⁴ Jacob Reckless' mentor is Chanute, an unreliable drunk who is only concerned with pursuing his own goals and rarely shies away from abusing his pupil. Jacob is forced to steal, hunt, and bargain to obtain artifacts, as opposed to many other protagonists who are given them by powerful mentors. Chanute is semi-willingly advising Jacob during his apprenticeship, which is, however, rather an education in surviving-skills than constructive mentorship.

Funke empowers her protagonist with self-sufficiency at every stage of the narrative. In contrast to many fantasy protagonists whose heroic identities are predetermined by prophecies and adult intervention,¹⁰⁵ Jacob matures independently, gradually becoming a hero despite his teacher's desires, rather than in accordance with them. For example, when Jacob prepares to go on a journey to save his brother, he does so in defiance of Chanute who tries to talk him out of it. *Reckless* demonstrates that education is a complex multi-layered process, one that is not so much about schooling and training, but about learning and acquiring skills. The key purpose of education, as shown by Funke, is personal growth and discovery as opposed to conformity and obedience.

Cornelia Funke's attitude resonates with critical pedagogy's premise that, above all, the learning process should be "a way to ask questions about power" ("Finding Freedom in the Classroom" 18). By challenging fantasy fiction's notorious practice of depicting almighty and fair-minded mentors, Cornelia Funke establishes a platform for readers to exercise their critical literacy skills. Analyzing *Reckless* in the classroom, I argue, can be a step toward generating critical consciousness among the students.

¹⁰⁴ The theme of education has a long-lasting presence in fantasy literature; some stories even take place in educational institutions. One of the most prominent examples is J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series* (1997–2007).

¹⁰⁵ Such as, for example, the identities of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and his companions.

Our understanding of heroism is shaped, among other things, by the fiction that we read. Protagonists whose heroic identity is shaped by mentors and artifacts convey an oppressive notion of heroism that depends on other people and things. Such a notion is, in my view, weak and destructive: it does not promote independent thinking and resistance among readers.

Funke's work takes a step away from the mainstream depiction of heroism. *Reckless* provokes critical reflection by depicting an alternative kind of heroism that is proactive, accessible, and liberated. The social implications of reading and teaching *Reckless* and similar works of fairytale fantasy coincide with the goals of critical pedagogy: they problematize the issues of inequality, expose oppression, and advocate for social change. Juxtaposing the models of heroism perpetuated in different works of supernatural fiction can be an effective way to enhance students' ability to critically approach popular culture.

3.3. Conclusion: Chapter 3

This chapter focused on educational applications of Cornelia Funke's *Reckless* and, by extension, on the universal potential of fairytale fantasy works to be used in the classroom. After exploring the novel from a critical pedagogy perspective, I concluded that analyzing educational practices and images of heroism as they are depicted in Cornelia Funke's novel *Reckless* can be a way for teachers to inspire students to criticize established power dynamics in institutional settings and to understand the political implications of idolization. The hybrid generic structure of the fairytale fantasy allows to reinvent familiar fairy-tale scenarios in ways that encourage critical consciousness among students.

As opposed to many traditional fantasy and fairy tales in which heroic identities are constructed by powerful mentors and potent artifacts, heroism in *Reckless* is a matter of personal

strength and resourcefulness. The novel's protagonist is not unique or "chosen" to begin with: his power is based on the skills he learns over many years, and his ability to use the tools around him to his advantage. Funke shifts the reader's attention away from magical objects and their power of wish-fulfillment; instead she emphasizes the character's abilities.

Jacob's journey is predetermined by his willingness to make mistakes and make his own decisions, as opposed to following recommendations of mentor-figures. In *Reckless*, heroism arises from knowledge and personal freedom. One might even consider the underlying statement of the work (i.e. that magical objects alone are powerless) to be a criticism of today's superfluous consumption. Funke's novel illustrates that revisionist fairytale fantasy works provide valuable opportunities to raise critical awareness that can be taken advantage of by teachers in order to empower students as active participants of the learning process.

This dissertation aims to deliver strategies that will enhance the understanding of the fairytale fantasy as a genre that reaches beyond national boundaries. The subsequent chapter explores the Russian fairytale fantasy tradition by analyzing Svetlana Martynchik's novel *Yellow Metal Key* (2009) in the context of its prior stories *The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino* (1936) by Alexey Tolstoy and *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1881–1883) by Carlo Collodi. An examination of these Russian works in addition to the previous German case-studies shall highlight the versatile character of this investigation.

Chapter 4. Svetlana Martynchik's *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* (2009)

The previous chapters considered the revisionist potential of Cornelia Funke's popular fairytale fantasy novel *Reckless*. The comparative analysis of Funke's and the Grimm Brothers' works helped clarifying the goals, means, and roles representative of the fairytale fantasy genre. To follow is a comparable investigation of fairytale fantasy fiction and fairy tales in the Russian literary tradition.

The principal case-study in the next two chapters is the contemporary fairytale fantasy *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* (*Yellow Metal Key*, 2009) by the Russian novelist Svetlana Martynchik, also known by her pen-name Max Frei. This chapter examines the parallels between *Yellow Metal Key* and *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* (*The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino*, 1936) by Alexey Tolstoy, who, in turn, based his tale on Carlo Collodi's *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia d'un burattino* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 1881–1883). The sections to follow contribute to the thesis' overall discussion of the genre's unique properties by exploring the revisionist potential of Russian fairytale fantasy.

Svetlana Martynchik is a leading Russian-speaking fantasy author. She is recognized by her unusual writing style and boundless creativity. Among the features that let Martynchik's work stand out is the imaginary universe that accommodates most of her narratives. This imaginary universe is comprised of interconnected secondary worlds that were supposedly created by the character "Sir Max" (i.e. Max Frei). Sir Max is the fictional alter-ego of the author as well as the protagonist of the famous book series *Labirinty Ekho* (*The Labyrinths of Echo*, 1996–2000). Martynchik suggests that *The Labyrinths of Echo* and its many companion novels are essentially Sir Max's autobiography. In the context of Martynchik's oeuvre, "Max Frei" assumes distinct roles depending on the story: he can function as the author, the protagonist, a secondary character, or as

an intertextual reference that connects seemingly unrelated works such as, for example, *Yellow Metal Key* and *The Labyrinths of Echo*.

Although the novel is largely unrelated to the overarching narrative of the series, *Yellow Metal Key* might be considered as one of the companion pieces of *The Labyrinths of Echo*. This chapter contrasts *Yellow Metal Key* with its corresponding prior stories to expose the multilayered structure of Martynchik's prose that fully exploits the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy genre. As with Cornelia Funke's *Reckless*, Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key* utilizes the generic hybridity of the fairytale fantasy in order to generate opportunities for readers to consider supernatural narrative devices more critically.

4.1. A Historical Survey of Russian Supernatural Fiction

4.1.1. The Roots of the Tradition

Mostly due to the language barrier, Russian scholarship on fantasy fiction is rarely discussed on the international arena. Domestically, however, both fantasy research and fantasy fiction are growing in popularity. Among other things, the trend reinforces the impact of supernatural themes on the national literary tradition. Influential scholarly works relevant to the topic of this dissertation are *Poètika literaturnoy skazki (The Poetics of the Literary Fairy Tale, 1992)* by Mark Lipovetsky, *Fantastika v kontekste massovoy kultury (Fantasy in the Context of Mass Culture, 2007)* by Avgusta Royfe, and *Worlds Apart: An Anthology of Russian Science Fiction and Fantasy (2007)* edited by Alexander Levitsky. "Fantastikovedeniye" (i.e. the theoretical study of supernatural fiction) is a contemporary branch of Russian literary criticism that increasingly gains recognition.

At the same time there are many European and North American researchers who contribute to the study of Russian supernatural literature. Most of them are known for their work on Slavic folk- and fairy tales (Linda Ivanits, 1989; Andreas Johns, 2004). Among the experts is Jack Haney, the author of *The Complete Russian Folktale* (1999–2006), an acclaimed collection of seven volumes dedicated to the understanding of Russian folklore.

In the Russian literary tradition, such genres as science fiction (*nauchnaya fantastika*), horror (*uzhasy*) as well as various subgenres of fantasy fiction are brought together under the umbrella term “fantastika”; the term corresponds with “supernatural fiction” used throughout this study. There has been no separate term for fantasy fiction in Russian until the genre gained massive popularity in the 1990s. Previously, works that resemble fantasy were attributed to the fairy tale genre and referred to as “skazki” (i.e. fairy tales). Contemporary Russian critics and publishers tend to use the Anglicism “fentezi” (i.e. fantasy fiction) to describe the genre.¹⁰⁶

Much like Anglophone and Germanic, Russian supernatural fiction is deeply rooted in folklore.¹⁰⁷ Along with folktales and fairy tales, a key role belongs to the unique oral narrative form known as “bylina” (the plural form is “byliny”). It is said to have originated during the Kievan period of Russian history between the tenth and eleventh centuries. *Byliny* are epic folk songs that recount prominent events in national history. As opposed to folktales and fairy tales that “have generally been recited in prose” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 49), *byliny* are rhymed. Thematically, they place an enhanced emphasis on heroism, with its common protagonists being “bogatyrs” or “vityazes.”

¹⁰⁶ The direct translation of “fantasy” into Russian is “fantaziya.” It is not used to signify a genre of fiction; instead, “fantaziya” describes an imaginary construct much like the English word “fantasy” in its colloquial use.

¹⁰⁷ Russian supernatural fiction has been influenced not only by Russian but also by Slavic folklore. As the limits of this study do not permit an examination of the links between different branches of folk art, the focus of this chapter remains predominantly on the role of the Russian folklore tradition.

*Bogatyr*s are Slavic medieval folk heroes, known for their tremendous physical strength and eagerness to serve their land and its peoples. *Bogatyr*s travelled the country in search of adventures and opportunities to accomplish feats (*podvigi*), although rarely with a courtly or spiritual intent, and in this they were more similar to heroes of the *chanson de geste* than to Arthurian knights of the Round Table such as Lancelot or Perceval. Some of the *bogatyr*s and their deeds are presumed to have real historical origins. Most heroes, however, are fictional. *Bogatyr*s are brought in relation with Slavic pagan mythology since their adventures often involved supernatural creatures and impossible tasks. Contemporary literary criticism differentiates between *byliny* about “older” heroes, such as Svyatogor, Volga Svyatoslavovich, and Mikula Selyaninovich, who resemble mythological figures, and “younger” heroes, such as Ilya Muromets, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Alyosha Popovich, who are more human.¹⁰⁸

The musician and storyteller Kirsha Danilov (1703–1776) is the first known collector of Russian *byliny*. His work has been edited and published by Andrei Yakubovich (1776–1842) under the title *Drevniye russkiye stikhotvoreniya* (*The Ancient Russian Poems*) in 1804. The first edition only contained 26 of the original 71 texts; the work was re-published in 1818, this time including all of the texts.

The next major collector of *byliny* and other Russian folklore was Ivan Sakharov (1807–1863), who published multiple archeological and ethnographical studies on Russian folksongs, rituals, and legends, most importantly *Skazaniya russkogo naroda o semeynoy zhizni svoikh predkov* (*Tales of the Russian People about the Family Life of their Ancestors*, 1836).

¹⁰⁸ Russian *byliny* have played a vital role in influencing the perception of the supernatural within the literary tradition. In regard to contemporary Russian fantasy, *byliny* find most reflection in “Slavic fantasy.” This subgenre of fantasy fiction draws from oral and written Slavic folklore, including *byliny*, in the same way fairytale fantasy narratives draw from fairy tales. One might go as far as to suggest that Slavic fantasy is a subcategory of fairytale fantasy fiction that is limited to a particular range of linguistic and cultural traditions. Although, the study of *byliny* and Slavic fantasy lies outside of the scope of this dissertation, it is worth pointing out that the topic offers extensive opportunities for future research.

Remarkably comprehensive early collections of Russian bylina were provided by the ethnographer Pavel Rybnikov (1831–1885) and the Slavist Alexander Hilferding (1831–1872). Rybnikov gathered 200 bylina that were published between 1861 and 1867 under the title *Pesni, sobrannyye P. N. Rybnikovym* (*Songs Collected by P. N. Rybnikov*). Hilferding collected 300 bylina that were published posthumously in 1873 under the title *Onezhskiye bylina*. Before bylina and other forms of folk art became the object of scholarly pursuit, they spread by word of mouth, passed on naturally from one generation to the next. The leading role in transmitting Russian folklore belongs to the travelling artists known as “skomorochi.”

Jack Haney calls skomorochi “the early tellers of tales in Muscovite Russia” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 37). The phenomenon has an extensive history: skomorochi lasted from the eleventh to the eighteenth century at which point they gradually started to disappear. Skomorochi were wandering storytellers, musicians, and dancers who regularly participated in folk festivals and ceremonies, including weddings, Christianizing, and funerals (cf. Vlasova 10). Jack Haney (1999) and Russell Zguta (1987) argue on the religious-like nature of the skomorochi phenomenon: “storytellers were thought to have magical powers, and their tales in some cases were regarded as spells” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 37). The common attitude towards tales and storytellers was linked to many superstitions (*suyeveriya*) and rituals.

For example:

The only absolutely safe time for telling tales among the Russians were after sundown and in the winter, particularly during the periods of the winter festivals surrounding the solstice or during the prelenten period that followed. Traditionally, tales were not told

from St. Nicholas Day (May 9) until after harvest (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 38).

The taboos existed because skomorochi and their tales were perceived as uncanny, otherworldly, even magical. To use Jack Haney's example: "the peasants so feared the powers of the storytellers that they avoided them and their arts at certain times of the year and certain times of the day" (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 38). A kind of magical thinking revealed itself when it came to the various rituals surrounding the telling of tales and the reception of the skomorochi by the Russian people.¹⁰⁹ The simultaneously apprehensive and ecstatic attitude towards the skomorochi had profound consequences for community life: their role as knowledge and news carriers cannot be underestimated.

The Russian folklore tradition was ritualized by the skomorochi, who were passing on not only the art, but also a worldview that fortified magical thinking. The practice that went on for several centuries profoundly embedded supernatural narratives into the Russian literary and cultural tradition. One could argue that the skomorochi eased the job of the first Russian folk- and fairy tale collectors once they started gathering Russian national lore.

4.1.2. The Reception of Supernatural Tales in Russian History

The collection of Russian folklore started in the middle of the nineteenth century. Some of the prominent early collectors are Petr Kireevskii (1808–1856) and Pavel Iakushkin (1822–1872). Jack Haney names Kireevskii the "unchallenged Russian authority on folklore" (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 28). Petr Kireevskii was succeeded by Ivan Khudyakov (1842–1876) with his *Velikorusskiye skazki* (*The Great Russian Tales*, 1860) and, ultimately, by Alexander

¹⁰⁹ For a comprehensive survey of magic-related practices in Russia ranging from the fifth to the eighteenth century see Ryan, W. F., *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 1999.

Afanasyev (1826–1871),¹¹⁰ who established his place in history as the leading collector of Russian national lore.

Alexander Afanasyev is among the most influential storytellers and collectors in the Russian folk- and fairy tale tradition. He is also widely recognized in the international arena. Afanasyev was a provincial Russian lawyer. He published his groundbreaking masterpiece *Narodnyye russkiye skazki* (*Russian Fairy Tales*) in eight volumes between 1855 and 1867, followed by *Narodnyye russkiye legendy* (*Russian Folk Legends*, 1859) and *Poeticheskiye vozzreniya slavyan na prirodu* (*Poetic Views on the Nature of the Eastern Slavs*, edited between 1865 and 1869).

Afanasyev contributed as an academic and collector of Russian proverbs and other forms of folk art. As opposed to other collectors, in particular Ivan Khudyakov, who “retold folk tales in a bookish language and made no effort to disentangle the many obscure places in his oral sources” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 5), Alexander Afanasyev tried to stay as close as possible to the original tales:

While Afanasyev was preparing his tales, a lively discussion was taking place in Russia concerning the presentation of folktales. Debate ranging from the opinions of some who argued that “rural peasants and country women are in no position to narrate anything, and it would be pointless to rely on them” to the opinion of the scholar Fedor Buslaev that the tales ought to be preserved precisely as they were told, without editing of any sort (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 32).

¹¹⁰ There are different ways in which scholars transliterate “Александр Афанасьев”; this study shall use “Alexander Afanasyev.”

Afanasyev shared Fedor Buslaev's (1818–1898) point of view regarding the preservation of tales in their original state. The collector published eight volumes with over 600 tales between 1855 and 1867. Afanasyev himself collected only a small number of tales, mainly from his hometown and province, while the majority of the material was given to him by colleagues and other amateur collectors from all over the country. Afanasyev was closely familiar with the work of the Grimm Brothers, and even reviewed *Children's and Household Tales* in 1864. Yet, as James Riordan points out, “unlike the Grimms, [Afanasyev] makes no attempt to ‘prettify’ his stories, to make them interesting for children” (222). The collector favored “genuine texts” that retained “the peculiarities of oral speech and dialects and their specific grammatical and syntactic structures” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 5)

With concern to the sustenance of his work, Afanasyev received financial and other aids from the “Russian Geographical Society” that was founded in 1848; the society provided the collector with travel funds and enabled seamless publishing until 1850s (cf. J. Riordan 222). After the Russian Geographical Society stopped supporting Afanasyev's collection work, the latter turned to a fellow literary scholar and founder of the “Russian Geographical Society,” Vladimir Dal' (1801–1872).¹¹¹ Eager to help, Dal' provided Afanasyev with enough folktale material for an additional two volumes.

Contrary to the Brothers Grimm, Afanasyev did not intend for his collection to be of interest to the general readership. Zipes argues that Afanasyev's work “was a purely scholarly publication” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 5). Despite the support he received from other scholars, Afanasyev faced recurrent criticism on multiple other fronts. Thus, on the ideological level, “the Russian literary establishment doubted that illiterate Russian peasants were capable of

¹¹¹ Vladimir Dal' is to this day considered one of the most prominent Russian lexicographers; his dictionaries continue to influence contemporary Russian linguistics.

telling coherent stories” (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 5). The attitude clearly undermined the value of Afanasyev’s endeavors. Other critics were concerned with the artistic value of Russian tales, insisting on their inferiority to other European tales.

Afanasyev’s work faced rejection from both the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist censors. The collection *Russian Folk Legends* was banned in the same year when it appeared. The work was proclaimed “blasphemous and immoral” (J. Riordan 222) for its inappropriate depiction of Christian saints. The conflict between Afanasyev and the authorities escalated to the point where police was sent to confiscate the second edition of the tales. These events took an immense toll on the author’s emotional, psychological, and financial welfare. In a short span, Afanasyev was reduced from an esteemed scholar to a disregarded blasphemer.

In response to the raids, Afanasyev transferred the remnants of his work to international publishers. As a result, sometime between 1872 and 1875, the collection *Russkie zavetnye skazki* (*Russian Secret Tales*, also translated as *Russian Forbidden Tales*) appeared in Geneva without any traces of bibliographical information.¹¹²

Russian Secret Tales is a unique cultural artifact in the Russian literary tradition. It is a collection of fairy tales explicitly inappropriate for children. The work is full of obscene and offensive language, sexual references, and violence. Simultaneously, the work is valuable for its “biting satire on the clergy and nobility” (J. Riordan 223). Afanasyev’s *Russian Secret Tales* is an early example of a Russian literary work that employs supernatural narrative devices in unorthodox ways with the aim to provoke critical reflection.

In contrast to the comparatively fortunate fate of the Grimm Brothers, Alexander Afanasyev ended his days in poverty, stripped of his previous status and privileges. In spite of

¹¹² In Russia, the collection was published as late as 1991. For a more detailed overview of the work see Haney, Jack, *Mr. Afanasiev's Naughty Little Secrets*, 2010.

these egregious circumstances, he published several more works before his death in 1871. When assessing why Afanasyev's work elicited so much criticism as compared with the Grimm Brothers' work, one explanation might be linked to the national orientation of Grimms' tales.

As stated before, the Grimms insisted on the "German" nature of their stories: they used a brew of dialects and proverbs to underline the "volkstümlich tone" of the tales (cf. *The Brothers Grimm* 114). This intent protected the Brothers from both the church and the government. The Grimms positioned themselves as scholars undertaking an important mission, namely advancing the German national consciousness. Despite representing an impressive number of Russian territories and peoples, Afanasyev's work was not regarded in the same context.¹¹³

Alexander Afanasyev's tales were condemned by both the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist censors for reinforcing magical thinking. As noted by Jack Haney, folk- and fairy tales "flourished [...] at times when social values were in conflict with the ideas of a dominating social group" (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 88). Put differently, while the people were inspired by magical solutions, the ruling institutions regarded supernatural tales as a dangerous form of protest. They assumed, not without reason, that supernatural narratives have an incentive to subvert the status quo and undermine the social system:

It was therefore a form of propaganda, and that is precisely how it was seen and judged by the contemporary guardians of the truth, whether that guardian was a medieval bishop fulminating against the "shameful" tales of his flock or a commissar whose campaign for universal literacy was also a bold attempt to seize control of the fount of knowledge from village elders and impose the party's view

¹¹³ According to Jack Zipes, for his collection of fairy tales Alexander Afanasyev used texts "from over 30 Russian provinces, three Ukrainian, and one Belorussian" (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 5).

of what was useful for the peasant to know (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 88).

Tales met radical opposition because they spoke of a better life and prosperous leisure, things that peasants desired but were unable to have. The fear was that these narratives could foment dissent, encourage people to rebel, and to challenge the authority of the ruling class. As with the history of the skomorochi, Afanasyev's struggles confirm that at various stages in national history supernatural-related phenomena were embedded in Russia's cultural, social, and political domains.

Among the early authors of Russian literary tales were Vasily Levshin with his *Ruskiye skazki* (*Russian Fairy Tales*, 1780), Petr Timofeyev with *Skazki russkiye, soderzhashchiye v sebe 10 razlichnykh skazok* (*Russian Fairy Tale Including 10 Extended Tales*, 1787), and Mikhail Tchulkov with *Peresmeshnik, ili Slavenskiya skazki* (*The Mocker or Slavic Tales*, 1789).

Strongly influenced by the German Romantic movement, in particular by the *Kunstmärchen* of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Ludwig Tieck and Novalis, Russian supernatural fiction took a new turn in the nineteenth century. It began to explore themes associated with fantasy fiction as we know it today. Among the most favourably received authors was Antoniy Pogorelskiy (1787–1830) with the collection *Dvoynik, ili Moi vechera v Malorossii* (*The Double, or My Evenings in Little Russia*, 1828) and the fairy tale *Chërnaya kuritsa, ili Podzemnyye zhiteli* (*Black Hen, or Living Underground*, 1829).

Another important Romanticist, Alexander Veltman (1800–1870) is considered to be among the first to experiment with the genres of science fiction, alternative history, and historical fantasy (cf. Kharitonov, 251–254).¹¹⁴ Veltman's works *Koshchei bessmertny: Bylina starogo*

¹¹⁴ On the role of alternative history in Russian science fiction see Kharitonov, Evgeniy, "Skazka sprysnutaya mysliyu" ("A Fairy Tale with a Touch of Thought"), 2001.

vremeni (*Koshchei the Immortal: A Bylina of Old Times*, 1833), *Svetoslavich: Vrazhii pitomets* (*Svetoslavich: The Devil's Foster Child*, 1837) and *Novyy Yemelya, ili Prevrashcheniya* (*New Yemelya or Transformations*, 1845), are known among the forerunners of contemporary Russian fantasy. A notable figure of the movement, Vladimir Odoevsky (1803–1869), was known for his vivid supernatural short stories. His works include the collections *Skazki dedushki Irineya* (*Grandpa Iriney's Fairy Tales*, 1841) and *Russkiye nochki* (*The Russian Nights*, 1844).

Russia's most famous Romantic poet, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) greatly influenced the development of Russian language and literature. He composed several fairy tale poems that share many attributes with the *Kunstmärchen*; examples include “*Ruslan i Lyudmila*” (“*Ruslan and Lyudmila*,” 1818–1820), “*Skazka o tsare Saltane*” (“*The Tale of Tsar Saltan*,” 1831), and “*Skazka o mērtvoy tsarevne i semi bogatyryakh*” (“*The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights*,” 1833). Jack Haney remarks that Pushkin's tales were “poetic” in style, “liberally sprinkled with phrases he heard from his nurse, Arina Rodionovna, or in his travels” (*An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* 27). Fyodor Dostoyevsky considered Pushkin's celebrated short story “*Pikovaya dama*” (“*The Queen of Spades*,” 1834) the “pinnacle of the art of the fantastic” (Dolinin 134) for its sophisticated blend of reality with the supernatural.¹¹⁵

Following Pushkin, the works of Nikolai Gogol' (1809–1852) such as the Ukrainian folklore-inspired collection *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (*Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, 1831–1832), the horror novella “*Viy*” (1835), and the fantastic novella “*Portret*” (“*The Portrait*,” 1835) influenced the historical development of Russian supernatural fiction.¹¹⁶ John Clute goes as far as to consider Gogol's masterpiece *Mertvyye dushi* (*Dead Souls*, 1842) a subdued supernatural narrative. Clute suggests that the novel's archetypal characters, “surreal dislocations [...] animate

¹¹⁵ See more in Dolinin, Arkadiy, *Dostoyevsky: Stat'i i materialy* (*Dostoyevsky: Articles and Essays*), 1924.

¹¹⁶ “Fantastic” is used in compliance with Tzvetan Todorov's definition of the term.

metonymies [...] and the constant juxtapositioning of life and death” (Clute and Grant 418) generate a fantastic appearance.

Ironically, Nikolai Gogol' is also a pioneer of “Russian realism,” the dominant literary movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the spirit of the time some of Russia’s finest literary figures, including Ivan Goncharov (1812–1891), Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883) and Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), produced largely realistic literature, thus influencing the development of supernatural fiction only marginally. Although, it should be noted that the impact of another realist, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881), remains open to debate due to some of his works occasionally being linked to the traditions of the gothic novel¹¹⁷ and dystopian fiction.¹¹⁸

Overall, Alexander Afanasyev’s efforts to collect national folklore had a significant impact on the development of Russian supernatural fiction. Despite the initial rejection, Russian folk- and fairy tales gradually gained the status of a vital contribution to the nation’s cultural capital. James Riordan remarks on the tales’ influence on other art forms:

Folk stories recounted by serf nurses to young aristocratic gentlefolk provided themes for innumerable Russian masterpieces, from the music of Tchaikovsky (“Sleeping Beauty,” “Swan Lake,” “Nutcracker”), Rimsky-Korsakov (“Sadko,” “The Snow Maiden,” “The Golden Cockerel”) and Stravinsky (“The Firebird,” “Petrushka”), to the writings of Pushkin, Gogol' and Aksakov (219).

¹¹⁷ For an examination of gothic elements in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre see Yevtushenko, Emiliya, “Misticheskiy syuzhet v tvorchestve F. M. Dostoyevskogo” (“The Mystical Syuzhet in the Works of F. M. Dostoevsky”), 2002.

¹¹⁸ See Gakov, Vladimir, Alan Myers, Igor Tolokonnikov, and Peter Nicholls, “Russia,” *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, edited by John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls, and Graham Sleight, www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/russia. Accessed 23 Oct. 2017.

The critic claims that there has not been one Russian artist whose works have not been influenced in one way or another by folk and fairy tales told in infancy (cf. 219). Similarly, in *Russian Magic Tales from Pushkin to Platonov* (2012), the British poet and translator Robert Chandler argues that there always has been a very strong connection between Russian oral and written traditions. (cf. xviii) The influence occurred on many levels. For instance, it corresponded to the readers and the authors: “even the most Western-oriented of nineteenth-century Russian writers could not help but be more familiar with folk ways and folk literature than their contemporaries in other parts of Europe. It is, indeed, often difficult to understand much of Russian literature without some knowledge of folklore” (Chandler xviii). Over generations, Russian fairy tales, some that arose from the oral tradition and others that were composed by individual authors, influenced the formation of cultural values.

Considering that most fairy tales are embedded in the national literary tradition in which they originated, fairytale fantasy naturally inherited an element of this affiliation. By borrowing from fairy tales, fairytale fantasy works often display explicit national markers (e.g. dialects, aphorisms, poetry), thus establishing a connection to specific national literatures in a way that is rarely shown by other subgenres of fantasy fiction.¹¹⁹

4.1.3. The Evolution of Modern Russian Fantasy

The first decade of the twentieth century in the Russian literary tradition was marked by the second wave of the “Russian symbolism” movement that introduced a new perspective on the supernatural. Characterized by its decadent views, idealistic aspirations, and newly found spirituality, the movement was deeply influenced by the Russian philosopher and theologian

¹¹⁹ It is worth mentioning that there are fantasy subgenres (e.g. Slavic fantasy) that originate in and exclusively depend on a specific national and linguistic context. Fairytale fantasy narratives, by way of contrast, can borrow elements from several national literatures simultaneously.

Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900). Supernatural elements might not have directly appear in the works of Symbolist poets, but their use of complex metaphors, irrational abstractions, and references to myths created the necessarily “fantastic” atmosphere.¹²⁰ Thus, Alexandr Blok’s works, for example, are notorious for blending the mysterious with the ordinary and alternating between detachment and immersion. Similar tendencies can be observed in the works of other symbolists, including Fyodor Sologub (1863–1927), Valery Bryusov (1873–1924), and Zinaida Gippius (1869–1945).

The Russian symbolism movement reaffirms a particular tendency evident in the tradition of Russian supernatural fiction, where most of the time the supernatural tends to appear in its most elusive form, hidden between the lines, ambiguous enough to leave plenty of room for interpretation. As I illustrate later in this chapter, this pattern persists in Russian fantasy fiction until this day.

Along with symbolism, the first half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the “mystic line of Russian fantasy.”¹²¹ Alexander Kondratiev (1876–1976), for example, combined paganism with folklore; his works include the novel *Satiressa* (1907) and the collection of mythological sonnets *Slavyanskiye bogi* (*Slavic Gods*, 1936). Another important figure at the time was Alexander Grin (1880–1932). He was among the first Russian authors to experiment with the creation of secondary worlds: most of his works, among them the novella *Alyye parusa* (*Scarlet Sails*, 1923) and the novel *Begushchaya po volnam* (*She Who Runs on the Waves*, 1928), are set in an imaginary world that fans refer to as “Grinlandia.”¹²²

¹²⁰ For a comprehensive discussion of Russian Symbolism see, for example, Pyman, Avril, *A History of Russian Symbolism*, 2004.

¹²¹ The term has been suggested by Cyril M. Korolyov; see Korolyov, Cyril M., “Russia,” *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, edited by John Clute and John Grant, sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=russia. Accessed 23 Oct. 2017.

¹²² The term has been suggested by Korneliy Zelinsky in “Zhizn' i tvorchestvo A. S. Grina” (“The Life and Art of A. S. Grin”), 1934.

Arguably the best-known Russian work of supernatural fiction is the classic *Master i Margarita* (*The Master and Margarita*) written by Mikhail Bulgakov between 1928 and 1940, but banned from publishing by the state censorship until 1967. Against the background of a biting satire of the Soviet society, Bulgakov uses supernatural imageries to challenge his characters' humanity, glorify self-sacrifice, and ridicule cowardice.¹²³ Other remarkable works of supernatural fiction by the author include the social satire *Sobach'e serdtse* (*Heart of a Dog*, 1925) and the science fiction novella *Rokovyie yaytsa* (*The Fatal Eggs*, 1925).

After the Second World War, while European and North American fantasy fiction experienced an eminent rise in popularity, Russian speaking territories remained under the rule of the Soviets. As one might expect, USSR's official ideology did not sit well with magical solutions and potentially escapist references to secondary worlds representative of the fantasy genre. On that, the critic Dmitriy Volodikhin remarks:

The Soviet world perception was grounded in science. Thus, in the USSR even the supernatural was required to demonstrate a scientific foundation. Magic, dragons, elves, much like any other demonic entities are very difficult, if not impossible to justify scientifically. Consequently, fantasy fiction remained unwelcome in the land of communism, industrial progress, and space triumphs ("Fentesi").

In my opinion, the Soviet propaganda rejected fantasy fiction much for the same reasons as, in the nineteenth century, the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church ostracized fairy tales: out

¹²³ For more information on the topic see the scholarly works of Anthony C. Wright (*Mikhail Bulgakov: Life and Interpretations*, 1978) and Ellendea Proffer (*Bulgakov: Life and Work*, 1984).

of fear that, in time, unrestrained creative thought on paper would lead to more active forms of protest against the existing power structures.¹²⁴

Soviet intellectuals, however, never failed to find a way around the system. The result was one of the most vibrant periods in Russian literary history: the “golden age” of Soviet science fiction.¹²⁵ In sharp contrast to fantasy, the futuristic and technological orientation of science fiction aligned comfortably with USSR’s political agenda. Prevented from working with supernatural phenomena directly, while, at the same time, inspired by national technological progress, Soviet authors adopted the language of science to explore the impossible.¹²⁶

Under the umbrella of science fiction, the most prominent literary duo at the time, Arkady (1925–1991) and Boris Strugatsky (1933–2012), produced formidable social satires that utilized typical fantasy-themes, such as, for instance, travels to a Medieval-themed secondary world as in *Trudno byt bogom* (*Hard to Be a God*, 1964), and supernatural creatures and magical artifacts as in *Piknik na obochine* (*Roadside Picnic*, 1972). According to Peter Nicholls and John Clute, in the second half of the twentieth century:

Writers demanded the freedom to speculate much more widely, to write “far” rather than “near” fantasy, as they put it. Encouraged by a more liberal literary climate and the example of Western work, now being translated in quantity, new and talented authors emerged

¹²⁴ See Riordan, James, “Russian Fairy Tales and Their Collectors,” 220–22.

¹²⁵ According to the comparatist Daniel Gerould, the “golden age” of Soviet science fiction lasted from 1956 to the early 1970s. For a historical survey of the topic see Gerould, Daniel, “On Soviet Science Fiction,” www.depauw.edu/sfs/review_essays/gerou31.htm. Accessed 4 Mar. 2016.

¹²⁶ It is not to say that science fiction is not an independent literary genre with a potent history and an extensive list of followers. Precisely because science fiction and fantasy are considered separate genres, and because many have written about the former’s history, I will keep my account short. My aim is merely to point out that due to the negative attitude toward supernatural phenomena and, consequently, the absence of fantasy as a generic category at the time, many works that would have been otherwise classified as “fantasy” or “science fantasy” were attributed to science-fiction or fairy tales instead. The overview was not meant to recite the history of Russian science fiction, but to stress how particular works that are currently considered sf instead fit into the genealogical framework of fantasy fiction.

and themes formerly taboo began to appear in print: aliens, cybernetics, [extra-sensory perception], robots and time travel, for example (Nicholls and Clute, “Russia”).¹²⁷

Finding inspiration in the works of Ray Bradbury (1920–2012), Isaac Asimov (1920–1992), and Stanislaw Lem (1921–2006), Soviet authors used the tropes of science fiction to comment on political, social, and cultural challenges of their time. At the same time works that dealt with supernatural phenomena but did not fit the sf category were only accepted in the context of children’s literature. Any exploration of the supernatural was rarely to be found outside of educational and moralistic narratives.

Among the rare exceptions that managed to pass the censorship were the fairy tale-plays by Eugene Schwartz (1896–1958) written in the genre of magic realism, including “Drakon” (“The Dragon,” 1944) and “Obyknovennoye chudo” (“The Ordinary Miracle,” 1956), the novel *Ponedelnik nachinayetsya v subbotu* (*Monday Begins on Saturday*, 1965) by the Brothers Strugatsky, Bulgakov’s already mentioned *Master and Margarita* (1967), and *Al’tist Danilov* (*Danilov, the Violist*, 1980) by Vladimir Orlov (1936–2014).

At the time magic and other fantasy themes were used for allegorical purposes, mostly appearing in family-oriented romantic comedies. Children and young adults’ oriented *twice-told* tales were a trend in Soviet supernatural fiction.¹²⁸ Examples include Eugene Schwartz’s twice-told fairy tale-plays “Ten” (“The Shadow,” 1940), “Sniezhenaya koroleva” (“The Snow Queen,” 1948), and “Goliy korol” (“The Naked King,” 1960),¹²⁹ which were retellings of fairy tales by

¹²⁷ “Near” refers to the so-called “close aim” science fiction: works that were limited to dealing with travels only within the Solar system and praising anticipated technological progress (i.e. predominantly written during the heavily censored period between 1930 and 1960). “Far,” by contrast, applies to later science fiction works that exceeded these limitations.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Meshcheryakova, Mariya, *Russkaya detskaya, podrostkovaya i yunosheskaya proza 2 poloviny XX veka* (*Russian Children’s, Adolescent, and Youth Fiction in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century*), 1997.

¹²⁹ The play was written in 1934 but first published as late as 1960.

Hans Christian Andersen. Similarly, Alexander Volkov (1891–1977) composed *Volshebnik izumrudnogo goroda* (*The Wizard of the Emerald City*, 1939) that was a loose adaptation of Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Popular Soviet authors of original children's fiction that included supernatural elements were, among others, Pavel Bazhov (1879–1950) with the fairy tale collection *Malakhitovaya shkatulka* (*The Malachite Box*, published between 1936 and 1945), Lazar Lagin (1903–1979) with the fairy tale *Starik Hottabych* (*Old Khottabych*, 1938), and Nikolay Nosov (1908–1976) with the utopian trilogy about Neznayka's adventures comprised of *Priklyucheniya Neznayki i yego druzey* (*The Adventures of Dunno and his Friends*, 1954), *Neznayka v solnechnom gorode* (*Dunno in Sun City*, 1958), and *Neznayka na lune* (*Dunno on the Moon*, 1966).

In the 1980s, influenced by the political reforms associated with perestroika, the institute of state censorship went into decline. Consequently, previously banned Western fiction and films were increasingly released. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, fantasy fiction promptly gained popularity and established itself as one of the most-read genres in contemporary Russia (cf. Gusarova 5–8).

Many authors, including Nick Perumov, Vera Kamsha, and Alexey Pekhov, followed in the footsteps of Western epic fantasy writers.¹³⁰ Others, such as Yuri Nikitin, Aleksandr Bushkov, and Maria Semyonova found inspiration in Slavic folklore and mythology, introducing readers to the subgenre of Slavic fantasy.¹³¹ Popular Russian-speaking fantasy authors also include Andrey

¹³⁰ Traditional epic fantasy tropes can be observed in works such as Perumov's *Gibel' bogov* (*Godsdoom*, 1995), Kamsha's *Khroniki Artsii* (*Chronicles of Artsia*, 2001–2003), and Pekhov's *Khroniki Sialy* (*The Chronicles of Siala*, 2002–2003).

¹³¹ Examples might include Nikitin's *Troye iz lesa* (*The Three from the Forest Cycle*, 1992–2010), Bushkov's *Svarog* (*Svarog Cycle*, 1996–2007), and Semyonova's *Volkodav* (*Wolfhound*, 2007).

Belyanin, H. L. Oldie, the writing-duo Maryna and Serhiy Dyachenko, Sergey Lukyanenko, Svyatoslav Loginov, and Sergey Malitsky.

In the past decade, there has been an increase in scholarly pursuit of fantasy fiction among Russian journalists, linguists, literary and film critics. Many have been reassessing the genre of fantasy in order to explain its immense popularity among readers. Thus, in *Rozhdeniye fentezi* (The Origins of Fantasy, 2007) the fantasy scholar Elena Kovtun breaks down the stages of development of Russian fantasy, illustrating how the genre stands out from its European and North American predecessors. Likewise, in *Zhanr fentezi v russkoy literature 90-kh gg* (The Genre of Fantasy in Russian Literature of the 1990s, 2009), Anna Gusarova examines the “poetics” of different subgenres of fantasy fiction and stresses the necessity to expand the vocabulary of fantasy studies in order to understand its role in the development of modern literature.

Vitaliy Shumko in *Genezis, razvitiye zhanra fentezi i yego sovremennoye sostoyaniye* (The Genesis and Development of the Fantasy Genre and its Current State, 2002) and Slaviana Shamiakina in *Literatura fentezi* (Fantasy Literature, 2013) are concerned with thematic similarities among popular fantasy works that help to discriminate between fantasy subgenres and their individual impact. Despite the considerable number of theoretical surveys, some of which are mentioned above, there is an obvious shortage of in-depth case-studies that would illustrate the generic peculiarities of Russian fantasy fiction. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by examining Svetlana Martynchik’s novel *Yellow Metal Key* (2009) in the context of its prior story *The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino* (1936) by Alexey Tolstoy.

As with the German literary tradition, supernatural themes are an important part of Russian literature. More so, the latter has its own remarkable fairy tale tradition that promotes the emergence of fairytale fantasy narrative. The retelling of classic fairy-tale tropes is an increasingly

popular trend in contemporary Russian literature. Examples of renowned fairytale fantasies include the series *Priklyucheniya Zhikharya* (*The Adventures of Zhikhar*, 1995–2005) by Mikhail Uspensky, the trilogy *Printsesssa* (*Princess*, 2005–2007) by Natalya Rezanova, the short-story *Kosheievo ovum* (*Koshei's Ovum*, 2005) by the Russian-Ukrainian author Vladimir Arenev, *O bednom kosheie zamolvite slovo* (*Pray for the Poor Koshei*, 2006) and *Komu v nav'yem tsarstve zhit' khorosho* (*Who's Doing Well in Our Kingdom*, 2006) by the Belorussian author Olga Gromyko, the fairytale fantasy series *Taynyy sysk tsarya Gorokha* (*Tsar Gorokh's Secret Service*, 1999–2015) by Andrei Belyanin. Many of these works incorporate elements of comic fantasy.

Now that the historical origins of Russian fairytale fantasy have been discussed, the chapter continues with an extended analysis of the primary sources. As with the works by Cornelia Funke and the Brothers Grimm earlier in this dissertation, the following sections compare the generic goals, means, and roles in Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key*, Alexey Tolstoy's *Buratino* and, to some extent, Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*.¹³² Among other things, the analysis focuses on narrative style, character portrayal, and representation of magical objects in the works. As with Funke's *Reckless*, Martynchik's novel is commonly attributed to the genre of fantasy fiction without any consideration of its relation to the fairy tale tradition. The aim is to highlight the revisionist notions that emerge in the process of studying *Yellow Metal Key* through the fairytale fantasy framework.

¹³² Compared to the detailed interpretation of *Yellow Metal Key* and *Buratino*, this study only briefly engages with *Pinocchio*. In order to give Collodi's work a credible account, I would have had to provide more detailed background information on Italian supernatural fiction, which, in turn, goes beyond the limits of this project. For now, I shall keep my analysis of *Pinocchio* short, leaving the topic open for future investigations.

4.2. Revising Fairy Tales: The Case-Study of *Yellow Metal Key*

Svetlana Martynchik is a leading Russian-speaking fantasy author, literary critic, and artist who usually publishes under the pen-name Max Frei. The pseudonym also appears in collaborative projects between Martynchik and her husband Igor Stepin.¹³³ Martynchik was born in Odessa in 1965. She became widely recognized for her fantasy series *Labirinty Ekho* (*The Labyrinths of Echo*, written between 1996 and 2003). Martynchik's fictional universe is supposedly created by "Sir Max," the author's literary alter ego and the protagonist of *The Labyrinths of Echo*. It is implied that most of the stories are autobiographical.

The cycle is composed of eight novels, each telling a collection of stories about the adventures of Sir Max and his friends in the supernatural secondary world "Echo." Sir Max starts as an "everyday hero." He finds a way to travel between realms and gradually acquires supernatural powers in the course of his adventures. Martynchik's works about Sir Max include *Gnezda khimer* (*The Chimeras' Nests*, 1996) and *Moy Ragnarok* (*My Ragnarok*, 1998). The number of novels, edited collections, and short stories written and composed by Max Frei has reached over a hundred. Her works are renowned for captivating plotlines, entertaining humor, and vivid imagery. Svetlana Martynchik's novels have been awarded numerous prestigious literary awards including "Bol'shaya Kniga" and "Serebryanaya strela."

Until now, there has been only limited scholarly research on Martynchik's works. Reflections and analyses are mostly to be found in blog posts and book reviews. Still, I agree with

¹³³ In an interview for the popular radio station "Echo of Moscow" (*Ekho Moskvy*), Svetlana Martynchik defined her collaboration with Stepin as follows: "Igor Stepin is someone I have known since 1986; we have painted, sculpted, and created imaginary worlds together. All we did was tell each other stories, fairy tales if you wish. At some point the stories made up by other people started to seem boring, and we opted for creating our own. And that is how we invented the city of Echo with all of its neighborhoods and characters. We invented the universe together, and then I started to write up the stories; it never really occurred to me that my works might actually be published" (Bolt'yanskaya, Interview with Max Frei). Here and hereafter, interviews are translated by me.

Anastasia Bashkatova that Svetlana Martynchik's novels make a valuable contribution: "the secret of Frei's popularity is his literary egalitarianism, and disposition to co-create with the reader" ("Igray kak Frei"). Martynchik is not afraid of taking up complex topics of identity, alienation, nothingness, and talk about them in a comprehensible way that attracts readers from various social classes and educational backgrounds.

Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla (*Yellow Metal Key*, 2009) is one of Svetlana Martynchik's novels that are for the most part unrelated to her most prominent series *The Labyrinths of Echo*. The only allusion to *The Labyrinths of Echo* occurs when Sir Max briefly appears in a dream of Phillip, the protagonist of *Yellow Metal Key*.¹³⁴ For the most part, however, *YMK* originates from a different imaginary world. The novel is a retelling of *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* (*The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino*), a renowned fairy tale written by Alexey Tolstoy (1883–1945) in 1936.¹³⁵

4.2.1. *Buratino and Pinocchio through the Lens of Unnatural Narratology*

The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino was one of the most influential fairy tales written during the Soviet era. The literary critic Mark Lipovetsky considers the figure of Buratino to have been powerful enough to become ingrained in the Soviet and later the Russian cultural unconscious (cf. "Utopiya svobodnoy marionetki, ili Kak sdelan arkhetyp"). The wooden puppet, Lipovetsky remarks, has been reimagined numerous times (e.g. in fiction, films, songs, and games) and yet, it manages to retain its unique and recognizable features. Lipovetsky calls Buratino an "influential cultural archetype" on a par with Chapayev or Stierlitz: a symbol that transcended the Soviet era and established itself as one the pillars of Russian popular culture.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Svetlana Martynchik's novel is hereafter abbreviated as *YMK*.

¹³⁵ Alexey Tolstoy's work will hereafter be referred to as *Buratino*.

¹³⁶ Vasily Chapayev (1887–1919) was an eminent Red Army commander during the Russian Civil War and Max Otto von Stierlitz is a popular fictional character from the television series *Semnadtsat' mgnoveniy vesny* (*Seventeen*

The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino is a revisionist twice-told tale. Alexey Tolstoy intended it as a creative adaptation of Carlo Collodi's (1826–1890) classic fairy tale *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia d'un burattino* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 1881–1883).¹³⁷ Tolstoy claims as a child to have read *Pinocchio* many times: he liked to tell the story to his friends, occasionally adding different plot-turns to keep it interesting (cf. *Zolotoy klyuchik* 4). After becoming an acclaimed writer, Tolstoy morphed his early oral adaptations into an independent story.¹³⁸

The plots of *Buratino* and *Pinocchio* revolve around an anthropomorphic wooden puppet that goes on adventures: in Collodi's tale his name is "Pinocchio," and in Tolstoy's "Buratino." Both protagonists are free-spirited rebels who face resistance from the surrounding world. Both puppets are carved from a speaking piece of log by their retrospective fathers "Papa Carlo" and Geppetto.

In Tolstoy's story, Papa Carlo, an aged barrel organ player, lives in extremely poor conditions in a little room under the staircase. He carves Buratino in the hope that the puppet will bring him luck and happiness. To his dismay, Buratino turns into an egocentric troublemaker who causes problems from the moment he learns how to walk. The wooden-boy is neither very smart, nor particularly kind. Buratino's adventures mostly revolve around other people influencing him; in the process, he learns the difference between friends and enemies. Eventually, he develops a selfless and brave side to his personality.

Moments of Spring). See Lipovetsky, Mark, "Utopiya svobodnoy marionetki, ili Kak sdelan arkhetyip" (The Utopia of a Free Puppet, or How an Archetype is Made"), magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2003/60/lipov.html. Accessed 30 Oct. 2017.

¹³⁷ Carlo Collodi's work will hereafter be referred to as *Pinocchio*.

¹³⁸ A profound exploration of Alexey Tolstoy's life and oeuvre can be found in *Krasnyy shut: Biograficheskoye povestvovaniye ob Alekseye Tolstom* (*The Red Jester: The Biography of Alexey Tolstoy*, 2005) by Aleksey Varlamov.

Pinocchio is more malicious than Buratino, but also more determined. The story follows the same pattern: Pinocchio messes up, and his father tries to save him. Moved by Geppetto's efforts, Pinocchio intends to become a better person, but succumbs to his laziness and carelessness. After various adventures, some of them similar to Buratino's, others less so, Pinocchio experiences a complete transformation from puppet into human. Jack Zipes calls Collodi's *Pinocchio* a "pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps fairy tale that demonstrates that even a log has the potential to be good, human, and socially useful" (*Happily Ever After* 76). The fairy tale was meant as a commentary on "what it meant to develop as a peasant boy in nineteenth-century Italian society" (82). Its moralistic inclination relates Collodi's fairy tale to those by the Grimm Brothers.

When comparing *Pinocchio* with *Buratino*, Collodi's tale strikes as more didactic. Whenever Pinocchio acts stubborn or arrogant he is punished by external circumstances. Possibly the most dreadful penalty is his temporary transformation into a donkey as punishment for laziness. The premise is that the protagonist of *Pinocchio* is intrinsically flawed and needs to improve. The moralistic orientation of the work implies that being a puppet is "bad": it is a "condition" that must be overcome through earnest work and virtuous behavior. Collodi asserts that the ultimate aspiration is to transcend the "puppet-shell" in favor of becoming human.

Following the premise, Pinocchio learns his lessons, adapts to societal expectations, and, ultimately, collects his reward. The circumstances differ in *Buratino*. Tolstoy's tale lacks Collodi's didactic ambition. Tolstoy's puppets, Buratino especially, are independent actors who shape their fates autonomously, regardless of their "natural" predisposition to be controlled by a puppeteer. Tolstoy's protagonist does not seek transformation, but takes advantage of his otherness instead. In fact, it is Buratino's rebellious personality that ultimately leads him to success. The contrast between the works is striking: Pinocchio's ultimate achievement is made possible through

complete self-rejection (i.e. transformation into a human), whereas Buratino triumphs by staying true to himself and amplifying his realm of influence (i.e. the newly discovered puppet-theater becomes the leading attraction in town).

Pinocchio is continuously made aware of his inferiority as a non-human. In response, he develops an ambition to enter the realm of the natural world previously unavailable to him due to his non-humanness. In return for demonstrating compassion, selflessness, and diligence, at Collodi's protagonist wakes up as a "real" boy at the end of the tale. Carlo Testa argues: "Pinocchio finally accepts for the sake of someone else the animalization he had stubbornly fought against when he was acting in his own name – and it is just his selfless embracing of animalization that eventually allows him to transfigure his previous animal-like self into a properly humane being" (Testa 103). That is to say, after continuously being "beaten and lulled into submission" (*Happily Ever After* 80) by social forces around him, Pinocchio conforms at last and is reborn in reward.

That is, if we were to interpret the transformation as part of the narrative reality of Collodi's tale. I argue that there are clues suggesting that Pinocchio's entire story was only a dream conceived by a regular boy. To illustrate: when the protagonist wakes up in his bed, there is no sign of the Blue Fairy, who has allegedly performed the magic transformation. There are things in the room that might or might not have been gifts from the Fairy, but there is no direct evidence to confirm the reality of her visit. In addition, there is a marionette in the room that resembles Pinocchio's former puppet-body, but there are no signs it had ever been "worn" by the protagonist. Chances are that it has been a simple toy that inspired the dream in the first place. Last but not least, this reading would explain the absurd plot twists in Collodi's story, which, arguably, resemble the abrupt turnover of images seen in dreams.

One might argue that Pinocchio's awakening revokes all the prior supernatural events in the story. It is best understood within the framework of unnatural narratology, developed by scholars such as Brian Richardson (2000; 2002; 2006), Jan Alber (2009; 2016), and Dorrit Cohn (1978). The concept of the unnatural narrative emerges in response to Monika Fludernik's notion of the natural narrative.¹³⁹ In the edited collection *Unnatural Narratives—Unnatural Narratology* (2011), Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze explain that “unnatural narratologists are interested in narratives that have a defamiliarizing effect because they are experimental, extreme, transgressive, unconventional, non-conformist, or out of the ordinary” (2). This is to say the scholars investigate the appeal of the unnatural to readers.¹⁴⁰

As opposed to realistic narratives, which are concerned with “producing lifelike illusions” (Alber and Heinze 46), unnatural narratives examine the strange, the weird, and the eccentric. According to Alber and Heinze, “narrative theory has had a mimetic bias ever since the times of Aristotle and the unities of time, place, and action. And this real-world orientation has led to the marginalization of the unnatural” (5). It is, therefore, the goal of unnatural narratology to explore what lies beyond the mimetic realm. Although unnatural narratology does not focus on fairy tales and fantasy explicitly, I consider its conceptual framework to be highly effective in interpreting these genres.

Unnatural narratives provide a space for phenomena that violates physical laws, limitations, epistemic possibilities, and conventions. Even though unnatural narratives are used to convey meanings and symbols that might not exist in the actual world, they still:

¹³⁹ For an elaborate discussion of the natural narrative and its properties see Fludernik, Monika, *Towards a Natural Narratology*, 2010.

¹⁴⁰ See Richardson, Brian, *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, 2006.

Incorporate conventional modes of storytelling so that they can be decoded by readers and viewers. It seems that the unnatural is only appealing if it can be understood through mindsets shaped by human experience in life and/or literature. Otherwise, narratives of the unnatural in fact cease to be narratives and instead become abstract forms of literature (Alber and Heinze 160).

Alber and Heinze note that narrative structure of this kind provides the opportunity for the unnatural to be expressed in a manner that can be readily assimilated by readers (e.g. the dream in *Pinocchio*). It enables the expression of the supernatural, the mystical, the unbelievable in a way that appeals to but does not disorient the reader.

Alber names a variety of reading strategies that allow readers to “use real-world and literary scripts to naturalize unnatural scenarios” (Alber and Heinze 165). These strategies include but are not limited to: 1. interpreting the events of the story as “internal states” (e.g. dream, fantasy); 2. seeing the events as allegories; 3. “blending preexisting frames” (e.g. attributing human traits to animals and objects) (cf. 165). In such works, it is predominantly the violation of expectations that makes the narratives unnatural.

To use Alber and Heinze’s terminology, Carlo Collodi “naturalizes” the narrative by letting Pinocchio wake up at the end of the tale. Supernatural events that occurred prior to the awakening and appeared as unnatural (e.g. the transformation into an animal), convert into the category of “internal” experience. The dream context enables readers to consider the events as normal and interpret them in an allegorical manner. In Tzvetan Todorov’s terms: what might have seemed a “marvelous tale” at first ultimately transforms into a narrative of the uncanny.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Although Tzvetan Todorov does not reference the term “unnatural narrative,” I propose that his paradigm can be related to Alber and Heinze’s theoretical framework.

In short, the awakening scene calls into question the narrative reality of the events in Collodi's *Pinocchio*; the reader remains uncertain whether s/he was told a marvelous tale that resulted in miraculous transformation or a mimetic narrative that mostly described imaginary events. The uncertainty that arises in response to the ambiguity transforms *Pinocchio* into an unnatural narrative.¹⁴²

This creates a fundamental distinction between Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* and Alexey Tolstoy's *Buratino*. Tolstoy's story is a natural narrative: it is presented as a fairy tale, it features various fairy-tale attributes (e.g. a typical opening, character-archetype), and, most importantly, it follows through with the original premise to deliver a supernatural narrative. Readers have no reason to doubt the narrative reality of the events in *Buratino*. As with most fairy tales, Tolstoy's story is set in a marvelous secondary world that is governed by its own laws. As opposed to Collodi, who unsettles the border between fantasy and reality, Tolstoy preserves the narrative integrity of his imaginary world.

4.2.2. *Yellow Metal Key as a "Liminal Fantasy"*

The narrative reality of the events described in Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key* is ambiguous to the same extent if not more than the reality of the events in Collodi's *Pinocchio*. The story of the yellow metal key begins in a mundane setting. While demonstrating a rather quirky and introspective personality, the protagonist and narrator of *YMK*, Philip, comes across as ordinary. As the narrative goes on, not only does the protagonist remain within the limits of normality, but so do the events that happen to him. To demonstrate, below is a brief overview of the novel.

¹⁴² For the same reason, I argue, Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* falls into Tzvetan Todorov's category of "fantastic narrative."

The story begins in contemporary Moscow and follows the protagonist on a journey across Eastern Europe. For the most part, Philip is portrayed as an “everyday hero”: he has no particular talents and his life appears rather uneventful. Based on references to the past, we learn that Philip was abandoned by his biological parents as a small child and spent some time in an orphanage. Eventually, he was adopted by his mother’s former lover, Karl, a prominent organist, fortune’s favorite, and on all accounts an extraordinary human being. It does not take long for readers to notice that Karl strongly influences Philip’s life. Despite his age (i.e. 30s), Philip’s relationship with his stepfather remains a major source of anxiety.

At the start of the novel, the protagonist is about to depart from a rented house in Moscow’s suburbs where he had spent several months working on a book. Philip does not have a “proper” job; instead, he supports himself by renting out apartments, which he fortuitously acquired in his youth by taking advantage of the country’s destabilized economy during the 1990s. Despite the financial prosperity, Philip clearly struggles with depression: he comes across as restless and repeatedly complains about the lack of purpose in his life. In Philip’s own words: “over time, I developed a habit of thinking that life has failed to provide me with opportunities to live up to my potential; although, I have to admit, deep down I suspected that it must have been me who failed to mature” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 82).¹⁴³

The plot of *Yellow Metal Key* incorporates elements of a mystery novel. The main puzzle revolves around a door that Philip coincidentally discovers in the basement of Karl’s house many years prior to the events of the narrative. Decorated with mysterious symbols, the ancient-looking door-in-the-wall does not seem to lead anywhere and remains locked for decades.

¹⁴³ As of now, Svetlana Martynchik’s *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* (2009) has not been translated into English. Here and hereafter citations from the novel are translated by me.

The events of *YMK* begin to unravel when Philip goes on a “treasure hunt” as per his father’s request. Karl is a passionate collector of lost antiques, especially keys. Having a locked door in his basement that has no key was bound to capture his attention. After searching for many years, Karl finds a fellow collector in Prague, Pan Bronislaw Chernoguk, who claims to have the right key for Karl’s door. When Karl asks Philip to travel to Prague to seal the deal, the protagonist complies because he cannot find a suitable reason to refuse. The key in question is, naturally, the “yellow metal key” referenced in the title of the novel. The quest starts in Prague and takes Philip across multiple Eastern European cities.

In the course of his journey, the protagonist experiences many strange, even uncanny events. But every time the reader begins to suspect the presence of supernatural forces, Martynchik offers a mundane explanation that takes the narrative back into the realm of normality. This pattern emerges because *Yellow Metal Key* is written in the mode of “liminal fantasy.”¹⁴⁴ According to Farah Mendlesohn, liminal fantasy differs from other modes by its lack of magic. The defining feature of such works is that readers cultivate an anticipation of wonder, although the supernatural might in fact never enter the narrative. Liminal fantasies are characterized by “a desire for the fantastic that isn’t met and therefore appears to be unnerving” (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* xxii). Throughout the story, the reader maintains an impression that something unusual is happening, but cannot define what it is. Instead of crossing over into the supernatural realm, liminal narratives keep the reader wavering in between different interpretations.

Mendlesohn’s understanding of liminal fantasy is closely tied to Tzvetan Todorov’s concept of “the fantastic,” which I discussed in the previous chapters. As with the fantastic

¹⁴⁴ As with “portal-quest fantasy” discussed in Chapter 2, liminal fantasy is one of four fantasy modes first introduced by Farah Mendlesohn in “Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy” (2002) and later developed in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008).

narrative, the key element in liminal fantasy is “hesitation”: readers’ simultaneous wonder and uncertainty in response to the nature of the events in the story. What might seem like a supernatural event at first is as likely to be the result of a delusion as that of a miracle; whether fantastic narratives and liminal fantasies take place in supernatural or mundane secondary worlds is a question that remains unanswered.

Although Todorov insists on the decline of the fantastic,¹⁴⁵ Farah Mendlesohn demonstrates that similar generic features can be found in various modern fantasy works that form the liminal fantasy category. Svetlana Martynchik’s *Yellow Metal Key* is one of many Russian fantasy works that follows the tradition. Thus, Todorov identifies three “conditions” of the fantastic. First, the reader must “hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events” (33) of the narrative. Second, “this hesitation may also be experienced by a character” (33) with whom the reader identifies. And third, the reader must avoid interpreting the events “allegorically” (33). All of these conditions are met in *YMK*. What makes *Yellow Metal Key* stand out, from numerous other liminal fantasies, is its embeddedness in the fairy tale tradition.¹⁴⁶

The first obvious link between Martynchik’s novel and Tolstoy’s *Buratino* is the title of the work. It refers to the golden key that is at the heart of the adventures of Tolstoy’s protagonist, the anthropomorphic wooden puppet Buratino. Many other superficial parallels create an immediate link between the narratives. Thus, for example, in the two works the father figures share

¹⁴⁵ Todorov contrasts the marvelous that has “always existed in literature and [is] much in evidence today” with the fantastic that “had a relatively brief life span” (Todorov 166). According to Todorov, the fantastic approximately lasted from 1780 (Jacques Cazotte) to 1880 (Guy de Maupassant). For more, see Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic*, 166–172.

¹⁴⁶ Svetlana Martynchik herself appears to be uninterested in locating her writing within a particular generic frame. Although the author does not deny that her novels resemble fantasy fiction, she avoids placing any labels. In an interview for *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, Martynchik claims that “generic categories are mostly valuable from a marketing perspective” (Lintsova and Sorokina, “Max Frei po imeni Svetlana”). I allow myself to disagree with the author, given that this study rests on the assumption that contextualizing fairytale fantasy works within its generic tradition prompts a more comprehensive understanding of individual works.

a name (i.e. Karl/Papa Carlo, evidently inspired by Collodi's Geppetto) and a profession (both are musicians).¹⁴⁷ Similarly, both protagonists encounter an authoritative heroine who attempts to educate them (i.e. Mirra Zhukotovskaya and Malvina). Both narratives revolve around a locked door hidden in the protagonist's parental home. As a result of these allusions, readers cannot help but associate *Yellow Metal Key* with *Buratino* and *Pinocchio*, and, consequently, with the fairy tale tradition.¹⁴⁸

Fairy tales play a unique role in most societies, they are naturally passed on from generation to generation, transmitting cultural values and behavioral norms. Many scholars, among them Jack Zipes (1988), Jack Haney (1999), and Maria Tatar (2002), argue that fairy tales influence the way we perceive and interact with the surrounding world. According to Zipes: "fairy tales in their oral, literary, and mass-mediated forms have enabled children and adults to conceive strategies for placing themselves in the world and grasping events around themselves" (*The Brothers Grimm* 12). From their earliest experiences, many young people are confronted with the supernatural while reading or listening to fairy tales: these stories shape the ways in which they respond to other supernatural narratives as adults. The cultural relevance of fairy tales is important to my argument as it implies that readers of *Yellow Metal Key* are likely to have read either *Buratino* or *Pinocchio*, or even both. Furthermore, the fact that fairy tales generally influence our perception of other supernatural narratives modifies the expectations that readers might have of *YMK* since it pretends to be a fairy tale.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ This is, in fact, a dual reference: on the one hand, to Alexey Tolstoy's "Papa Carlo," the man who carved Buratino, and, on the other hand, to the writer Carlo Collodi, the "father" of the original fairy tale about the quirky wooden puppet.

¹⁴⁸ There is an ongoing scholarly debate regarding the genre of *Pinocchio* as well as *Buratino*. See, for example, Isakovskaya, Alla, "Detskaya skazka v russkoy sovetskoy literature" ("The Fairy Tale in Russian Soviet Literature"), 2012. For the purpose of the argument, I agree with scholars (e.g. Gudov, 2002; Testa, 2004), who consider the works to be fairy tales.

¹⁴⁹ The impact of fairytale fantasy's generic features on reader perception is further discussed in Chapter 5.

The readers cannot help but wonder whether Philip is meant to represent a grown-up Buratino or Pinocchio, or, perhaps, a combination of both characters. Martynchik encourages readers to search for parallels between the stories: is Philip's story modeled after the adventures of Buratino (or Pinocchio)? Are the events of *YMK* a fantasy conjured by Philip's bewildered imagination? Would it be valid to assume that Philip has actually read Alexey Tolstoy's *Buratino* (i.e. as did most Russian children)?¹⁵⁰ None of these questions are answered, but they influence readers' perception of *YMK*. Furthermore, they unsettle the integrity of Martynchik's secondary world by blurring the boundaries between *YMK* and other supernatural narratives.

Instead of replicating classic fairy tale tropes, Svetlana Martynchik disassembles conventional structures to create unorthodox opportunities for critical reflection in supernatural stories. Drawing from the hybrid generic framework of the fairytale fantasy, Martynchik places her characters in multiple narrative spaces simultaneously: she stages an intricate portrayal of the protagonist's battle with mental illness against the background of a beloved classic fairy tale. In the following sections, I shall use *Yellow Metal Key* to illustrate the elaborate revisionist potential embedded in the fairytale fantasy genre.

4.2.3. Framing *Yellow Metal Key* as an Unconventional "Fairy Tale"

Farah Mendlesohn observes that in liminal fantasies, the supernatural "hovers in the corner of our eye" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* xiv), which results in an indistinct border between reality and imagination. To put it another way, liminal fantasies build on episodes that might have a supernatural explanation, but do not necessarily need to. First, such narratives tempt readers to suspend their disbelief and "cross the threshold into the fantastic" (xxiii), in order to, then, offer

¹⁵⁰ That is, if readers were to assume that *Yellow Metal Key* is set in a secondary world that mirrors the consensus reality of contemporary Russia.

an alternative, ordinary explanation of what happened. Emulating Todorov's fantastic narratives, liminal fantasies employ a wide range of narrative devices that serve to blend fantasy and reality.¹⁵¹ In *YMK*, hesitation is provoked by narrative devices that implicate an unreliable narrator, such as hallucination, lucid dreaming, drug- and alcohol intake, self-alienation, and mental breakdown.

In the course of the novel, Martynchik repeatedly suggests that her protagonist might be suffering from more than one of these conditions. The indicators of Philip's challenging mental state are, however, obscured by a cheery narrative manner, an uninterrupted stream of anecdotes, and, most importantly, by plenty of fairy tale markers. Martynchik goes a long way to disguise the dramatic character of her novel. Yet, on occasion the protagonist's depressive state becomes apparent. For example, when Philip explains to Karl how the people around cause him to despair:

Don't you get overwhelmed? [...] Don't you get it? When there are so many of them, those who have lost themselves, who are joyless, nearly blind, unable to communicate, but entirely certain of their entitlement: their unified chorus, their picture of the world, it overpowers, and suddenly becomes the only reality that remains... don't you feel it? This yearning, this burden take over, and the apparent magnitude of possibilities suddenly becomes nothing more than an empty promise (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 57).

Classic fairy tales rarely pay attention to characters' emotions, focusing on their actions instead. Martynchik uses her readers' familiarity with Collodi and Tolstoy's narratives to disrupt generic expectations. Specifically, readers have few reasons to expect in-depth psychology from a

¹⁵¹ That is to say, there are multiple ways to make a fantasy "liminal." Apart from an unreliable narrator, the effect might be reached by means of irony, metaphors, uncanny settings, etc.

fairy-tale retelling, and thus it is even more startling once Philip's mental problems gradually become apparent.

Fairy tales tend to feature generic protagonists with whom readers of all strata can identify. For the same reason tales are more likely to remark on the profession or the social status of their adult heroes (e.g. a miller or a king), as opposed to other more specific biographical characteristics. Fairy tales about children, on the other hand, commonly revolve around maturation and social integration of child protagonists. Buratino, for example, is pressured by his father into learning and attending school.

Philip bears a superficial resemblance to a typical fairy tale character. As with Buratino, the protagonist of *YMK* does not have a last name and his physical appearance is described only schematically. At the same time there is a substantial age gap between Martynchik's hero and his predecessors that adds an additional level of complexity. Philip is a grown-up man in his thirties and, yet, he has much in common with Buratino and Pinocchio. As with the child-characters, Philip has difficulty integrating in society.

Martynchik uses the link between her work and the fairy tales to problematize the notion that being of a certain age necessarily means being well-adjusted. Thus, Philip does not have a regular job or a permanent residence. He only ever mentions to be in contact with his father and stepmother who live in a different country. He admits having abandoned most of his relationships out of boredom. As a result, he appears narcissistic and self-absorbed.

The protagonists' restlessness is not the only theme that relates *Yellow Metal Key* to *Buratino*. Among other things, Buratino is known for his inability to concentrate; he easily loses focus and leaves tasks unfinished. Similarly, Philip is a writer who fails to produce books. Every time he finishes a novel, he looks for a sign that the book is "needed." Philip gives his books a

chance to “fight back,” for example through an unexpected phone call or a car accident, before he goes on to burn them in the fireplace. Despite feeling content with the quality of his books, Philip ultimately destroys them all for not “fighting back.”

Philip’s irrational approach to his work can be interpreted as one of many indicators of the character’s psychological issues. Another marker is Philip’s bewildered internal monologue: he might begin by describing the scenery, snap into recalling a childhood memory, brood over an unrelated rhetorical question, and eventually return to the actual narrative. To illustrate, when boarding the train from Moscow to Vilnius, Philip ironically pleads for god “to be humane” and to not let other passengers enter his compartment. Later he goes on to counter, that if he were god himself, he would not care to “fulfill the whims of a non-believer misanthrope” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 10). When no new passengers turn up, Philip rejoices that his plea worked and god was “not being petty” for once. Unlike a typical fairy tale, *Yellow Metal Key* uses ongoing monologue to portray the protagonist in detail. Even before the story begins to unravel, readers learn about Philip’s past and get a feeling for his current psychological state and motives.

4.2.4. The Buratino Who Grew Up

The conflict between generations is a fundamental theme in fairy tales of many literary traditions. Parents are frequently the ones to challenge their offspring with a task that becomes the narrative’s focus. Nonetheless, fairy tales rarely discuss the relationship between children and their guardians in much detail. In Tolstoy’s tale, we learn slightly more about the connection between Buratino and Papa Carlo than might be expected from an average fairy tale.

Readers meet Tolstoy’s characters at the beginning of their relationship, when Papa Carlo carves Buratino. As the story progresses their connection evolves, developing from antagonistic to harmonious. The fairy tale concludes with Papa Carlo and Buratino discovering a new,

“marvelously beautiful” (Tolstoy 138) puppet theater that promises them a prosperous life ahead. One might argue that *Buratino* is, among other things, the story of Papa Carlo’s success: he goes from being a musician that could not play to directing a popular theater of his own. For *Buratino* the theater is, quite literally, a playground, whereas for his father it symbolizes a second chance.

Similar to how Cornelia Funke reinterprets parental relations between Grimms’ fairy tale characters, Martynchik takes Tolstoy’s “*Buratino*” and “*Papa Carlo*” and transforms them into Philip and Karl. Contrary to *Buratino* where we observe the formation of a parental relationship, in *Yellow Metal Key*, we meet Philip and his father at a time when their relationship has long been established. Moreover, it is not a relationship between a child and an adult, but between a grown-up son and his aging parent. Readers learn about their past through the memories of the protagonist. Martynchik, I claim, picks up where Tolstoy leaves off: she encourages readers to imagine what the relationship between a grown-up *Buratino* and his father might have been. As a result, *YMK* with its multilayered narrative structure is not only a twice-told tale that revisits several scenarios from *Buratino*, but also a revisionist sequel to Tolstoy’s novel.

Read as *Buratino*’s sequel, *Yellow Metal Key* depicts *Buratino* (i.e. Philip) as a grown-up that he might have become after being raised in prosperity, sheltered by his father’s success. Martynchik uses the fairytale fantasy framework to explore generational dynamics. For example, *YMK*’s protagonist does not appear self-directed even compared to Tolstoy’s *Buratino*, who, despite his other personality flaws, was able to find joy in his life.

Philip lacks initiative and motivation; like many other “celebrity kids,” he remains in the shadow of his father’s extraordinary personality. Philip idealizes Karl: “some consider me to be phenomenally lucky, but I know, my luck is a mere shadow of Karl’s fortune; I have no right to complain, mind you, since I’ve already made my greatest win in my early childhood – when I got

the world's best Dad, a one of a kind" (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla*). The protagonist goes as far as comparing himself to Buddha. Similar to Siddhartha Gautama, he grew up surrounded only by beauty and happiness, sheltered from the world. And when Philip finally left "the castle," he was stunned by the cruelty and misery of the surrounding world. Martynchik seduces the readers with seemingly simple plotlines. This simplicity, however, is an illusion that disguises intricate symbolism and intertextuality that eradicate the border between reality and imagination.

The protagonist's abstract philosophical reflections and recollections of the past form a substantial part of *YMK*'s narrative. It is clear that Philip struggles with nostalgia for his euphoric childhood orchestrated by Karl. He is absorbed in his childhood memories. Moreover, he insists on the supernatural character of his experiences: "when I was a child, miracles used to be the most natural thing to me. In fact, I did not even realize that they were 'miracles': things like choosing one's dreams, or having one's wishes come true without ever making them, or bickering with invisible creatures" (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 81). Philip thinks of his childhood as a "magical time" when all his wishes came true with no effort on his part. Although the safety and support that he felt can be attributed to the care of his parent, Philip opts for a supernatural explanation instead.

Philip complains that miracles ceased to happen to him somewhere in the process of growing up. Martynchik clarifies that the protagonist does not speak of miracles allegorically; instead Philip is reminiscent of actual supernatural events that he believes occurred in his past. In an effort to "bring back" his childhood wonders, Philip admits spending many years of his adult life befriending "psychics and fortune-tellers" and maintaining a library "bursting with occult literature" (cf. *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 82). The protagonist's preoccupation with his past, his

immature dependency on his father, his dubious account of supernatural events: a combination of these traits aid to undermine the hero's credibility.

Even if readers were to take Philip's beliefs seriously, Martynchik discredits her protagonist further by letting him comment on the "unreliable" nature of memory:

Human memory is flawed by its nature. People tend to discriminate between 'significant' and 'inferior' events of their lives. As a rule, the inferior events are easily forgotten although they are the ones that ultimately hold the truth: omit a single detail and the authenticity is lost in vain. Hence, I always believed that history is no more scientific than fiction (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 44).

The protagonist's monologue guides the narrative making sure that readers are immersed in Philip's perception of the events. This intimate connection between the character and the reader adds another layer of meaning to *Yellow Metal Key's* fairy tale background. Martynchik plays with the portrayal of the supernatural in the text: on the one hand, the experiences in question can be considered ordinary for most children with a vivid imagination; on the other hand, in *YMK* it is an adult character who considers magical thinking and imaginary friends to be part of his consensus reality.

As a result, readers are left in doubt, they *hesitate* between trusting the protagonist and considering him delusional. To assume that *Yellow Metal Key* is, in fact, a supernatural narrative would mean that Philip is telling the truth about the loss of his extraordinary powers. There is, however, no textual evidence that the story takes place in a supernatural secondary world; the only thing that links *YMK* to the supernatural is the text's allusion to Tolstoy's fairy tale *Buratino*. Utilizing the fairytale fantasy framework enables Martynchik to construct two parallel narrative

realities. In the first, a reliable narrator describes his adventures in a magical secondary world. In the second, the story takes place in the imagination of a deluded mad-man who never leaves his house.

4.2.5. *Disassembling the Feeling of Wonder*

In the course of the narrative, Philip repeatedly admits that he is losing his sense of reality: time after time the protagonist is unsure whether the events take place in fictional reality or in his imagination. To give an example, on the way to Prague, Philip wakes up in the middle of the night to find his bus stranded at the Polish border. It appears to be an unexpected stop. Getting off the bus, Philip notices that “the ground is hovered in fog,” which he did not notice through the window. The haze catches the hero by surprise, causing him “to lose his notion of reality, suddenly afraid he might drown in the fog like in viscous porridge” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 70). Next, Philip realizes that all the other passengers, including the bus driver, are either unconscious or dead. His immediate reaction to the unusual situation is an attempt to get in touch with his father that fails, because, apparently, Karl’s phone number ceased to exist.

In that moment of panic, Philip takes over the bus and drives away from the border. After a while, passengers begin to return to their senses and no one can explain what happened. Only the bus driver briefly comments that borders are “rotten places where anything can happen” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 77) before dismissing the topic. The bus returns to its original route, Philip consumes a bottle of cognac, and falls back asleep. When he wakes up, nobody shows any evidence of remembering the nightly events, leaving Philip and the readers in doubts whether anything happened at all or the events occurred in a dream. In contrast to Tolstoy’s action-oriented fairy tale *Buratino*, Martynchik places the protagonist’s perception at the center of her narrative. Every plot turn serves to explore Philip’s internal action, motivation, and mentality.

Another example of Martynchik disassembling the “feeling of wonder” readers’ might expect from a supernatural narrative, occurs during Philip’s interaction with Mirra Zhukotovskaya, the main female character of *Yellow Metal Key*. Mirra is an allusion to Alexey Tolstoy’s Malvina, the “girl with the blue hair” (*Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* 50) who attempts to teach Buratino good manners.¹⁵² Whereas Malvina comes across as whiny, narcissistic, and “in need of saving,” Mirra, who is described as “a mad doll [...] with the demeanor of a spoiled teenager” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 138) takes advantage of her talents in order to succeed, and consequently, appears as a strong character.

Mirra invites Philip for “cactus tea,” upon which they supposedly travel through space by means of lucid dreaming. The experience shifts Philip’s attitude towards the supernatural. Before he seeks to rationalize the events around him. Afterwards, he states that “what happens” is not important; what matters instead is the experience in itself: “only my feelings and perception make sense, they bring the experience” (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 243). Once again, there is no textual evidence that the “cactus tea” was not, in fact, drugged, and, thus, caused Philip and Mirra to hallucinate. At this point in the narrative, Martynchik has been undermining her protagonist enough for readers to grow skeptical toward his gullibility.

The image of Philip operating in a semi-conscious state is a reoccurring reference throughout the novel. The hero refers to it as his “autopilot mode” (i.e. “*avtopilot*”).¹⁵³ It appears in situations when Philip is either sleep deprived, tired, or intoxicated. When “on autopilot,” the protagonist executes tasks automatically without thinking. Martynchik takes the irony a step further by letting Philip repeatedly address himself in the second and third person. Aside from

¹⁵² Here and hereafter citations from Alexey Tolstoy’s *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* (1936) are translated by me.

¹⁵³ See Frei, Max, *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* (*Yellow Metal Key*), 14–16.

ridiculing his character, Martynchik succeeds in sowing further doubt towards Philip's accuracy of perception.

After readers get used to infantilizing Philip, they learn that he can barely handle alcohol without blacking out. Several times the hero gets drunk and admits losing his memories of the prior events. The protagonist's frequent state of intoxication underlines his escape from sobriety into a "wondrous" realm of a different kind (i.e. that is prompted by delusions instead of the supernatural). In addition, Philip's alcohol abuse reinforces the dream-like quality of the narrative.

The deeper into the story, the more convoluted it becomes. The suspicion Philip's adventures might be a product of his imagination is reinforced every time new characters make an appearance. The majority of people that the protagonist meets in the course of his journey embody fictional characters from other literary works. The sources range from Greek and Scandinavian myths and the Old and New Testaments, to European fairy tales, and other canonical works of world literature. To exemplify, upon leaving Moscow, Philip exchanges a few words with Petr, the gatekeeper of the residence where he was staying. Petr is a reference to St. Peter the gatekeeper to heaven. Another biblical reference is the name of the Prague's bus driver, "Yasha."¹⁵⁴

The level of uncanniness only rises throughout *Yellow Metal Key*. At the start of the novel, Philip mentions mythological figures only in passing.¹⁵⁵ In the later chapters, by way of contrast, he encounters them in person.¹⁵⁶ In this manner, the first people Philip meets upon his arrival in Prague is a group of street performers disguised as Shakespeare's King Claudius, Ophelia, and Laertes. Correspondingly, the novel's antagonist Pan Bronislaw Chernoguk is repeatedly compared to the demon Mephistopheles. Considering all the people the protagonist meets are

¹⁵⁴ "Yasha" is a diminutive form of Yakov that is the Slavic alternative of the given name Jacob.

¹⁵⁵ As example might serve the scene where Philip compares the city of Moscow that "devours his time and energy" (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla 7*) to the Greek titan Cronus.

¹⁵⁶ As with the street performer Kjalarr, whose name is an allusion to Odin, the Norse god of war.

borderline fictional, it does not come as a surprise that Philip's narrative raises associations with a dream.

As with Farah Mendlesohn's liminal fantasy and Tzvetan Todorov's fantastic narrative, the interaction between the character and the world plays a secondary role in *YMK*. Instead, it is the perception of the world that matters the most (cf. Todorov 120). Traditionally, fairy tales do not encourage doubts regarding the legitimacy of the supernatural. Combining the rhetorical strategies of liminal fantasy with fairy-tale markers allows Svetlana Martynchik to challenge her readers' generic expectations and interpretive habits.

4.2.6. *Magical Objects as Tools of Critical Reflection, Part 2*

Artifacts with unusual powers are important to both fairy tales and fantasy fiction. Among other things, magical objects can drive the plot or aid character development. The second chapter of this work contrasted the depiction of magical objects in selected Grimms' fairy tales with that in Cornelia Funke's *Reckless*. I concluded that the generic properties of the fairytale fantasy allow Funke to use artifacts to explore the intrinsic worlds of the characters. This is also the case in Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key*.

The central artifacts in both *Buratino* and *Yellow Metal Key* are a mysterious locked door and a key. In *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature*, Botelho and Rudman argue that "doors and keys are powerful metaphors that allow readers to explore their perception" (xiii). The image of a key that unlocks an unknown door is in itself enough reason for readers to anticipate an unexpected plot turn.

Doors and keys traditionally have a special role in supernatural narratives. Beginning with myths, doors and keys are used as symbols of the mysterious, unexplored, and concealed. They are triggers of our imagination: in fairy tale and fantasy fiction keys and doors acquire additional

meaning serving as gateways into the supernatural. Doors lead to unfamiliar and estranged spaces, allowing readers to engage with the unknown. While doors create new imaginary grounds, keys unlock them.

In both, *Buratino* and *Yellow Metal Key*, the door and the key are connected to the characters' anticipation of a different, potentially more satisfying future. In Tolstoy's tale, Buratino states: "I will use Karabas Barabas to find out where is the door that can be opened with the golden key. There must be something wonderful behind it, something amazing... It should bring us happiness" (*Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* 109).¹⁵⁷ Philip's adventures also revolve around finding a special key: the yellow metal key that has the power to open a mystical door known as "Hecate's Gate." The true nature of both the gate and the key are not entirely clear, but the link to Hecate, the Greek goddess of liminal spaces, points beyond everyday reality, to a more marvelous dimension.

As the narrative progresses, readers are inevitably led to believe that the artifacts must be at least unusual in some way, or even have supernatural properties. Despite the generally illusive nature of all supernatural aspects of the story, a certain hesitation is established in respect to the role of the yellow metal key and Hecate's Gate. What started as a scavenger hunt inflicted by Philip's father, progressively acquires a mysterious dimension. In the end, it is Pan Bronislaw Chernoguk who reveals the legend of the Gate. He confesses to be part of a secret society that believes that opening Hecate's Gate is a magical act that has the power to "change the world for the better" (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 57).

According to Chernoguk, only the person that finds the Gate can open it (i.e. it is, unsurprisingly, Philip who discovered the door in Karl's basement). Moreover, the Gate cannot be

¹⁵⁷ Here and hereafter citations from Alexey Tolstoy's *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino* (2008) are translated by me.

unlocked by just any key; it has to be a yellow metal key conjured by the seeker's imagination. This is the reason why Chernoguk had Philip chase a fake copy of the key all over Europe: to reinforce the protagonist's motivation to find the artifact. In other words, all of Philip's adventures have been orchestrated by Pan Chernoguk.

The novel culminates when Philip supposedly conjures the real yellow metal key that matches Hecate's Gate. At least this is what the protagonist is told to believe. The narrative, on the other hand, only shows that Philip finds a second yellow metal key on Pan Chernoguk's shelf; whether it was simply another copy of the same key, or it was a magically created artifact remains unknown. Furthermore, by the time this last major plot turn is revealed, the readers have long lost confidence in Philip as a reliable narrator. Thus, when Pan Chernoguk claims that Philip created the yellow metal key out of thin air, readers are unlikely to believe in the occurrence of the supernatural. Martynchik's constant allusions to "internal states" as defined by Alber and Heinze encourage readers to doubt the actuality of the story itself, the trustworthiness of Philip's account, and the authenticity of the secondary characters.

The most powerful way in which Martynchik utilizes the hybridity of the fairytale fantasy genre, is by exploiting the parallels between *Buratino* and *Yellow Metal Key*. Both narratives introduce characters who find themselves in a challenging situation. In *Buratino* and Papa Carlo's case the cause is external: poverty. In Philip's case, despite the superficial prosperity, he is plagued by boredom and purposelessness. Both protagonists go on a journey that is simultaneously a self-discovery quest and a treasure hunt. Tolstoy suggests that his characters' problems can be resolved by means of external intervention: by finding the golden key and unlocking the hidden door. As we have seen before, this is a common premise in many classic fairy tales.

By introducing the legend of Hecate's Gate, Martynchik seemingly takes a major step in turning her novel towards the fairy tale tradition. Through the legend of the Gate, *Yellow Metal Key*'s protagonist gains reassurance that something is wrong with the world around him and not with himself as he might have suspected earlier. As a result, Philip begins to see "the solution" to his issues in finding the yellow metal key and opening Hecate's Gate. It becomes the hero's mission, the fulfilling of which promises to nullify his previous shortcomings and guarantee a future he desired as a child. As with *Buratino*, the apparent conclusion is that the hero has been right to complain about the world being wrong: it is "broken" and can be fixed by means of magical objects. On the first glance, the result of both, *Buratino* and Philip's journeys are the same: the protagonist finds the missing artifact, unlocks the door, and finds himself reborn into a more successful life.

Philip ultimately returns to Vilnius to open Hecate's Gate. After, the narrative breaks off to be resumed in the epilogue, where Philip finds himself back in the suburbs of Moscow. He does not seem to remember any of his adventures. Instead, he recalls a dream about wanting to rewrite Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. At the start of this new story, Philip is back to the same room where the narrative started, only that he is now a successful author with a flourishing social life.

Here, Martynchik imitates Carlo Collodi. As with *Pinocchio*, Philip appears to have acquired a new status (i.e. of a successful writer) and considerably improved his personality (i.e. presumably as a result of his adventures), in a manner similar to Pinocchio, who awakes as a real boy, presumably, as a result of his personal growth. There is, however, no evidence that either of the stories happened and were not dreamt up by the protagonists. In other words, as with Collodi, Martynchik ends *Yellow Metal Key* in a way that is typical of Todorov's fantastic narratives: unresolved.

Yellow Metal Key presents a stimulating case-study of the limits of an unnatural narrative. Although Martynchik alludes to internal states (e.g. dream, delusion, even infantilization) with the aim to naturalize the narrative of *Yellow Metal Key*, she simultaneously maintains a wondrous atmosphere by referencing Tolstoy's and Collodi's fairy tales. Similar to Cornelia Funke, Svetlana Martynchik uses the hybrid features of the fairytale fantasy genre in order to create new opportunities for supernatural narrative devices to serve as vehicles for critical reflection.

4.3. Conclusion: Chapter 4

Todorov's claim about the death of the fantastic, *qua* surpassed by psychoanalysis, seems (to use Mark Twain's words) an exaggeration. In my opinion, the fantastic today simply has a different orientation from that described by the philosopher. One might argue that the extensive popularity of fantasy fiction signifies an urgency to reevaluate the status quo through the versatile lenses of imaginary worlds with their alternative solutions. In *Yellow Metal Key*, the author constructs a modern fantastic narrative (i.e. liminal fantasy) with which a contemporary reader can empathize. Svetlana Martynchik shows that both the fantastic as well as fantasy fiction can do more than provoke fear, wonder, or curiosity.

Nothing about Martynchik's work is stable: the genre is undefined, the plot is ambiguous, and even the author's personality is subject to debate. By referencing a fairy tale, Martynchik brings in a magical "aftertaste" into her story. The episodes from the protagonist's past, present, and future fused with the allusions to *Burattino* and *Pinocchio*, result in a truly fantastic setting despite the apparent absence of any supernatural elements in the story.

Martynchik unfolds the potential of the fairytale fantasy genre by introducing a complex multilayered protagonist figure that clashes with the traditional fairy tale conventions. As I have

shown throughout this chapter, Philip is anything but a one-dimensional protagonist: his alleged addiction to narcotic substances, his emotional dependency on his father, and his obsessive narcissistic personality result in a contradictory and puzzling narrative persona.

Philip's adventures, in what might have been interpreted as a fairy-tale-like universe, all too often resemble a dream, a drug-fantasy, and even a psychotic breakdown. The discrepancy leads to a dissonance: the end of *Yellow Metal Key* that in itself might have seem as a "happy ending" that fulfills conventional fairy-tale expectation (i.e. external circumstances ensure happiness) cannot be reconciled with the rest of the text that reveals an unreliable narrator.

Fairy tales rely on readers suspending their disbelief in order to accept the supernatural component of the narratives. By continuously undermining the protagonist's trustworthiness in the course of the story, Martynchik accomplishes the opposite of the suspension of disbelief. The supernatural serves to discredit the narrative. Although it appears that Philip has changed the world for the better by finding the yellow metal key and opening Hecate's Gate, readers encounter too many inconsistencies throughout the story to believe in a supernatural solution. *Yellow Metal Key* is, therefore, a fairy tale in which readers are not able to believe.

Martynchik combines a recognizable fairy-tale framework with Max Frei's joyful signature style to create a façade that masks an unfolding personality crisis behind a stream of anecdotes and irrelevant side-stories. The narrative of *Yellow Metal Key* reminds of a carnival: it overwhelms with a cacophony of mismatching colors and noises. Once readers are able to look behind the masks, figuratively speaking, the contradiction between the tone of the book and its dramatic content is striking. The characteristic features of the fairytale fantasy genre enable Martynchik to deliberately misalign form, content, and context, prompting a new level of sensitivity for character development that is, arguably, unattainable for conventional fairy tales.

Svetlana Martynchik combines an unreliable narrator with a fairy-tale-like setting in order to transform *Yellow Metal Key* into a liminal fantasy. She establishes a connection between *YMK* and *Buratino*, creating several interpretive dimensions, including one in which *YMK* can be read as a sequel to Alexey Tolstoy's work. In her novel, Martynchik reevaluates the experience of growing up and conveys a social critique: her protagonist represents a generation of frustrated daydreamers who desperately seek to bring back the fairy-tale-like comfort of their past. These are examples of narrative techniques that allow the author of *YMK* to take advantage of the hybrid nature of the fairytale fantasy genre in order to revise traditional fairy tale tropes and create opportunities for critical reflection.

Chapter 5. “Alternative Subcreation” as a Revisionist Tool

The preceding chapters examined the genealogy of the fairytale fantasy in the German and the Russian literary traditions, stressing that the phenomenon can only be fully understood in the context of its roots. I have argued that fairytale fantasy works must be interpreted within the context of their differences from and similarities with the classic fairy tales to which they relate. This chapter supports the overall argument about the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy by examining Svetlana Martynchik’s *Yellow Metal Key* through the lens of reader response theory.

As demonstrated by the *Reckless* and *YMK* case-studies, our perception of fairytale fantasy works is influenced by our earliest reading experiences with classic fairy tales. For example, on the level of structure readers might expect a certain length or specific plotline. Similarly, fairy tales might raise associations with particular language devices and narrative styles. By borrowing fairytale markers, fairytale fantasy narratives also inherit the expectations that readers hold for fairy tale works. I claimed that this is an important source of the genre’s revisionist potential: by either meeting or violating readers’ generic expectations, fairytale fantasy works produce original interpretations of traditional settings and scenarios.

Building on the previous chapters, the following sections analyze the fairytale fantasy genre through the framework of reader response theory. I propose that the hybrid structure of the fairytale fantasy arises from a unique mechanism of world-building, for which I coined the term “alternative subcreation.” At the heart of my argument is the assumption that “alternative subcreation” enhances the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy, creating yet another layer of opportunities for critical reflection.

5.1. Defining “Alternative Subcreation”

In the essay “On Fairy-Stories” (1947), J. R. R. Tolkien claims that a fairy-story, a term that can also be applied to a work of fantasy, must be set in an imaginary realm known as the “Faerie” (cf. 38–45). Tolkien calls the realm of Faerie a “Secondary World” that is a distinctive yet contingent imaginary space that derives from the “Primary World.” The term “Primary World” refers to the actual world or our consensus reality. In Tolkien’s paradigm, god is the creator of the Primary World, whereas authors of fairy-stories (i.e. fantasy works) are “sub-creators” of secondary worlds. “Subcreation”¹⁵⁸ is, therefore, the process of creating imaginary worlds (cf. 56–72).

According to Tolkien, both the author and the reader have to believe in the fictional reality of the secondary world for the narrative to be perceived as a fairy-story.¹⁵⁹ Tolkien calls this act of trust “Secondary Belief,” it describes the reader’s willingness to “accept the premises of a work of fiction, even if they are fantastical or impossible” (“Teaching Critical Literacy Skills through Fantasy Literature” 46). If the reader fails to suspend their disbelief, the fairy-story loses its narrative integrity.

Most works of fantasy fiction are the product of what one might call “authorial” subcreation. I suggest, however, that there are narratives among them fairytale fantasies that reinforce an additional form of subcreation that is distinct enough to be assigned a separate category.¹⁶⁰ Building on Tolkien’s conceptual frame, I developed the category of “alternative

¹⁵⁸ The term is occasionally spelled “sub-creation.”

¹⁵⁹ In Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze’s terms, this means that the narrative integrity of the secondary world must remain intact.

¹⁶⁰ Fairytale fantasy is not the only genre that is associated with alternative subcreation. In fact, any type of fiction that uses preexisting world-building material to construct original secondary worlds qualifies for the category. Bound by the limitations of this project, the analysis in this chapter shall focus on fairytale fantasy narratives.

subcreation” that is meant to help discriminating the unique form of subcreation prompted by works such as, for example, Svetlana Martynchik’s *Yellow Metal Key*.

Conventionally, the process of subcreation presumes borrowing elements from the *Primary World* to construct an original secondary world. “Alternative subcreation,” by way of contrast, is based on deliberate adaptation of elements from other *already existing secondary worlds* (e.g. other supernatural narratives) in order to produce an original secondary world. To rephrase, I define “alternative subcreation” as a branch of subcreation that implies the construction of secondary worlds by means of intertextual references to preexisting secondary worlds.

“Alternative subcreation” uses intertextuality as its main tool. The concept of intertextuality was first introduced by the philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva, in her essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” Building on Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1895–1975) work (i.e. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 1929), Kristeva suggests that literary texts do not emerge as independent entities, but rather as collections of utterances and meanings from earlier texts read by the authors. As a result, Maria Alfaro argues that Kristeva approaches the text as “a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products” (268). In other works, the text is not treated as a “self-contained system” (268), but as an assemble of interacting and interdependent elements that are, to use Bakhtin’s terms, in constant “dialogue” with one another. For Kristeva, intertextuality is the governing force of the narrative; without it the text is neither complete nor self-sufficient.¹⁶¹ Following Bakhtin, Kristeva considers texts to be inseparable from the cultural and social contexts in which they originate.

¹⁶¹ Fantasy fiction already has a predisposition for intertextuality, more so do works of fairytale fantasy. Traditional fairy tales, by way of contrast, rarely include intertextual references to other works of fiction, including other fairy tales. Although numerous fairy tales share related plot devices and narrative techniques they are generally not meant to be read as intertextual figures.

Although intertextual cues are sometimes viewed in a position subordinate the rest of the text, in works generated by “alternative subcreation” they perform essential functions. Thus, intertextual references situate the framework readers are encouraged to adopt when reading the story. Intertextuality is the source of “alternative subcreation” precisely because of its secondary position: readers require the initial experience with the prior stories in order to make sense of the revisionist messages. In works produces by alternative subcreation, intertextuality serves as a gateway to other secondary worlds. Instead of building a connection from scratch, “alternative subcreation” utilizes readers’ memories to shape their perception of the work. It is a powerful manipulation: an entire story can be accommodated within a brief intertextual reference and still have the desired effect on the reader.

It is critical to understand that not every intertextual reference encourages “alternative subcreation.” In order to provoke “alternative subcreation,” the intertextual figure in question must contribute to the world-building process of the secondary world. In other words, it must function as an integral component of the narrative to the extent that its subtraction would compromise the integrity of the secondary world.

A fictional world generated by alternative subcreation bears the features of at least one other (often multiple) preexisting secondary world (e.g. the references to Grimms’ fairy tales in Cornelia Funke’s *Reckless*; Tolstoy’s characters reimaged by Svetlana Martynchik). Reception of such works is affected by a number of conditions, including readers’ familiarity with original stories, their ability to identify intertextual reference, their perception of the genre as a whole.

As I hope will become evident through this chapter, fictional works created by means of alternative subcreation have a unique predisposition toward revisionism. The adoption of preexisting settings, characters, and plotlines creates numerous possibilities for critical exploration

through reimagination and reevaluation. In the following sections, I shall turn to reader response criticism to enhance the understanding of alternative subcreation and its impact on the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy genre.

5.2. An Overview of Reader Response Theory

There are three fundamental dimensions to a literary text: the author, the reader, and the text. In the 1970s, the focus of literary criticism began to shift from the text itself and the authorial intent toward the reception of the text by the reader. To quote the literary critic Christine Brooke-Rose: “the actual (flesh and blood) author had been enthroned by criticism” (105). The German “Konstanzer Schule” or “Constance School” first turned its attention to *Rezeptionsästhetik* or the “aesthetic of reception.” The founders of the movement, Wolfgang Iser (*The Implied Reader*, 1972) and Hans Robert Jauss (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 1982), began to explore the ways in which “texts are actively constructed by individual readers through the phenomenology of the reading process” (Leitch 1521). Other prominent advocates of reader-response criticism include Roland Barthes (“The Death of the Author,” 1967), Norman Holland (*5 Readers Reading*, 1975), and Stanley Fish (*Is There a Text in This Class?* 1980).

According to the founders of reader response theory, reading is a process that presumes an active search of meaning (cf. Jauss 15–42). This process constitutes the interpretation of literary texts, and is influenced by the individual characteristics, preferences, and experiences of each particular reader. Finding and revising meanings is an intrinsic part of the act of interpretation. Wolfgang Iser insists that literary texts provide “instructions” or a “repertoire,” to which the reader

must respond, thus making interpretation into a product of both authorial intent and reader reception (cf. 37–65).¹⁶²

According to reader response theorists, a literary text is not a fixed entity. Instead, it transforms in accordance with the identity of the reader and the time period when it is received. To paraphrase Hans Robert Jauss, nothing about a piece of fiction is set in stone; by contrast, its meaning is purely interpretative (cf. Jauss 22). Similarly, the literary theorist Stanley Fish argues that “the stability of the text is an illusion” and that there were no “determined meanings” (cf. 312).

In *Is There a Text in This Class?*, Fish takes reader response theory in an innovative direction by subjecting fiction to cooperative decision-making:

The act of recognizing literature is not constrained by something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it (11).

Put differently, Fish claims that readers interpret literature not in accordance with their own desires, but under the influence of the communities in which they partake.

This corresponds with Hans Robert Jauss’ concept of the “horizon of expectations” that is fundamental to “reception theory.”¹⁶³ The horizon of expectations is equivalent to a “mental framework,” shared by members of the same culture and generation that readers use in order to understand, interpret, and evaluate literary texts. This framework develops over time and is

¹⁶² For an in-depth discussion of contemporary forms of reader response criticism see Davis, Todd F., and Kenneth Womack, *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory*, 2002.

¹⁶³ “Reception theory” examines individual reader-responses to literary texts. It can be considered a branch of reader response theory.

comprised of factual knowledge about each particular genre and the expectations readers might have of it. Jauss claims that:

The horizon of expectations of literature distinguishes itself before the horizon of expectations of historical lived praxis in that it not only preserves actual experiences, but also anticipates unrealized possibility, broadens limited space of social behavior for new desires, claims, and goals, and thereby opens paths of future experience (41).

In other words, the historical horizon of expectations is built on mimetic experience, whereas the literary horizon of expectations encompasses a variety of practices, including those experiences conceived by the imagination.¹⁶⁴

It is reasonable to assume that “alternative subcreation” makes extensive use of readers’ “horizon of expectations.” To use an example relevant to this study: fairytale fantasy builds its secondary world by incorporating narrative components from classic fairy tales. References to scenarios that most still remember from their earliest reading experiences provoke a specific type of reader response, namely recognition.

Recognition draws readers deeper into the imaginary universe, it is a fundamental aspect of the fairytale fantasy’s narrative structure.¹⁶⁵ As a critical term, I define “recognition” as a mechanism of world-building that promotes readers’ comprehension of the plot and empathy

¹⁶⁴ For an account of reader response theory in the context of supernatural fiction, specifically, that of children’s literature, see Benton, Michael, “Reader Response Criticism,” *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, 2004.

¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that “recognition” is a widely explored theme in literary criticism (e.g. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 1973; Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 1975). My intention is by no means to limit its effects to the fairytale fantasy genre, but instead to draw attention to yet another facet of this extensive phenomenon.

toward the characters.¹⁶⁶ The fact that readers are likely to experience recognition at some point in the narrative impacts the perception of and reaction to fairytale fantasy. As noted by C. W. Sullivan, “readers, having been exposed to these structures or patterns from their childhood readings and even Disney movies, will, consciously or unconsciously, respond to the familiar pattern in a predictable way” (285). That is to say, readers regard fairytale fantasy narratives through the lens of their experiences with related fairy tales; influential factors might include readers’ feelings toward, opinions of, and interpretations of the prior story.

To summarize, readers draw from their “horizon of expectations” directed toward the fairy tale genre when in fact evaluating a work of fairytale fantasy. This type of response generates numerous possibilities for revisionist work. It is worth mentioning that plenty of revisions present in *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* arise from the portrayal of familiar fairy tale components in ways that violate readers’ expectations of the individual components as well as the fairy tale genre as a whole.

Recognition enables readers to experience a stronger connection to the narrative, but also frequently dismantles generic expectations. As mentioned before, fairy tales as well as certain subgenres of fantasy occasionally rely on repetitive narrative structures, which, in turn, reinforce repetitive ideas. Consequently, readers tend to have relatively clear expectations of both genres. The hybrid character of the fairytale fantasy allows to unsettle the patterns: readers are encouraged to not only recognize familiar concepts but to develop original ways of interpreting them.

¹⁶⁶ I use “recognition” as a synonym of the Russian term *uznavaniye*, as opposed to the more traditional Hegelian term *Anerkennung*. “Uznavaniye” refers to experience-based acknowledgement, whereas in critical theory “Anerkennung” commonly implies the Self and the Other’s acknowledgment of one another. The German equivalent of “uznavaniye” is *Erkennung*.

5.3. The Source of the Supernatural in *Yellow Metal Key*

Fairy tales are passed down from one generation to the next, communicating cultural values and social norms. It is through fairy tales that many young people first are confronted with the supernatural. As has been argued by many, including Jack Zipes (2006) and Maria Tatar (2010), these first reading experiences strongly shape the young readers' world perception in the process of growing up. One could argue that people carry their perception of the supernatural learned from fairy tales throughout their entire lives.

By means of alternative subcreation, fairytale fantasy works connect to readers' expectations of and experience with fairy tales. Hence, when Svetlana Martynchik calls her work "Yellow Metal Key" she encourages readers to revisit their memories of Alexey Tolstoy's fairy tale *Buratino* (1936) and, by extension, Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1881–1883). A vivid example the effects of alternative subcreation in *Yellow Metal Key* is the illusive nature of the supernatural that is sustained throughout the narrative. As I have shown in the previous chapter, whether or not the supernatural enters the narrative of *YMK* is a matter of debate. It depends on individual interpretation. Some readers might allow a supernatural explanation to the hero's adventures; others, given Philip's portrayal as an unreliable narrator, might doubt the authenticity of the experiences described.

An allusion to the supernatural is in the background of Martynchik's novel: it emerges with every intertextual cue to a fairy tale or a myth.¹⁶⁷ *Yellow Metal Key* raises associations with multiple supernatural secondary worlds but only in the form of references. At the same time the narrative itself, arguably, never transcends the mundane realm. The parallel with *Buratino* is the

¹⁶⁷ In *Yellow Metal Key*, Svetlana Martynchik references Greek and Scandinavian mythologies as well as Christian and Buddhist religious doctrines.

dominant reason for readers to attribute *Yellow Metal Key* to supernatural fiction. By implying *YMK* might be a fairy tale and yet keeping the narrative mundane, Martynchik creates an illusion that unsettles the border between fantasy and reality. That is to say, the mechanisms of alternative subcreation are responsible for making *Yellow Metal Key* an unnatural narrative.

As noted by Marina Warner, readers welcome the fairy tale's ability to address "our need to move beyond the limits of reality" (15). Fairy tales encourage readers to suspend their original disbelief in the supernatural. Martynchik takes advantage of this pattern. Once the reader recognizes the parallels between *Yellow Metal Key*, *Buratino*, and *Pinocchio*—an ongoing guessing game begins.¹⁶⁸ Instead of validating supernatural explanations as done by most fairy tales, *YMK* repeatedly misleads readers by exposing supernatural events as optical illusions, dreams, and hallucinations. The juxtaposition reinforces the atmosphere of uncertainty: readers are trapped between desire for and distrust of the supernatural. Regardless of whether it is the tale of *Buratino* or *Pinocchio* that appears more relevant to the reader of *YMK*, the overlap and the breakdown of expectations is bound to generate confusion and hesitation.

One way to look at the question is that in *Yellow Metal Key* supernatural elements only enter the narrative through the reader's imagination that is triggered by intertextual references to other supernatural narratives. In other words, the flow of intertextual cues sustains the anticipation of the supernatural throughout the story, causing readers to ponder between different scenarios. The rhetorical strategies of liminal fantasy combined with the flexible generic structure of the fairytale fantasy allow *YMK* to maintain the necessary level of hesitation.

Martynchik plants numerous "windows" into other secondary worlds throughout the narrative of *Yellow Metal Key*. Starting with the links to *Buratino*, *Pinocchio*, and *The Labyrinths*

¹⁶⁸ As mentioned earlier, some readers will not recognize the references to the prior stories; because of that, in my view, such readers will also overlook a large portion of the revisionist messages embedded in the novel.

of *Echo*, each “window” (i.e. intertextual figure) presents a possibility for the reader to either enter or bypass a different secondary world. Consequently, there is no singular homogeneous secondary world in *Yellow Metal Key*; instead, there is an eclectic set of secondary worlds that sometimes complement and sometimes contradict each other. Not only the author juggles familiar concepts and infuses them with new meaning, but so does the audience.

If the reader does not recognize the reference or decides to ignore it, s/he never transgresses into the respective secondary world. As a result, the interpretation of the narrative heavily depends on the reader’s prior readings and individual choices. In accordance with the basic principles of reader response theory, fairytale fantasy demonstrates how readers can actively shape the meaning of a literary text.

Fairytale fantasy works grant the reader a remarkable level of freedom of interpretation. Readers of novels such as *Reckless* or *Yellow Metal Key* find themselves in an interactive environment where they consciously or subconsciously react to each intertextual reference, and, by that, navigate their interpretation. Fairytale fantasy narratives actively engage the reader’s “horizon of expectations” that becomes the driving force in determining what external meaning will impact the understanding of the story. This unique process is made possible through the mechanisms of alternative subcreation.¹⁶⁹

To give one last example: fully embracing the interactive premise of the fairytale fantasy genre, Martynchik appears to be communicating with the reader directly through one of *YMK*’s secondary character. When Philip meets Sir Max-the character in a dream, near the last chapter of the novel, Max says to him:

¹⁶⁹ It is not to say that works of realistic or other supernatural fiction are read in the same way by different readers. My intent is only to show that the generic fluidity of the fairytale fantasy provides additional opportunities for interpretation and critical exploration.

Until now, you have been merely a participant. You drove where you were told, you did what needed to be done, you listened to what has been said, sometimes you believed it and other times you did not. You tried to watch, to make conclusions, to guess what was happening, you tried to understand but did not have much success. It is for the best. Because at this point you do not need to understand, you need to decide what is happening (*Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla* 398).

It seems that this call for action aims not only at the protagonist, but just as much at the reader. Martynchik encourages readers to examine secondary worlds more critically and to take agency in defining them according to one's needs. Whether the words come from Max Frei-the author, Sir Max-the character, or Svetlana Martynchik herself, remains unclear. The readers are left with sufficient ambiguity to adopt any interpretation that suits them.

5.4. Conclusion: Chapter 5

Fairy tales that are part of larger folktale traditions become explicit and implicit frame narratives in various forms of supernatural fiction. In fairytale fantasy works the process reaches a critical mass, generating a new genre that heavily relies on its readers' prior reading experiences. While reading a fairytale fantasy novel, readers consciously and subconsciously draw structural, thematic, and narrative parallels to classic fairy tales. The use of familiar language and leitmotifs inspires recognition and lures readers deeper into the fantasy universe. The role of recognition in fairytale fantasy narratives is strong enough to influence the perception of the work, as, for

example, in the case of *Yellow Metal Key*, it is intertextuality that is responsible for making Svetlana Martynchik's work an unnatural narrative.

When a fairytale fantasy takes on elements from fairy tales, readers transfer their generic expectations onto its narrative. Some of these expectations are met, but most are broken. The more a fairytale fantasy text borrows from fairy tales the stronger is the impact. Svetlana Martynchik's *Yellow Metal Key* reveals the capacity of fairytale fantasy to draw from preexisting secondary worlds to engage readers deeper than into the process of world-building.

“Alternative subcreation” uses intertextual references as the principal source of its worldbuilding. In the case of fairytale fantasy, this has a number of consequences. First, readers' interpretation of the secondary world is greatly influenced by previous reading experiences. Second, once the link between a fairytale fantasy work and its prior story is established, the former inherits the expectations that readers hold for the latter genre. Third and finally, readers' associations and expectations of prior stories are often used as a source of revisionism. Thus, in *Reckless* and in *Yellow Metal Key* readers can fully appreciate Funke's critic of outdated character portrayal or Martynchik's intricate play with rhetorical modes only once the works are located within the larger context of their respective prior stories and national literatures.

Conclusion

Fairy tale and fantasy fiction are genres that revolve around imaginary realms: their supposedly abstract status inclines readers to perceive information in a less skeptical manner. It has been argued before that fantasy and fairy tales share the ability to turn serious matters into games, without undermining them or making them appear less significant. By suspending their disbelief, readers engage in imaginary worlds, reimagining consensus reality in a new preferred fashion. As a result, the play that occurs while reading fairy tales or fantasy is significant not only because it allows participants to express themselves in unexpected ways, but also because it grounds real emotions that affect players outside the fictional context.

In this dissertation, I argued that fairytale fantasy, a hybrid genre that combines fairy tale and fantasy characteristics, uses supernatural narrative devices to inspire critical reflection by revisioning and reinterpreting familiar scenarios from classic fairy tales. I referred to this quality of the fairytale fantasy as its “revisionist potential.” This study aimed to enhance the understanding of the narrative apparatus and the revisionist properties of the fairytale fantasy genre.

As has been argued by Gerald Graff in *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (1987): “no text is an island” (10). Fictional narratives naturally borrow from one another in implicit and explicit ways. It is, therefore, not only the fairytale fantasy that mirrors and builds on earlier works. In some ways, all forms of fiction have reflexive properties. The fairytale fantasy genre is, however, uniquely capable of utilizing the strengths of both its ancestor-genres to challenge readers’ expectations and create new paths for critical thought.

Demonstrating the extent to which fairytale fantasy narratives are embedded in their corresponding prior stories was an imperative condition necessary to validate my interpretation. As a result, I selected primary sources that would leave no doubt regarding their origins. This work

examined two sets of case studies from different national literatures: comparing Cornelia Funke's *Reckless: Steinernes Fleisch (Reckless: The Petrified Flesh)* with selected tales from the Brothers Grimm' collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales)* as representative examples from the German literary tradition; and comparing Svetlana Martynchik's *Klyuch iz zheltogo metalla (Yellow Metal Key)* with Alexey Tolstoy's *Zolotoy klyuchik, ili Priklyucheniya Buratino (The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino)* as representative examples from the Russian literary tradition. Drawing on a comparative close reading analysis of *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* and their respective prior stories allowed me to illustrate that it is fairytale fantasy's generic hybridity that enables the transformation of supernatural narrative devices into mechanisms of critical reflection.

The decision to analyze *Reckless* and *YMK* emerged as a result of both novels' intricate ties to their respective national folklore. A juxtaposition of works that draw from distinct mythological and linguistic backgrounds was meant to show that the instruments of understanding the fairytale fantasy introduced in this dissertation are not limited to specific national literatures; instead, my aim was to propose a range of widely applicable interpretive strategies that, and that is my hope, will prompt further investigations into the topic.

In addition, my selection of primary sources was influenced by the aspiration to bring scholarly attention to stimulating international works that until now have remained largely invisible to critics. Cornelia Funke and Svetlana Martynchik are widely known by readers in their native countries, but national as well as international literary scholarship has yet to discover their work.

Last but not least, *Reckless* and *YMK* ideally suited the purposes of this study due to the nature of "revision" by which each of the novels deviates from its corresponding prior story. In

other words, Funke's and Martynchik's texts illustrate different forms of revisionist work that are made possible by the unique narrative characteristics of the fairytale fantasy genre.

One might say that Cornelia Funke's revision is "detail-oriented." Funke recycles names, settings, and material objects that a reader familiar with Grimms' fairy tales easily recognizes. Sometimes, the author even goes as far as to quote directly from the prior stories to establish an immediate connection between the works. In *Reckless*, the intertextual references might be explicit, the revisionism, however, is surprisingly subtle: it reveals itself slowly through small clues. Typically, such clues appear in the form of unsettling fragments of information about seemingly familiar character-archetypes or recognizable magical artifacts: for instance, when a mentor who is expected to be wise, instead behaves cruelly, or when a harmless children's toy suddenly reveals to have had a murderous history. In other words, the author borrows specific plot components from Grimms' tales in order to then use them as points of departure for her revisionism.

The revisionist function is enabled due to *Reckless* adopting similar thematic and structural patterns, and partially imitating the goals, means, and roles associated with the Grimms' fairy tales. The mechanism depends on the reader's initial recognition which then leads to surprise or even bewilderment in response to an unexpected revelation. The goal of such revisionism might be considered fulfilled when the experience of reading the fairytale fantasy in question compels the reader to reconsider and, possibly, reevaluate his/her interpretation of the corresponding original fairy tale.

A juxtaposition of Cornelia Funke's *Reckless* with Grimms' fairy tales provides numerous thought-provoking instances for comparison that might be of interest to a general readership. As I hope this dissertation was able to show, an analysis of Funke's novel might also have productive

classroom applications and serve as a starting point for teachers and students to discuss a variety of matters ranging from present-day sustainability concerns to the fragility of domestic power structures.

Compared to *Reckless*, the revisionist work displayed by *Yellow Metal Key* has a more abstract scale. By that I mean that isolated plot devices are rarely the focus of Svetlana Martynchik's critical attention. Instead, she utilizes the features of the fairytale fantasy to challenge the generic conventions associated with several literary genres, including the fairy tale. Martynchik produces a wondertale that does not mention the supernatural; it is emotionally charged as one might expect from a psychological thriller but its narrative form resembles that of a children's book.

An additional level of complexity is added by the fact that in the case of *Reckless*, readers who are familiar with Grimms' fairy tales are unlikely to miss the parallels between the works. With *Yellow Metal Key*, by way of contrast, I know of many readers who, although familiar with both Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* and Alexey Tolstoy's *Buratino*, failed to draw any connections between the works during their first reading of Martynchik's novel. Phrased differently, while the perception of *Reckless* is almost certainly going to be influenced by the work's relation to the Grimms' tales, *YMK* might be regarded independently of its corresponding prior stories. Martynchik abandons the underlying critical assessment of prior stories known from *Reckless* in favor of unobtrusive hints and well-hidden cues.

Although, similarly to *Reckless*, *Yellow Metal Key* references names and characters that relate to a prior story (i.e. Alexey Tolstoy's *Buratino*), the effect is, arguably, different. Funke's work revises particular characters or situations, whereas Martynchik's novel uses the metaphor of a children's tale in order to reevaluate the experience of growing up.

An important parallel that can be drawn between *Reckless* and *Yellow Metal Key* is that both narratives place an adult protagonist in a setting that raises associations with children. Funke does not engage with this matter, leaving it in the background of her story. Martynchik, by way of contrast, makes the discrepancy a central target of her revisionism by, among other things, ridiculing and undermining the trustworthiness of her protagonist throughout the novel.

In *Yellow Metal Key*, the intertextual references to Tolstoy and Collodi's fairy tales are not meant to revise *Burattino* or *Pinocchio*; instead, Martynchik utilizes the fairytale fantasy format to frame her social critique: the protagonist of *YMK* emerges as a contemporary "hero of our time," a personification of the post-Soviet generation of frustrated daydreamers that hopelessly try to recreate outdated fairy-tale scenarios.¹⁷⁰ The juxtaposition of *Reckless* and *YMK* case-studies served to illustrate distinct aspects of the revisionist work made possible by the hybrid nature of the fairytale fantasy genre.

My investigation did not intend to provide a full account of the relations between the fairy tale and the fairytale fantasy genres. Instead, it used German and Russian case-studies to illustrate the extent of the influence that a national fairy tale tradition can have on a modern fairytale fantasy narrative. The full extent of the impact of the fairytale fantasy is yet to be observed. Nevertheless, I hope that this study might prove useful for future inquiries into the history and genealogy of fairytale fantasies in general and within the context of other national literatures. This dissertation provided points of contact for further studies on disciplinary, thematic, and methodological levels. In addition, my work revealed the need for more targeted exploration of the revisionist potential of the fairytale fantasy from other perspectives, such as, for example, those of cultural and gender studies.

¹⁷⁰ Here, "hero of our time" is meant as an allusion to *Geroy nashego vremeni* (*A Hero of Our Time*, 1840), a novel by Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841).

In this dissertation, I argued that the recent popularity of fairytale fantasy suggests that traditional fairy tales with their straightforward plots and didactic intentions might no longer fulfill the needs of contemporary readers. Instead, there seems to be a demand to revisit, reconsider, and reevaluate old paradigms with a more contemporary and critical perspective in mind. Judging by the enthusiastic reception of various recent fairytale fantasies, modern readers seem to be more willing than ever to question conventional expectations and to challenge outdated stereotypes (at least within the limits of their imagination). As pointed out by John Clute and John Grant:

At the end of the 20th century mimetic tradition increasingly fails to fulfil the most conservative expectations of how we can understand the nature of the world. More than perhaps ever before, human beings live (and perceive the meanings of their lives) in a maze of realities and illusions so multiplex and inchoate, that for many it is almost impossible to make sense of being alive (900).

Along with other supernatural narratives, fairytale fantasy stories provide a valuable opportunity for readers to reevaluate the status quo through the versatile lenses of alternative imaginary worlds. This study constitutes a further piece of evidence in favor of the epistemic value of supernatural fiction. I used my case-studies to demonstrate that non-mimetic narratives have the ability to generate complex arguments with an advanced social, political, and cultural agenda. It is my hope that this dissertation was able to show that reading, studying, and teaching works of fairytale fantasy uniquely serves to expand our perception of literature and its limitations.

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