

# **‘Key’ and ‘Treasure Chest’ Configurations in Goethe’s Works: A Comparative Overview in Poetological Perspective**

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In one of his initial letters to Goethe, Schiller characterizes his friend’s power of imagination as follows:

Ihr beobachtender Blick, der so still und rein auf den Dingen ruht, setzt Sie nie in Gefahr, auf den Abweg zu geraten, in den sowohl die Spekulation als die willkürliche und bloß sich selbst gehorchende Einbildungskraft sich so leicht verirrt. In Ihrer richtigen Intuition liegt alles und weit vollständiger, was die Analysis mühsam sucht . . .

Eight days later he writes:

Ihr Geist wirkt in einem außerordentlichen Grade intuitiv, und alle Ihre denken- den Kräfte scheinen auf die Imagination, als ihre gemeinschaftliche Repräsen- tantin, gleichsam kompromittiert zu haben. Im Grund ist dies das Höchste, was der Mensch aus sich machen kann, sobald es ihm gelingt, seine Anschauung zu generalisieren und seine Empfindung gesetzgebend zu machen. Darnach streben Sie, und in wie hohem Grade haben Sie es schon erreicht!<sup>1</sup>

Goethe had become increasingly skilled in depicting both, the creative as well as the darker potential of the human imagination. As a poet, artist, and philoso- pher, he investigates in a life-long endeavor the prerequisites and dimensions of this most cherished talent, which he regards as a divine gift. At age 30, he poetically personifies “Phantasie” as a female companion and declares her to be “Meine Göttin.” The poem thus entitled eulogizes her with highest praise

above all “Unsterblichen.” Jupiter is paid tribute for having bequeathed his own lively “Schoßkind,” the imagination, to mortal men to become their beautiful and loyal, “ewig bewegliche/ Immer neue” and “unverwelkliche Gattin.”<sup>2</sup>

For the responsible person, such a divine gift obligates. Developing a “regulated” or “disciplined” imagination which at the same time is productively and playfully creative became a major concern of Goethe’s. Both qualities of the imagination must complement each other as do “Willkür / Und Gesetz, [ . . . ] Freiheit und Maß” in nature and society resulting in a “bewegliche Ordnung.”<sup>3</sup> Goethe works on acquiring “eine Phantasie für die Wahrheit des Realen”;<sup>4</sup> he encourages scientists to develop an “exakte sinnliche Phantasie”<sup>5</sup> and mandates beginning with the revision of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, that it be supported by a trained analytical intellect—“Verstand,” and by the synthesizing faculty of higher reasoning—“Vernunft.” In the absence of these the artistic imagination can easily turn wild and ugly, even fatal, instead of producing works of lasting truth and beauty.

A large body of theoretical discourse found in Goethe’s treatises, letters, and conversations attests to his thorough epistemological and poetological understanding of the imagination.<sup>6</sup> One statement in particular assumes a position of central importance. On one hand it relates to the three directions of the productive imagination to be examined here: the Mephistophelian, the Therapeutic, and the Playfully Creative Imagination, on the other hand, it supports a method of interpretation which has been acknowledged as a most fruitful tool of Goethe research. In this statement, the author distinguishes between increasingly complex functions of the imagination. He furthermore demonstrates the desirability of employing analogies so that the mind becomes active in seeing similarities and establishing required connections. It is the young Wilhelm Meister who already in the first fourth of Book I of his “Lehrjahre” recognizes the significance of being aware of interconnections when he proclaims about the “Zusammenhang”: “darauf kommt doch eigentlich alles an.”<sup>7</sup> In 1821 Goethe writes to his friend Knebel about the “Einbildungskraft”:

. . . diese ist zuerst *nachbildend*, die Gegenstände nur wiederholend. Sodann ist sie *produktiv*, indem sie das Angefasste belebt, entwickelt, erweitert, verwandelt. Ferner können wir noch eine *umsichtige* Einbildungskraft annehmen, die [ . . . ] umherschaut, Gleiches und Ähnliches erfasst, um das Ausgesprochene zu bewahren. Hier zeigt sich nun das Wünschenswerte der Analogie, die den Geist auf viele bezügliche Punkte versetzt, damit seine Tätigkeit alles das Zusammengehörige, das Zusammenstimmende wieder vereinige.<sup>8</sup>

The scholarly recognition is not new, that the author’s larger literary works with their complex symbolism and intricate artistic structures contain a much more profound and differentiated representation of what he wants to communicate than what is found in his theoretical texts. Eberhard Lämmert calls this phenomenon “Goethe’s empirical contribution” to [novel] theory.<sup>9</sup> For one of

his primary concerns, namely to portray the multifarious functions and workings of the human imagination adequately, the poet never tires of inventing a vast array of symbols in interconnecting networks. Space limitations here permit no more than a focus on one pair, that of "key" and "treasure chest." This central symbolic pair of key and treasure chest is found in many Goethean works in various constellations and reconfigurations. Because of its frequency and range, this interpretation is intended to provide only a selective overview together with a comparative analysis of its development and usage by the author, without any in-depth analysis of individual works in their entirety. Key and treasure chest also metamorphize into objects of more or less similar shape, which the context reveals as recognizable because they are identical in function. The analysis will proceed chronologically and thematically with emphasis on Goethe's later oeuvre.

### **I. The Mephistophelian Imagination**

The first thematic category, the "Mephistophelian imagination," is elucidated primarily in *Faust I* and *II*. Mephisto, the para-human devil, functions initially as a master illusionist. With attractive images he seduces Faust's fantasy, first in the scholar's study to a world of sensually appealing dreams, then to an eye-catching model of female beauty in the magic mirror of the witch's kitchen, and finally to irresistible desire for the "schöne[.] Bild" (verse 3248) and the person of Gretchen. Faust also calls her a "Götterbild" (v. 2716), when he has the upper hand emotionally and intellectually over his erotic impulses. Gretchen's own world of fantasies plays no insignificant role in the drama either. She fears losing her balance when she discovers Mephisto's little casket of jewels in the "Schrein" of her room. Poor as she is, her imagination conjures up the splendor of an aristocratic lady who, wearing such jewelry, would outshine her own simple natural beauty.

But the "Schrein" and treasure chest also point to the inner nobility of Gretchen's character and the strength of her love for Faust dwelling in her heart.<sup>10</sup> This becomes apparent in the song Gretchen sings about the goblet of the King of Thule and the loyalty of love embodied therein, which foreshadows Gretchen's future loyalty to Faust. The metaphor of the heart as an enclosed chest, a chamber containing the image of the beloved is old. In a touching medieval German song, the lover claims to have lost the key to his faithful heart, telling his darling that she must remain in it forever.<sup>11</sup> Gretchen is not so lucky. The fact that she is so easily seduced by the jewels in the box and by Faust who knows loyalty only to his striving is indicated by the key which is directly attached to the treasure casket. Because of the key's immediate availability, it takes no effort or skill to access the treasure. Goethe through this constellation emphasizes the fact that on a basic level the human imagination functions as a handmaid of desire. Biologically and erotically propelled, psychologically

rooted in semi-or sub-consciousness, often socially conditioned, the imagination on this level intertwines itself with sensuality. It operates with little or no freedom. It can easily fall victim to its own seductive power, to appealing well-meant suggestions, or to malicious manipulations of others.

In the second part of *Faust*, Goethe endows key and treasure chest as symbols of the imagination with additional and enhanced functions.<sup>12</sup> Both objects also appear as seemingly separate entities, especially when their metamorphosis and far-flung interconnections increase in complexity. A few examples will suffice to illustrate specific features typical for the functions of the Mephistophelian Imagination in *Faust II*. In the first act's festival "Mummschanz" parade at the emperor's court, Faust embodies the Poet and stands for God Plutus, the allegorical personification of immense material and immaterial riches. But his large overflowing treasure chest serves the youthful emperor's imagination only as a quick means to acquire money, which he believes can remedy the chaotic conditions of his empire. His impetuous grasp for the gold envelops him in a ball of fire. The ensuing imaginary conflagration symbolizes his and the crowd's insatiable greed. It illustrates Mephisto's success with illusions and simulacra, leads to the invention of paper money, and foreshadows the outbreak of civil war in Act IV.

Goethe employs the symbol of fire, Mephisto's favorite element, to demonstrate the potential interrelationship of entertainment, deceit, lust, and violence and their connection to the powerful force of the human imagination. In the Masquerade, before the fire breaks out, Mephisto as Clown uses the treasure chest's malleable gold as material to form a key-shaped erotic image, a phallus. Its shock and entertainment value has lost none of its draw, and Mephisto's tricks have found multiple replications in old and modern media.

The connection between the dark and dangerous side of the imagination and the capacity of entertainment to incite deceit and violence also figures prominently in Goethe's allegorical festival play *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, written after the Napoleonic wars. There the figure of the entertaining Clown pronounces himself "der gefährlichste von allen" "Dämonen der List." Since "everyone considers him trivial" he can easily "deceive the entire world." After transforming into his second shape—that of a "böser Geist"—, the Clown disappears and Mephisto's trademark, the flame of fire bursts from the ground.<sup>13</sup> In regard to the aberrations of the human imagination producing certain forms of entertainment, which Goethe characterizes as "Tummelplatz häßlicher Kreaturen," he in 1805 makes the observation,

[ . . . ] wie nötig es sei, in der Erziehung die Einbildungskraft nicht zu beseitigen, sondern *zu regeln*, ihr durch zeitig vorgeführte edle Bilder Lust am Schönen, Bedürfnis des Vortrefflichen zu geben. Was hilft es, die Sinnlichkeit zu zähmen, den Verstand zu bilden, der Vernunft ihre Herrschaft zu sichern: *die Einbildungskraft lauert als der mächtigste Feind*, sie hat von Natur einen unwiderstehlichen Trieb zum Absurden, der selbst in gebildeten Menschen mächtig wirkt und ge-

gen alle Kultur die angestammte Roheit fratzenliebender Wilden mitten in der anständigsten Welt wieder zum Vorschein bringt.<sup>14</sup>

The Mephistophelian imagination, however, acts not only as seducer and deceiver, but also as facilitator, an agent that can challenge and strengthen knowledge and creativity. We can call this the “Instrumental Imagination,” which, depending on its use, has beneficial or damaging results. The paradoxical self-definition of Mephisto found in *Faust I*, as “Ein Teil von jener Kraft, / Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft” (v. 1335f.), also applies to the artistic realm. Goethe makes use of this theodicy concept—explicitly stated in the “Prolog im Himmel”—when he causes the devil to serve Faust’s higher purposes. It is Mephisto who, for example, provides Faust with the required magical key that leads him to the realm of the Mothers, interpreted by Dorothea Lohmeyer as a Goethean personification of the archetypes of life. Among these, Faust will find the model of supreme female beauty in occidental literature and art, Helena of Greece. Since Mephisto’s fantasy is not creative, he himself has no access to the archetypes, but he can provide the wherewithal and the key which grows in Faust’s hand and keeps him from getting lost in the timeless and spaceless depths of nature and of his unconscious.<sup>15</sup>

## II. The Therapeutic Imagination

The significance of our second category, the “therapeutic imagination,” which inspired many Goethean works and to which he saw himself particularly committed, cannot be over-emphasized. The two *Wilhelm Meister* novels, written, like *Faust I* and *II*, over a time span of some 60 years, highlight this human and artistic faculty. It is embodied in the creative and self-reflective central character, Wilhelm who, when recognized as such behind the intentionally belittling mask of an unassuming “average chap,” becomes a hero of undeniable importance and consequence. The functions of the therapeutic imagination reveal themselves as major themes in both novels. Goethe regarded healing and teaching, liberating and inwardly ennobling the reader through art as his supreme mission. In his paradigmatic Bildungsroman and artist novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the pitfalls, the detours, and the necessary contributing factors for healing and educating the artistic imagination are symbolically depicted.<sup>16</sup> Learning to master it further in the second titular novel, his *Wanderjahre*, Wilhelm becomes a thinker, a poet, and a physician. With his songs, interpersonal mediation and curative know-how he helps individuals, families, and social groups. He is able to save his own son, Felix, on two levels: de facto from death by drowning in the river and metaphorically from emotional despair.

Key and treasure chest assume unlocking gateway functions also for the therapeutic imagination. While Wilhelm in his youth, after looking long and

assiduously, finds the key to the pantry in which the chest with his beloved marionettes is hidden, Felix (in the sequel) discovers a little treasure casket in a mountain cave, deep inside a “large iron box.” Pointing to its gold and enamel adornment, the author compares this closed and locked “Kästchen” from the depths to a magnificent little book, reminding us of the David and Goliath story booklet Wilhelm secretly stole from the case containing the marionettes. But Wilhelm is conceived as the budding poet who masters his craft and eventually merits his last name, Meister—Master. In contrast, Felix, although he starts out full of promise cannot open the book-like treasure chest, not even at the end of the novel when the right key is found and tried. Youthfully impulsive, he breaks it in the lock. He also fails in the pursuit of Hersilie, his love interest.

For Goethe the therapeutic function of the imagination becomes particularly significant in healing the wounds of the heart, brought about through the loss of one’s love, or by fantasies enmeshed in a “selbstgeschaffnen Wahn” causing excessive hope or fear.<sup>17</sup> Several of Goethe’s early dramas and his novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* deal thematically with the capability of making fruitful use of the gift of one’s therapeutic imagination, or the failure, either tragically or humorously treated, of doing so. In Goethe’s early drama *Lila* of 1776/77, Dr. Verazio, i.e. Dr. “Truth”, declares: “Wenn wir Phantasie durch Phantasie kurieren könnten, so hätten wir ein Meisterstück gemacht.”<sup>18</sup> The successful cure seems to confirm a principle of a “homöopathische Seelenheilkunde,” however, with the still rather naïve psychological insight: “Was Lieb und Phantasie entrissen, / Gibt Lieb und Phantasie zurück.”<sup>19</sup> The heroine is healed by performances mixing reality and fantasy, caringly “staged” by her relatives. They mirror her past experiences in such a way that her frightful phantasms can turn into healing images ultimately leading her to recognition of the truth in her situation.

These programmatically formulated statements are transformed, immensely enhanced and variously differentiated in Wilhelm Meister’s life story by Goethe’s multilayered networks of symbolic constellations. In merging the memory of the marionettes with the traumatic and haunting image of his lost love, Mariane, Wilhelm therapeutically creates in the treasure chest of his heart and on the externalized stage of his imagination the figure of the wondrous Mignon. He makes her into his adopted child who sings his songs of longing and loneliness. Narratively, she functions up to a point as a very beneficial twin or doppelgänger figure in the novel who, however, also carries the potential for a tragic outcome. Poetologically, her ultimate transformation into a work of art by Wilhelm’s therapeutic imagination and by the support of certain members of the Tower Society, has to take place in the “Saal der Vergangenheit” (VII, 574) of Natalie’s castle. On a higher level, Mignon’s obsequies and marble casket at the end of the novel represent a parallel to Wilhelm’s “Reliquienkästchen” (VII, 80), described in Book II, which preserved love notes as well as small memorial objects of Mariane. Memory of the past

is a human, and especially an artist's treasure reservoir. Without it the imagination would not function. Even the future is unthinkable and unimaginable without the experiences and knowledge accumulated in the past.

A humorous analogy, where no healing occurs as it does for Wilhelm Meister, makes even more explicit use of the symbols of key and treasure chest in illustrating the relationship of nature, art, and the artistic imagination. In Goethe's early literary satire, *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, King Andrason's helpful alter ego, Sora, unlocks with a "Hauptschlüssel"<sup>20</sup> the room in which the foolish Prince Oronaro keeps in boxes an artificial nature for his imagination, since authentic nature is too powerful for his maudlin heart. That he is indeed a fool indicates his name "Oronaro," an anagram for "O, o, o Narr." One of his boxes also carries a life-size female puppet. Sentimental books like Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* and Goethe's own *Werther* fill her straw-stuffed bosom. Oronaro loves not a live woman, but an artificial image assembled from popular works of sentimental literature and represented in a puppet with the "stolen" likeness of King Andrason's wife. As one can see, Goethe satirizes here in the figure of a fool a solipsistic and psychologically unhealthy lifestyle. The fantasy of the foolish prince dwells in false, theatrical manipulations. He satisfies the longing of his heart with artificial substitutes. The figure of Oronaro illustrates not only the preference of shadow images over what is real but also the masking and perversion of reality.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to this truly sick prince, healthy King Andrason represents a "Phantasie für die Wahrheit des Realen" in this play, possessing an educated and cultivated imagination which, according to the author, is the mark of the true artist.<sup>22</sup>

In Goethe's last fictional prose work, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, the hero initially carries a secret object like a fetish with him, "das halb wie eine Briefftasche, halb wie ein Besteck aussah" (VIII, 40). Beautifully adorned wallets in other sections of the novel contain poems and love notes.<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm's possession reveals itself as a doctor's small instrument case, which will assume its greatest significance after he has finished his studies and begins to heal others. The scalpel or surgical knife found inside the instrument case resembles a key. This surprising reconfiguration of key and case for Wilhelm Meister symbolizes the fact that what usually opens an enclosure now has become an integral part of its content: a key is no longer necessary to open the doctor's case. Instead both, key and case, function in concert in Wilhelm's hands to heal others. The analytical faculties, so to speak, have become part and parcel of the treasure chest, and the imagination has become "umsichtig" and "geregelt."<sup>24</sup>

The motif of the "Kästchen" in its function as a healer's treasure chest is introduced to the Wilhelm Meister novels in the very center of *Lehrjahre* (Book 4, Chapter 6: in the 49<sup>th</sup> of a total of 98 chapters, excluding Book Six which is not divided into chapters). Its structural and thematic significance is heightened by the fact that Natalie also makes her first appearance in the

center of the book as a figure of light and as a worldly “Heilige.” Under the “heilsame[n] Blick ihrer Augen” (VII, 228) a surgeon takes care of Wilhelm who has been wounded during a robbery attack. Wilhelm recognizes the surgeon “an dem Kästchen, das er in der Hand hatte, und an der ledernen Tasche mit Instrumenten” (VII, 227).<sup>25</sup> In *Wanderjahre*, he attributes his career choice and his purchase of the required instruments to his cure by Natalie’s “helpful” presence and the hand of the “tüchtige Wundarzt” (VIII, 280). Additionally, in the 1829 version of the novel the terrifying experience of a boyhood trauma is told by Wilhelm. Having witnessed the drowning of a newly found friend leaves an indelible impression. It qualifies even more than what the Wundarzt narrator of the *Neue Melusine* and her “Kästchen-Schloß” relates as something which makes the maturing artist and poet “noch immer in der Erinnerung unruhig” (VIII, 354).

All of these events become the springboard for Wilhelm’s healing career on the “Real-” as well as the “Bedeutungsebene.”<sup>26</sup> At the end of the novel, Wilhelm Meister has, indeed, mastered his fate and his craft, as the omen of his last name predicted. His therapeutic successes in the healing arts are based on experience and knowledge as well as on an educated imagination that is rooted in the unconscious as well as the conscious creativity of the mind. Goethe says it directly and best in the very last letter he wrote:

Je früher der Mensch gewahrt wird, daß es ein Handwerk, daß es eine Kunst gibt, die ihm zur geregelten Steigerung seiner natürlichen Anlagen verhelfen, desto glücklicher ist er; was er auch von außen empfangt, schadet seiner eingebornen Individualität nichts. [ . . . ] Hier treten nun die mannigfaltigen Bezüge ein zwischen dem Bewußten und Unbewußten; [ . . . ] Bewußtsein und Bewußtlosigkeit werden sich verhalten wie Zettel und Einschlag, ein Gleichnis, das ich so gerne brauche.<sup>27</sup>

### III. The Playfully Creative Imagination

Mainly associated with lyrical poetry, the third category of Goethe’s “Phantasie,” for which the metaphor as “Schoßkind” of Jupiter in the above-mentioned poem “Meine Göttin” seems most appropriate, can be called the “playfully creative imagination.” Goethe’s childlike “Geniusgestalten” in general, display much of this light-footed or winged form of “Einbildungskraft,” but also its demonic potentials. In his first *Wilhelm Meister* novel and his second *Faust* drama, the poet personifies it in the androgynous or androgynously dressed figures Mignon, Knabe Lenker and Euphorion.<sup>28</sup> But the playfully unencumbered creative imagination also reigns supreme in that prose genre which Novalis considers the “Canon der Poesie,” namely the fairy or fantasy tale.<sup>29</sup> Goethe likewise states: “Ohne Poesie läßt sich nichts in der Welt wirken: Poesie aber ist Märchen.”<sup>30</sup> While all three of his *Kunstmärchen* captivate the reader with their perplexing paradoxes and magic allure, they reveal the traits of Goethe’s maturity as a poet and thinking artist. The structural integrity of

these fairytales leaves no doubt that the author's seemingly unbridled creative imagination works hand in hand with a supreme form of consciousness, which he calls "Besonnenheit." In "Noten und Abhandlungen" of *West-östlicher Divan* Goethe writes:

Die Besonnenheit des Dichters bezieht sich eigentlich auf die Form, den Stoff gibt ihm die Welt nur allzu freigebig, der Gehalt entspringt freiwillig aus der Fülle seines Innern; *bewußtlos* begegnen beide einander, und zuletzt weiß man nicht, wem eigentlich der Reichtum angehöre. / Aber die *Form*, ob sie schon vorzüglich im Genie liegt, *will erkannt, will bedacht sein*, und hier wird *Besonnenheit gefordert, dass Form, Stoff und Gehalt sich zueinander schicken, sich ineinander fügen, sich einander durchdringen*.<sup>31</sup>

To no surprise, the motifs of key and treasure chest occur in his tree art tales in various manifestations, most explicitly in *Die neue Melusine*, a playfully puzzling and amusingly ironic component of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, yet, as Melusine claims and not just for the "Abenteurer": "Die Sache ist ernsthafter, als du denkst" (VIII, 363). A few years earlier, Goethe had composed what he paradigmatically entitles *Das Märchen*, and he included *Der Neue Paris* in his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Since the latter two fantasy tales not only incorporate a number of treasure chests and keys but also transform them in progressively complex metamorphoses, I shall focus on their interpretation in greater detail than was possible in the previous comparative overview.

Goethe's three fantasy tales basically deal with different phases of initiation into the all-important relationship of life and art and the imagination's vital role in the process. Two of them also incorporate the significant symbol of the bridge as being absent, temporary or permanent. The different metamorphoses and constellations of the bridge in regard to amazing new juxtapositions of key and treasure chest symbolize most aptly the maturing artist's developmental stages in relation to art and life.

In Goethe's "Knabenmärchen" *Der neue Paris*—one of several retrospective, ironic, and symbolic "wiederholte Spiegelungen" of himself—the pubescent youthful story teller bears a number of similarities to the experiences, feelings, fantasies, and thoughts of the ten-year old Wilhelm Meister. The novel's hero, specifically called Goethe's beloved "Ebenbild,"<sup>32</sup> discovers to his great joy the enticing and thought-provoking marionettes in "nebeneinanderstehende Kasten," when by chance the pantry key is left sticking in the usually locked door. In the author's words, these figures represent nothing less than Wilhelm's "Helden-und Freudenwelt" (emphasis added), the puppet-sized embodiments of "Freunde und Feinde." Wilhelm memorizes the story of David and Goliath not only in the attic, where Mignon later sleeps, but also, among other places, in "allen Winkeln [ . . . ] des Gartens" (VII, 19–21).

The magical garden, in which the semi-fictional story teller, a somewhat "narcissistic" young poet and "Neue Paris," not of Troy but of Frankfurt, finds

himself, resembles a poetic treasure chest of large dreamlike proportions. Inside the magnificent garden walls, a river and two golden fences bordering the river's edges separate the circular outer from the inner realm and form barriers to the as yet secret center of the garden. Only after he has fulfilled certain conditions, is the boy granted permission to cross the river. A magic temporary bridge comes into existence when the fences, composed of vertically arranged spears shaped like upwardly pointing keys, collapse against each other and allow him passage. Arriving in the garden's central pavilion, the boy discovers three beautiful majestic women, who resemble in color the three apples the winged messenger-god, Mercury, had given him in a dream the night before. Not yet capable of understanding either their significance or the "heavenly music" they perform, the youthful poet is also not able to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by the gods. Instead, he plays games with a miniature nymph whose singing and dancing he is able to appreciate. She shows him her treasures, dolls, and puppets in glass cases. The toy soldiers of both genders, which the children carry in "Kasten" (IX, 60) onto the golden bridge, magically stand up without support and form two opposing armies. As the author specifically notes, they follow the pattern of the opposing spears of the bridge, turning the formerly friendly companion into a "Gegnerin" in the ensuing confrontation. In the context of its use of mythological figures and in analogy to specific other Goethean works, the choices which the juvenile "Narziß" makes in this fairytale point to more than what appears to be a typical battle of pre-teen children. Not only biological and psychological gender conflicts are portrayed, but also the vital issues of the young poet's artistic development, as can be seen in the following events (IX, 60–62).

In the attempt not to be defeated by his new friend, the boy pretending to be "Achilles," throws his agate balls too ferociously at the girl's cavalry so that her "Amazon" centaurs break apart. Miraculously they reassemble, become "alive" and move by themselves, analogous to Wilhelm Meister's puppets, the marionettes from the boxes in the pantry, when they entered his imagination.<sup>33</sup> The boy's angry and hurtful confrontation with his playmate results not only in the loss of her and the toy figures but, more significantly for this fairy tale, in a retraction of the temporary bridge. The key-shaped spears rise up, throw the unrestrained young poet off the formerly supportive playground and form a barrier again. Although the key-shaped spears now prevent him from reaching the inner sanctuary—Wilhelm Meister calls a puppet player's secret enclosure a "Heiligtum" (VII, 19)—there is at least hope of entering the magical poetic garden again through the changing constellations of three objects outside the gate and by keeping Mercury's mission in his mind.

After being ushered out of the garden, the impetuous budding poet discerns on the wall opposite the gate nut trees, an inscription, and a fountain basin arranged perpendicularly above each other like a giant key. He makes sure to remember this configuration as a point of reference for possible future entries into the magic garden. Puzzling enough, and cause for much scholarly

speculation, is the fact that Goethe includes a drawing of a vertically positioned key with the larger-sized handle or head at the top as an illustration in *Wanderjahre*.<sup>34</sup> In *Der neue Paris* the narrator, after describing how these three objects "senkrecht über einander [standen]," adds: "ich wollte es *malen*, wie ich es gesehn habe." (IX, 64, emphasis added).

When the young story teller in this—for the autobiography of a poet—even more relevant fantasy tale, later revisits the area and attempts to repeat his adventure, he finds to his great surprise that all three objects have not only altered their appearance slightly, but are spread far apart. The garden gate is altogether gone. Upon further visits, however, the three objects seem to approach each other. This consoles him and provides him with the hope, even the assurance that if in the future the conditions are right, he will "mein möglichstes tun, das Abenteuer wieder anzuknüpfen" (ibid.). In contrast to Felix, who in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* breaks the key to the book-like treasure casket and finds healing and solace only through his knowledgeable father, Goethe in his autobiographical retrospective confirms the artistic potential and well-founded hopes of his younger self. After all, had he not described himself in the fairy tale as "Ein Liebling der Götter" and later in life, with increasing maturity, fulfilled their charge to deserve this appellation? (IX, 63).

By the additional analogy of function and action, the key to Felix's "Prachtbüchlein" provides proof that the configuration of the objects found on or above the wall opposite the secret garden gate indeed constitutes a key. Its parts separate at the end of the "Knabenmärchen"; they can come together again under certain circumstances and for the right person. The wise elderly autobiographer knows the specifics and puts them as a prediction into the mouth of his youthful "Ebenbild": "Wahrscheinlich, wenn *alles wieder zusammenrifft*, wird auch die Pforte von neuem sichtbar sein" (IX, 64, emphasis added). As we are informed in the second to last chapter of *Wanderjahre*, the likewise "broken" and separated parts of Felix' key originally were "magnetisch verbunden." In the hands of the right person, here an elderly "werter Goldschmied," the broken parts again "halten einander fest, aber schließen nur dem *Eingeweihten*" (VIII, 485, emphasis added). It is he who fulfills the prerequisites of craftsmanship and knowledge and thus as a true "initiate" can open the treasure chest. The theme of an attempted, a failed, a partly or completely successful "initiation" connects, among other works, Goethe's three fairy tales with *Wilhelm Meisters Lehr- and Wanderjahre*.

In *Das Märchen*, Goethe symbolically delineates the phases and cooperative actions necessary for the successful development, interaction, and cooperation of the best of human qualities on a personal and social level.<sup>35</sup> Not coincidentally, this classical fairy tale was composed in 1795 during the revision and completion of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1794–96). Both works raise the task of how to master life and the creative imagination to an entirely new level when compared with the "Knabenmärchen." On the surface, fairy tales

seem totally “ein Produkt der Einbildungskraft [die von] ihren eigenen Flügeln getragen und geführt [wird],” playful, light, easygoing and certainly without any obvious didactic purpose (VI, 209). On the other hand, Goethe concedes in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that the inventors of such stories find themselves rewarded when they “der Einbildungskraft Stoff zu neuen Bildern und dem Verstand zu fernem Nachdenken [. . .] hinterlassen” (IX, 447). The fictional narrator of *Das Märchen* even uses one of the paradoxical caveats which are so typical for Goethe’s pronouncements about his own works, namely that through this fantasy tale the listeners “an nichts und an alles erinnert werden sollen” (VI, 209).<sup>36</sup>

At the outset of *Das Märchen*, several serious and potentially fatal conflicts exist which have to be resolved with wisdom and circumspection. This time, a permanent, rather than a merely temporary bridge must be built over the river which divides a land in disarray and paralysis. This is one of the most important conditions to be fulfilled before the powerless Prince—young Goethe and Wilhelm Meister are also called “Prinz”—can marry Lilie without being killed by her touch. No longer relatively harmless like the dancing nymph in Goethe’s boyhood tale, “die schöne Lilie” reigns in her garden of art on the other side of the river but, as long as the spell of her unmediated beauty, the “tödliche Zauber des schönen *Scheins*,” is not lifted, she paralyzes or even destroys life.<sup>37</sup>

Lilie, “die vollkommene Schönheit,” embodies the essence of her garden. That this garden, just as its likeness in Goethe’s “Knabenmärchen,” symbolically represents a place of poetry, art and a realm of ideals, both dangerous and beneficial, seems obvious. The author specifies his symbolization with three additional features. Beautiful Lilie can infuse precious stones and art objects with only “ein halbes Leben.” This is the “life” which the imagination and the “schöne Schein” of art display. She knows and points out what art cannot do: “Alle Pflanzen in meinem großen Garten tragen weder Blüten noch Früchte.” Living creatures with the ability of organically reproducing themselves and their own kind do not exist in this garden, whereas works of art thrive, when planted by her hand “in einen sonst unfruchtbaren Boden” (VI, 222–227). And it is Lilie who sings, plays the harp, composes a poem, and is adorned with a light-emanating veil, Goethe’s symbol for “der Dichtung Schleier,”<sup>38</sup> so that Katharina Mommsen calls her a “Dichterin.”<sup>39</sup> The relationship of three and one, found in Goethe’s “Knabenmärchen” is reversed. The one supreme beauty, Lilie, has replaced the former dancing nymph. Alerte’s “Gebieterrinnen,” who had played their instruments in vain for young “Narziß,” have now been transformed into three female companions of Lilie, serving her and reflecting aspects of her beauty in the garden of art. At the end of *Das Märchen*, Princess Lilie, a descendent from Jupiter’s beloved “lap child,” becomes what was predicted, namely the loyal, no longer perilous, “unverwelkliche Gattin” of a matured, knowledgeable and empowered Prince.

Instead of boxes containing marionettes, puppets or toy soldiers which captivated the imagination of the young Wilhelm and the Neue Paris, a chest-like enclosure, a temple with the statues of kings, figures prominently in this fantasy tale. As yet hidden underground in the depths of the mountains like Felix's "Prachtbüchlein," but only much larger and much more difficult to retrieve, it represents an equally indispensable treasure for the Prince as does Lilie's garden. Whereas the action in *Der neue Paris* proceeds largely on a horizontal level, the vertical dimensions play a major role in the symbolic topography of *Wanderjahre* and *Das Märchen*, becoming most obvious in the Snake's progressively upright and supportive position and in the upward movement of the formerly buried treasure. This temple with the living statues of three distinctly differentiated kings made of gold, silver, and bronze respectively, has to be brought into the light of day so that their brother, the fourth king, will no longer rule as he does in times of psychological and political darkness. In epistemological and poetological perspectives, the three kings represent the conscious cognition and focused application of developed and clearly differentiated human faculties.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, their brother, composed of arbitrarily mixed metals, illustrates the clumsiness and excessive proneness to error or outright chaos, which undifferentiated thoughts and actions of an unlettered human nature or a dangerous political adventurism produce. He collapses into an ugly heap when the Prince, endowed with the gifts of the three genuine kings and married to his bride who has been delivered from her predicament, overcomes his former paralysis and rules his kingdom with wisdom and benevolence.

Before that happens, however, the inevitable question arises how the underground temple can be entered and by what means this particular treasure vault will be unlocked. Felix, as we have seen, failed in his attempt; the Neue Paris accomplished something, Wilhelm Meister succeeded. With fairy tale humor, Goethe resorts to the gold-eating will o' the wisp for help. Resembling keys with their vertical flames, they also act as keys. With their pointed tongues they lick and consume the golden lock and bolt to open the underground temple's gate. Goethe strengthens the image of their cooperation and key-like function even more when he points out that "sie die Spitzen ihrer Flammen *zusammenneigten* und [ . . . ] mit ihren spitzesten Flammen Schloß und Riegel aufzehrten" (VI, 234, emphasis added).

As a form of ambiguous temporary enlightenment, another will o' the wisp had lit the path to the Walpurgis Night festivities for Faust and Mepisto. Similarly, but on the higher level of serious initiation, the personification of analytical problem-solving and factual enlightenment, Jarno in *Lehrjahre*, leads Wilhelm Meister to the door of the secularized chapel, the innermost sanctuary in Lothario's castle. Here the hero is initiated into the formerly secret Society of the Tower mainly for two purposes: to complete himself by integration with what the other members symbolically represent, and to enrich

them by complementing their talents and faculties with his own productive imagination.<sup>41</sup> Just as the formerly obscure “emissaries” of the Tower Society and their actions eventually become an “open enigma” for the supposedly merely “lucky” protagonist of Goethe’s Bildungsroman of the Artist, the hidden treasure chest of the fairy tale temple rises from the depths of the earth to the sun-lit surface on the other side of the river in the terrain of Lilie’s garden. All prerequisites fulfilled, it reveals its content to the initiated. Curious or greedy visitors, however, are satisfied with appearances or gain: just as the revelers do in the “Mummenschanz” scene of *Faust II*, they grab for gold coins which the departing will o’ wisps scatter around with fun and ease to please the crowd.

The magnificent permanent bridge erecting itself to connect the two previously divided shores and to lead up to the emerging temple, is what Bernd Witte calls a “Kunstwerk und Kommunikationsmittel zugleich.”<sup>42</sup> It is built by the gold-eating and evolving Green Snake who initiates the whole process of healing, recovery, and transformation. The epistemological and poetological significance of the bridge is linked to the function of the will o’ the wisps as key, the recognition of the temple as treasure chest and endowment, and the helpful cooperation of the “Kräfte”<sup>43</sup> which constitute this fantasy tale. Symbolically they together provide the reliable foundations and strong connections on which the mature artist depends. This is corroborated by statements Goethe makes when he talks about the production of “wahre,” “durchgedachte,” “ganze” and “Meister-Kunst.”<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to the self-assured Narcissus of Goethe’s “Knabenmärchen,” the humble Green Snake embarks on an amazing road of discovery and development. His natural curiosity and sense perceptions had already endowed him with the ability to form a temporary bridge at specified times across the river. This, according to Goethe, corresponds to an artist’s experiences and possession of a “sensual fantasy” which, even though it is lacking enlightened reasoning and higher insight, can temporarily link up with the realm of art. After eating the will o’ the wisps’ gold, the Snake attains greater knowledge and clearer vision which allow him to distinguish the underground temple’s four kings through the light emanating from his body. Finally, under the guidance of the wise Old Man with the Lamp, the Snake with his natural curiosity and acquired cultivated capabilities not only preserves the paralyzed Prince from decay, but also revives him with Lilie’s help. The Snake’s “sacrifice” of his temporary existence in order to erect the permanent bridge parallels Goethe’s belief in a “Stirb und werde.”<sup>45</sup> For the healed Prince, beautiful Lilie and her touch have become benign, because her realm of art henceforth will be intimately connected to life and reality. Built out of the jewels and precious stones into which the Snake’s body had transformed, the bridge’s permanence, translucent structure and firm support arches constitute essential features for this fairy tale’s happy ending. They symbolize the majesty of what Goethe in

an essay written a few years earlier had designated as the highest form of art, "Stil," which is founded on the "tiefsten Grundfesten der Erkenntnis, auf dem Wesen der Dinge, insofern uns erlaubt ist, es in sichtbaren und greiflichen Gestalten zu erkennen."<sup>46</sup>

Effortlessness, lightness, and seeming willfulness characterize many inventions of Goethe's "playfully creative imagination." But as we have seen, "Besonnenheit" and "umsichtige Einbildungskraft" play no less a role in the themes and structures of the fairy tales which are part of his mature oeuvre. Another favorite term of the author, occurring for the first time in *Das Märchen* and frequently used later on, is the logically paradoxical but symbolically resolvable phrase: "das offenbare Geheimnis."<sup>47</sup> Visualized, this concept is embodied foremost in the integrated functions of "treasure chest" and "key." The ingenious symbolic use of this and other polar configurations allows the poet, as master craftsman, to operate on several levels of insight and presentation simultaneously, so that a wide spectrum of readers can enjoy his works. But it also provides the means which Goethe as author loves to employ, namely, to play with the reader's own perspicacity, initially hiding what only patient observation, circumspect cogitation, and knowledge can detect. Thus, even though broad interest in Goethe's works continues undiminished, much remains to be discovered, especially in regard to the artistic structures of his vast symbolic networks. Playing the detective to unveil among other intriguing challenges the author's carefully concealed self-reflections, and to trace his consummate craftsmanship, is indeed exciting and rewarding.

<sup>1</sup> August 23 and 31, 1794. *Briefe an Goethe*. Ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow (Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1965) I, 164 and 168. "Hamburger Ausgabe" (henceforth: HA-Br-aG).

<sup>2</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Werke*. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden. Ed. Erich Trunz. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hamburg: Wegner, 1968) I, 144ff. (henceforth: HA). Roman respectively Arabic numerals in the text refer to volume and page number of this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "Metamorphose der Tiere," HA I, 203. Northrop Frye uses the title *The Educated Imagination* for one of his books (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, 25 December 1825. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*. Münchner Ausgabe in 21 Bänden. Eds. Karl Richter et al. Vol. 19. Ed. Heinz Schlaffer (München: Hanser, 1987) 151 (henceforth: MA).

<sup>5</sup> Goethe's commentary to Stiedenroth's *Psychologie zur Erklärung der Seelenerscheinungen*. HA XIII, 42.

<sup>6</sup> For background and critical overview with multiple references see Hans Adler, "Einbildungskraft," *Goethe Handbuch in vier Bänden*. Eds. Bernd Witte et al. Vol. 4/1 (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1998) 239–242.

<sup>7</sup> HA VII, 19.

<sup>8</sup> 21 February 1821. *Goethes Briefe*. Eds. Karl Robert Mandelkow and Bodo Morawe. Hamburger Ausgabe in 4 Bänden (Hamburg: Wegner, 1962ff.) III, 501 (henceforth: HA-Br).

<sup>9</sup> "Goethes empirischer Beitrag zur Romantheorie." *Goethes Erzählwerk. Interpretationen*. Eds. Paul Michael Lützelner and James McLeod (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985) 9–36, esp. 15.

<sup>10</sup> In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe describes his love for Käthchen Schönkopf with the wording, “daß sie wohl verdiente, in dem Schrein des Herzens eine Zeitlang als eine kleine Heilige aufgestellt zu werden.” HA IX, 283.

<sup>11</sup> “du bist mîn, ich bin dîn: / des solt dû gewis sîn. / dû bist beslozen / in mînem herzen, / verloren ist daz slüzzelîn: / dû muost immer drinne sîn.” A typographically simplified version is available in *Epochen der deutschen Lyrik in 10 Bänden*. Ed. Walther Killy. Bd.1: *Gedichte von den Anfängen bis 1300*. Eds. Werner Höver and Eva Kiepe (Munich: dtv, 1978) 50.

<sup>12</sup> Goethe’s concepts of the symbol during different periods of his life are complex enough so that even a basic outline cannot be provided within the framework of this article. For a summary plus a selection of references see Robert Stockhammer’s entry “Symbol,” *Goethe Handbuch* 4/2, 1033. Wilhelm Emrich wrote the path breaking study linking theory and practice in his *Die Symbolik von Faust II. Sinn und Vorformen*. 3rd ed. (Bonn: Athenäum, 1964). In respect to the relationship of symbol and sign, imagination and interpretation, Manfred Frank, referring to Sartre and Peirce, states: “Symbole bleiben, selbst wenn sie verstanden werden, vieldeutig und treten nur im Übergang zum Imaginären hervor. Die Imagination aber ist eine Bewußtseinshaltung eigener Art: sie nimmt das Zeichen oder eine Kette von Zeichen zum Anlass von Sinnprojektionen, die deren gewöhnliche Bedeutung unsichtbar überlagern. [. . .] Tatsächlich jedoch ist diese strenge Abgrenzung von Zeichen und Symbol eine künstliche Abstraktion. Denn ein Zeichensystem bleibt [. . .] stumm, wenn es nicht interpretiert wird. “Die Dichtung als ‘Neue Mythologie’,” *Mythos und Moderne. Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion*. Ed. Karl Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1983) 18f.

<sup>13</sup> Act I, scene 8; HA V, 374f.

<sup>14</sup> *Tag- und Jahreshefte* 1805, HA X, 490. Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Dorothea Lohmeyer, *Faust und die Welt. Der zweite Teil der Dichtung* (Munich: Beck, 1975), 128ff., 124f.; Gottfried Diener, *Fausts Weg zu Helena. Urphänomen und Archetypus* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1961), 95ff.; Jane K. Brown, “Mephisto der Naturgeist“ in: J.K.B., *Ironie und Objektivität: Aufsätze zu Goethe* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 103f.

<sup>16</sup> Hellmut Ammerlahn, “The Marriage of Artist Novel and Bildungsroman. Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister: A Paradigm in Disguise*.” *German Life and Letters* 59/1 (2006) 25–46.

<sup>17</sup> This succinct wording occurs in the allegorical “Festspiel” *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, Act II, sc.15, verse 555. HA V, 385. Whereas the allegory of hope appears there as a victorious fighter against oppression, the “edle Frauen,” “Furcht und Hoffnung,” accompany Faust’s allegorical victory procession in chains. This indicates that if excessive and uncontrolled they can become “zwei der größten Menschenfeinde,” as the figure of “Klugheit” comments. Act I, “Mummenschanz” scene, HA III, verses 5403 and 5441f.

<sup>18</sup> Act I. MA 2.1, 140.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Act IV, MA 2.1, 160. Commentary by Hartmut Reinhardt: 614–624.

<sup>20</sup> MA 2.1, 198.

<sup>21</sup> That this can become a specifically 20<sup>th</sup> century problem of culture is addressed by critical theorists such as Jean Baudrillard. See his essay “Simulacra and Simulations,” *Selected Writings*. Ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998) 166–184 for an analysis of successive stages the image can serve: from representation via misrepresentation of reality to its absence altogether in the simulacrum.

<sup>22</sup> For more detailed interpretations see Hellmut Ammerlahn, “Vom Püppchen zum Liebchen, vom Schatten zur erkennenden Frau: Ironische und therapeutische Selbstinszenierungen der dichterischen Phantasie in Goethes ‘Anti-Werther-Dramen’ *Lila* und *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*,” *Analogon Rationis. Festschrift für Gerwin Marahrens zum 65. Geburtstag*. Eds. M. Henn and C. Lorey (Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1994) 111–128.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. the “Jagdgedicht” of the Major is enclosed by the “prächtige” and “köstliche Brieftasche” made by the Schöne Witwe. Hersilie places her answer to Felix’ love note in a “sehr zierliches” “Brieftäschchen” of her own hand. HA VIII, 185, 197, 265f.

<sup>24</sup> The skeptical mathematician and astronomer, companion of Makarie in *Wanderjahre*, attributes to her “eine in hohem Grad geregelte Einbildungskraft.” (HA VIII, 451). As early as in Book I, chapter 10 of the novel, Wilhelm’s “Erfassen der tiefsten Geheimnisse” of Makarie is confirmed (*ibid.* 126).

<sup>25</sup> At the end of *Lehrjahre* when encountering the doctor’s case again in the hands of a younger physician, Wilhelm shows less interest in its content and function than in the “Band”

that is attached to it. Just like Felix's "Prachtbüchlein" it is described as extraordinary: "Lebhafte, widersprechende Farben, ein seltsames Muster, Gold und Silber in wunderlichen Figuren, zeichneten dieses Band vor allen Bändern der Welt aus" (HA VII, 428). It may be no coincidence that the word "Band" which connects Wilhelm's memory of being healed in *Lehrjahre* with his becoming a healer in *Wanderjahre*, is applied in the latter work to Lenardo and to the society of craftsmen, artists, and emigrants which he leads (see HA VIII, 352, 413). Repeatedly characterized as the "Vermittler" Wilhelm connects what hitherto was separated in this novel. See e.g. Makarie's request: "Bereiten [Sie] unserer Familie ein glückliches Zusammenfinden" (ibid. 128).

<sup>26</sup> The fourth letter to Natalie, in which Wilhelm relates the drowning of a new friend, his helplessness vis-à-vis this tragedy and the circuitous path toward his profession, shows remarkable structural and thematic similarities to the narration of his own boyhood experiences to Mariane in *Lehrjahre*. Its poetological implications as well as the significance of Wilhelm's encounter with the painter at Lago Maggiore contributing to the hero's well-rounded education as a poet-thinker and healer, are discussed in Hellmut Ammerlahn, "Der Strukturparallelismus von Wilhelms kreativer, bildender und tätiger Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Goethes *Meister-Romanen*," *Goethe Yearbook X* (2001), 154–190.

<sup>27</sup> To Wilhelm v. Humboldt, 17 March 1832. HA-Br IV, 480.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Emrich, *Die Symbolik von Faust II*. 171–176, 350–356.

<sup>29</sup> *Novalis Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs* in 4 Bänden. Ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960ff.) III, 449.

<sup>30</sup> Conversations with Kanzler v. Müller, 15 May 1822, *Goethes Gespräche. Biedermannsche Ausgabe in 5 Bänden*. Ergänzt und hrsg. von Wolfgang Herwig (Munich: dtv, 1998) III, 367.

<sup>31</sup> HA II, 178. Emphasis added. For analyses of the artistic structures found in Goethe's fairytales see Ingrid Kreuzer, "Strukturprinzipien in Goethes Märchen," *Jb. d. dt. Schillergesellschaft* 21 (1977) 216–246; Stéphane Mosès, "Das wiedergefundene Eden—Goethes Märchen 'Der neue Paris'," S. M., *Spuren der Schrift—Von Goethe bis Celan* (Frankfurt/Main: Athenäum, 1987) 22–28; Gabriele Blod, "*Lebensmärchen*." *Goethes 'Dichtung und Wahrheit' als poetischer und poetologischer Text* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003) 128–133.

<sup>32</sup> Goethe to Charlotte v. Stein: "Ich bin eben über meinem geliebten dramatischen Ebenbilde." 24 June 1782, HA-Br I, 399. As Hans Gerhard Gräf explains the word "dramatisch" is a reference to the work's original title: *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung. Goethe über seine Dichtungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), Part I, vol. II, 712.

<sup>33</sup> For an analysis of the interrelationship between the hero's marionettes, the loss of his love Mariane, and the creation of Mignon through his artistic imagination, see Hellmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit. Goethes Künstler-Bildungsroman "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre": Struktur, Symbolik, Poetologie*. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003). Research literature is listed in the monograph's bibliography. For well-informed reviews see esp. Wilhelm Vosskamp in *Germanistik* 45 (2004): 825f., Waltraut Maierhofer in *German Studies Review* 28 (2005): 155f., Monica Casalis-Thurmeysen in *Etudes Germaniques*, 60 (2005): 167, Ellis Dye in *Goethe Yearbook XIII* (2005): 221–230. Three indexes are found on the website: <http://faculty.washington.edu/ammerlan/>

<sup>34</sup> HA VIII, 321. It occurs when Hersilie reports how the missing key to Felix' "Schatzkästchen" has finally been found and exhorts him as well as his father to come and use it so that the hitherto hidden secret of the book-shaped treasure chest can be revealed. As far as I can see, this is the only drawing Goethe himself included in his major works of prose fiction and thus must carry special significance.

<sup>35</sup> As Schiller mentioned in a letter to Goethe, dated 29 August 1795, the author's idea for *Das Märchen* was: "das gegenseitige Hülffeisten der Kräfte und das Zurückweisen aufeinander" HA-Br-aG I, 208.

<sup>36</sup> Interpretations of "Das Märchen" have reached into the hundreds and by now include long treatises and book-length studies. These works attest not only to the particularly rich content of interwoven images and ideas and to this fairy tale's artistic magnificence, but also to the multi-dimensional nature of symbolic narration in general. Friedrich Ohly observes that in Goethe's works "ein Symbol nach mehr als einer Seite hin bedeutungsträchtig wird, daß—je nach dem gebrauchten Schlüssel—ein Wahres sich erschließen kann, das nicht ein anderes Wahre ausschließt." "Zum Kästchen in Goethes 'Wanderjahren,'" *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 91 (1961/62) 255.

<sup>37</sup> Camilla Lucerna, "Wozu dichtete Goethe 'Das Märchen'?" *Goethe. NF des Jahrbuchs* 24 (1962): 215. Emphasis in the text.

<sup>38</sup> See Goethe's poem "Zueignung," HA I, 152.

<sup>39</sup> *Goethe Märchen*. Hrsg. und erläutert von Katharina Mommsen (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1984), 212. In the fairy tale, Lillie can be seen as the spiritual daughter of the Old Man with the Lamp, whom she calls "Heiliger Vater" (VI, 235). Peter Pfaff argues: "Daß aber der Alte Poet ist, bezeugt die Lampe, die Dunkles erhellt, Minderes vergoldet und verschönt, Totes ins Kunstgebilde bannt und das Metallisch-Harte rührt; daß der Poet Goethe ist, zeigen die Maximen an, welche die phantastische Märchenfiktion mit der prosaischen Allgemeinheit goethescher Wahrheiten durchbrechen." "Das Horen-Märchen. Eine Replik Goethes auf Schillers *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung*," *Geist und Zeichen. Festschrift für Arthur Henkel zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*. Eds. Herbert Anton et al. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1977), 327.

<sup>40</sup> For Rudolf Steiner in his interpretation of 1899 these are the "Gaben des Wollens, Fühlens und Erkennens" with commensurate "Handeln" as a consequence. "Goethes Geistesart in ihrer Offenbarung durch sein Märchen 'von der grünen Schlange und der Lilie'," *Goethe. Das Märchen* (Rastatt: Freies Geistesleben, 1961) 57–79, esp. 69f.

<sup>41</sup> See 264–274, 298f. and the chapter "Die Turmkräfte und Goethes poetische Epistemologie" in: Hellmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit*, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> "Das Opfer der Schlange: Zur Auseinandersetzung Goethes mit Schiller in den *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* und im Märchen," *Unser Commercium: Goethes und Schillers Literaturpolitik*. Eds. Wilfried Barner et al. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1984) 467.

<sup>43</sup> See footnote 35.

<sup>44</sup> These terms are marked by italics in the following selection of Goethe quotes: "Nur aus innig verbundenem Ernst und Spiel kann *wahre Kunst* entspringen" ("Der Sammler und die Seinigen," HA XII, 96); Wilhelm Meister: "Ist doch *wahre Kunst* [ . . . ] wie gute Gesellschaft: sie nötigt uns [ . . . ] das Maß zu erkennen, nach dem und zu dem unser Innerstes gebildet ist" (*Lehrjahre*, HA VII, 516); Meister: "Die Kunst bleibt Kunst! Wer sie nicht *durchgedacht* / Der darf sich keinen Künstler nennen" ("Künstlers Apotheose," HA I, 72); "Nur ein Teil der Kunst kann gelehrt werden, der Künstler braucht sie *ganz*," ("Lehrbrief" for Wilhelm in *Lehrjahre*, HA VII, 496); "Die Kunst kann niemand fördern als der *Meister*," ("Maximen und Reflexionen" 803, HA XII, 479).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. "Selige Sehnsucht," HA II, 18f.

<sup>46</sup> "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil," published 1789. HA XII, 32.

<sup>47</sup> When the Golden King asks the Old Man with the Lamp which one of his "Geheimnisse" is the most important, he answers: "Das offenbare." (HA VI, 216). Furthermore, for the author's intentionally created secrets, also in his life, see Marlis Helena Mehra, *Die Bedeutung der Formel "Offenbares Geheimnis" in Goethes Spätwerk* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag H.-D. Heinz, 1982).