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Optimistic Christian Verticals and Destructive Secular Horizontals in Joachim Ringelnatz's and Ödön von Horváth's Experimental Fairy Tales

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Abstract. This article contributes to the discourse on experimental interwar fairy tales as a subgenre that undermines the anachronistic fairy-tale conventions to a selective negation or recontextualization in accordance with a contemporaneous cultural crisis. The contribution consists of demonstrating how fairy tales provide popular interwar religious authors with a platform to parallel the critical mirroring of their secular contemporaneous society with an articulation of a Christian, humanist optimism. A spatially focused comparison of Ödön von Horváth's cycle of fairy tales Sportmärchen (1924–1926, published posthumously in 1972), and Joachim Ringelnatz's Nervosipopel: Elf Angelegenheiten (1924) distinguishes the vertical and horizontal textual spaces to demonstrate that both authors reflect their metaphysically uprooted society through a negation of the genre's characteristic orientation toward harmonic equilibriums on a horizontal spatial axis. However, by overlaying destructive horizontals with antinomic, transcendence-signifying Christian verticals, the tales also articulate a modality of nearness to God, even in the secular world. This symbolic and positive vertical motion correlates with preserving the genre's characteristic idealization of a child.

Keywords: Ödön von Horváth; Sportmärchen; Joachim Ringelnatz; interwar fairy tales; fairy-tale spatiality.

Introduction

This article deals with a spatially focused comparative analysis of the cycles of experimental fairy tales and anti-tales (*Anti-Märchen*) by popular religious authors of the interwar period – Joachim Ringelnatz's *Nervosipopel: Elf Angelegenheiten* (Nervous Fairy: Eleven Affairs, published in 1924) and Ödön von Horváth's *Sportmärchen* (Sport Tales, eight tales published in journals 1924-1926, posthumous book publication 1972). The classic fairy tales exhibit an optimistically theistic world image as a "große und

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verläßliche Ordnung" ["great and reliable order"] (Betz, 1982, p. 11), i.e., as an indissoluble unity of the empirical human world and its surpassing numinous transcendence. The latter reliably intervenes in the human microcosm to establish a joyful equilibrium. Horváth's and Ringelnatz's parodic anti-tales subvert such fairy-tale optimism. Instead of (re)establishing order, their anti-tales prevail over chaos (regarding *Sportmärchen* see Bartsch, 2000, p. 27).

With the grotesquely tragic endings, the authors seem to display a radically sceptical outlook on the modern human condition (Tismar, 1981, p. 37; Pape, 1974, p. 236). However, the contrastive comparison of the tales' horizontal and vertical textual spaces brings forth a subtle Christian optimism: Whereas the horizontal spaces mirror the contemporaneous, radically anthropocentric, narcissistic, and destructive society, the vertical spaces articulate faith in the possibility of preservation of a subject's union with the divine even within the modern and secular world.

By explicating the tension between the religious and the secular as integral to the spatial plane, this paper follows recent trends in comparative fairy-tale research not to marginalize spatial relations (Kujundžić, 2020, p. 22) but to perceive space as symbolically productive *per se*, particularly in regard to the portrayal of the interaction of the profane human microcosm with the subject-exceeding macrocosm (Ostrovskaja, 2021, p. 163).

The interwar experiments with the fairy-tale genre not only selectively disrupt the genre's conventions for satirical purposes (Tismar, 1981), but also utilize its allegorical potential to articulate theological, sociocritical, and philosophical statements (Meyer, Tismar, 2003, p. 144). Consequently, the classical fairy-tale forms become approached as anachronisms, underminable either to subversive negation or recontextualizing continuity (Zipes, 2006, p. 144). The subgenre remains scarcely explored due to the chaotic dispensation of texts (Meyer, Tismar, 2003, pp. 144–148).

While the allegorical orientation of experimental tales encourages their spatially oriented readings, the article aspires to demonstrate the utility of a spatially oriented comparative analysis in regard to the explication of similarly (religiously) motivated tales: The sociocritical moments of negation take place on a horizontal spatial plane, whereas the moments of religiously optimistic continuity take place on a vertical space in both authors.

2. Previous scholarly discourse

Apart from Pape's autobiographically focused chapter (1974, pp. 229–245), Ringelnatz's tale collection has not received scientific attention due to the scholarly marginalization of the popular author (see Möbus, 2000). However, the discourse on *Sportmärchen* repeatedly emphasized its Ringelnatz influence (Tismar, 1981, p. 35; Bartsch, 2000, p. 25). Baur explicates *Sportmärchen* as a continuation of a hundred-year-old comic tradition of ridiculing turnerism that reached its peak with Ringelnatz's *Turngedichte* (Turnering Poems, 1920) (1989, p. 14): young Horváth draws inspiration from the fatal biographies of their irreverent athletes (1989, p. 21). Moreover, Horváth draws inspiration from Ringelnatz's intensified personification of artificial objects in the poetry collection *Die Schnupftabaksdose* (The Snuff Box, 1912) (ibid., p. 23).

Baur reads *Sportmärchen* as a sociocritical satire on the contemporaneous "meaninglessness" within the subject's experience of the surrounding world: Whereas the hero of a classic fairy tale can be sure that he inhibits an inherently meaningful space, "ist es ebenso sicher, dass jeder der naiv befangenen Sportler aus Horváths Märchen in völliger Sinnlosigkeit lebt" ["it is equally certain that each of the naively preoccupied athletes from Horváth's fairy tales lives in a total meaninglessness"] (1989, p. 28). Schmidt-Dengler opposes this reading of *Sportmärchen* as an intentional satire. She argues that the tales are designedly pointless and concentrically "dichten gegen jede hermeneutische Bemühung ab" ["refute any hermeneutical effort"] (2001, p. 37). This contradictory thesis also brings to a Ringelnatz-parallel. According to Schmidt-Dengler, in constructing intentional pointlessness, Horváth draws on his affinity to Ringelnatz's nonsense poetry (40).

Yet, the previous research has not stressed one substantial parallel. Both authors exhibit adogmatic religiosity. Ringelnatz's *oeuvre* is full of Christian symbolism (Möbus, 2000, p. 173). His correspondence exhibits devoted faith in "Gott des Alten Testamentes, der unmittelbar im Alltag belohnt und straft" ["God of the Old Testament, who rewards and punishes imminently in everyday life"] (Pape, 1974, p. 292). As Baumann (2003) proves, Horváth's *oeuvre* also exhibits an adogmatic faith in an incomprehensible God. His theological optimism is most apparent in *Sportmärchen*, in which "[d]er Satzbau und die Wortwahl errinern den Leser unweigerlich an das Alte Testament, [...]" ["the sentence structure and the choice of words inevitably remind the reader of the Old Testament, [...]"] (2003, p. 543). Both tale collections include numerous biblical motifs, such as apocalypse and divine punishment, miracles, ascension, the heavenly realm, divine commandments, chants, churches, and angels; in Ringelnatz, we also observe a painless garden (1994, p. 224). While the biblical imagery hints at their Christian undertones, their contrast with the classic fairy-tale spatiality reveals their nuances as religious utterances.

3. The fairy-tale spatiality as a Christian propaedeutic of universes' divinity

The textual space of a fairy tale shows "fabled shifting" (Messerli, 2005, p. 275) of the *human (non-magical)* and *trans-human (magical) domains*, the former of which (the hero's initial world) submits to the latter (divine intervention, animated nature) after the hero's abandonment of the human microcosm as a "familiar, domestic space" (Kujundžić, 2020, p. 4). Even though the textual world is perceived as extremely imaginative (Messerli, 2005, p. 274; Pöge-Alder, 2016, p. 32), the interaction of these heterogenous domains relates to reality: While readers can correlate the former with their empirical experience, the latter represents the epistemic type of the mythological world (Kujundžić, 2020, p. 75) and communicates "that" what surpasses their non-fantastic reality on a transrational and religious plane.

The harmonious (equilibrium-establishing) relationship between the dependent *human* and the helping *magical domains* became a rule due to the influence of the Grimm Brothers. Their concentrated Christianization of appropriated narratives and assimilation

of numerous medieval missionary stories established the ubiquitous Christian tonality as a genre's distinctive romantic *signum* (Pecher, 2013): A humble hero of a "pure heart" can rely on the help of the *magical domain* if he accepts his subordination to an inherently ethical (Christian) universe that shows maximal reciprocity to his thoughts and actions (Heindrichs, 1998, p. 20). Thus, the hero shows toward his world "Abhängigkeit (im religiosen Sinn)" ["dependence (in the religious sense)"] (Lüthi, 1975, p. 156). His accountability for his actions before his spatial world opens classic fairy tales to reading as a romantic propaedeutic of Christian faith in the world's inherent divinity (Lange, 1982, p. 49).

4. Destructive horizontal space: terrestrial orientation replaces solar orientation

In Horváth and Ringelnatz, this harmonic union of a subject with an immanently transcendental macrocosm collapses as fatal spaces of destruction replace conventional equilibriums. In Ringelnatz's *Eheren und Holzeren* (Honoured and Ironed), the semblance of harmony between the antagonistic kingdoms is destroyed by "ein noch nie dagewesener Seesturm" ["an unprecedented sea storm"] (Ringelnatz, 1994, p. 246). *Vom Zwiebelzahl* (About Onioncounter) concludes with an explosion that kills both antagonistic characters. Horváth's personified parachute in *Der Fallschirm* (The Parachute) refuses to open and leaves its parachutist to a certain death, while in *Die Regel* (The Rule), both protagonists drown. This omnipresent destruction correlates with the modernist constellation of the *human domain*.

In classic fairy tales, the shift from the *human* to the *magical domain* is often accompanied by the hero's acquirement of a *solar orientation* toward both highly vertical and radically peripheral spaces. This spatial orientation that signifies the subject's attentiveness to his numinous macrocosm and underlines his peripheral, cosmological smallness (Ostrovskaja, 2021, p. 164).

In accord with their cosmological non-centrality, the Grimmean positive heroes frequently show humility (Kitzler, 2010, pp. 165–170). The help of the *magical domain* is summoned by the prayer of a "pious maiden" (2017, p. 99) or comes to "a poor but pious girl" (ibid., p. 343). The prince of KHM (Children and Household Tales) 204 leads a humble life with the desire to reach heaven. His humility springs from his *solar orientation* toward the Christian macrocosmic vertical of the earth-heaven: "He looked at the sky, which was so beautifully pure and blue, then he sighed, and said, 'How well must all be with one up there in heaven!'" (ibid., p. 945). In contrast, Horvath's and Ringelnatz's adult heroes show no *solar orientation*. They do not go "up to heaven" (ibid., p. 277), nor do they resort for help to instances localized up in "heaven" (ibid., p. 360). Instead, they inhabit self-centred microcosms that constrain their experience of the universe to a narcissistic yearning for secular achievements. The conventional (Grimmean) anachronistic orientation toward a God-created and incomprehensible (subject-transcending) universe is

replaced by a modernist fascination with earthly anthropocentric achievements in science, sport, and technology.

Horváth's *human domain* centralizes sport as a "Geistloses" ["soulless"] mass-psychotic phenomenon and a new "Weltregion" ["world religion"] (Baur, 1989, p. 27). Ringelnatz's *human domain* brings to the fore the contemporaneous obsession with technological and scientific progress. However, sport and technology are two related themes of progress-obsessed modernism present in both cycles: Horváth incorporates technological motifs in his tales about a neurotic plane (2017, p. 501) or a little son of a fanatical cyclist who "fast auf einem Damenrade geboren wurde" ["was almost born on a lady's bike"] (ibid., p. 499). As a society-absorbing child, he dreams about "Motorradelfen" ["motorcycle elves"] or "Kühlerkobolden auf Märchenkraftwagen" ["radiator goblins on fairy-tale power wagons"] (ibid.).

Ringelnatz, similarly to Horváth, thematizes sport (cf. Horváth's "irdischen Fußballplatze" ["earthly soccer field"] [2017, p. 493] and Ringelnatz's "überirdischen Billardspiel" ["supernatural billiards game"] [1994, p. 232]). While Horváth's boxing promoting posters saturate the space of an entire city (2017, p. 490), Ringelnatz also accentuates the mass popularity of sporting events with a contemporaneous poster-motif: "Schon seit Wochen hatten Plakate verkündet, der Franzose Pilmartine würde einen neuen Fallschirm vorführen. [...] Und an dem Sonntag strömten die geputzten Einwohner der kleinen Stadt hinaus. [...]" (["For weeks posters had announced that the Frenchman Pilmartine will demonstrate a new parachute. [...] And on that Sunday, the groomed inhabitants of the small town came out"] (1994, p. 224).

With the *human domain* determined by the new secular cults of sport and science, the conventional (Grimmean) *solar orientation* toward the miraculous and vertical (Christian) macrocosm is replaced by an antinomic *terrestrial orientation*, i.e., a fixation on the horizontal (profane) spatial axis: Modern acting subjects do not focus on the macrocosm but on the invention of wireless telegraphy, the creation of new motorized machines (1994, p. 236), scientific museums ("das Museum für internationale Laryngoskopie" ["the Museum of International Laryngoscopy"]) (1994, p. 260), or the invention of new sporting disciplines (of "den Stabhochsprung, der heutzutage besonders beim Sportphotographen beliebt ist" ["the pole vault, which is nowadays especially popular with sports photographers"] (2017, p. 503) instead.

In contrast to the heaven-oriented prince of KHM 204, both Horváth's and Ringelnatz's adult heroes pursue narcissistic worldly goals (fame, enrichment), whose attainment requires their *terrestrial orientation*. The "Lebensziel" ["life-goal"] of Horváth's Bindunghausen is to surpass on skis "die große Kurve, die noch von niemandem befriedigend bezwungen worden war" ["the big curve, which had not yet been satisfactorily conquered"] (2017, p. 501). Mańczyk-Krygiel explicates Horváth's mountaineering tales as a critique of human pride and ignorance of the natural world – his tragically ending mountaineers do not respect mountains but perceive them solely as an ego-centric platform to attain fame (2017, p. 118). Similarly, Ringelnatz's Professor Nipp desires scientific

recognition, "bestell[t] Säle, Reklame und Impresario" ["order[s] halls, advertising and impresario"] (1994, p. 254), and his self-centrism has destructive consequences, as his researched anthropomorphic fly dies.

The pride of the modern and anthropocentric subject leads both to metaphorical and literal downfalls. The mountaineer in Horváth urges his colleagues to continue climbing even when falling off the mountain (2017, p. 497). Ringelnatz's parachutist Pilmartine is so disgruntled by not being the center of attention, "daß er ausrutschend ohne Fallschirm vom Turme fiel" ["that he slipped and fell from the tower without a parachute"] (1994, p. 227).

5. Destructive horizontal space: the secular human domain rejects the magical domain

In its secular self-obsession, the anthropocentrically self-oriented *human domain* explicitly rejects the *magical domain* as a signifier of transcendence. In KHM, the devil repeatedly seduces the heroes into wrongdoing (Kitzler, 2010, p. 49). However, Horváth's narcissistic hero of contemporaneity – "Beispiel und Ehrenmitglied aller Ringkämpfer-Kongregationen" ["Exemplary and honorary member of all wrestling congregations"] (2017, p. 494) – rejects the macrocosmic Christian conflict of good and evil. Self-absorbed with his social status, he refuses Satan's promise of world governance with "[d]anke dafür – – – bin ja bereits Weltmeister" ["Thanks for that - - I am already the world champion"] (2017, p. 494).

Ringelnatz's child character Feix performs Bible-alluding miracles (changing of fluids, miraculous healings), but ends up "[v]on allen aufgegeben und gemieden" ["Abandoned and avoided by all"] (1994, p. 219). *Der arme Pilmartine* (Poor Pilmartine), in particular, brings to the fore society's secularism as an unwillingness to admit the possibility of a biblical miracle: the Christological child character Fidje, whose name alludes to Latin *fides* (faith), flies on a bicycle to heaven in front of an incredulous audience. Reminiscent of Christ, he performs a "Himmelfahrt" ["ascension"], whose aftermath is a "Massenvision" ["mass-vision"] [1994, pp. 227–228]). Subsequently, he is confronted with society's violent rationalism, which is hostile to wonder. Science, as well as the "sporting world" ["die Sportwelt"] (ibid., p. 226), strives to undermine his miraculous feat through rational explication: "Zahllose Bücher waren ohne Resultat geschrieben worden" ["Countless books were written without any result"] (ibid., p. 228). The modern man's inability to accept the idea of a transcendental (magic) and thus non-anthropocentric world leads to Fidje's prosecution, in which he is forced by threats to elucidate the unexplainable miracle.

Horváth also thematizes the societal loss of a miraculous faith: In *Aus Leichtathletikland* (From Athletics Land), the horizontal motions of a long jump and running connote the secular, whereas the high jump – a symbolic approximation to Christian heaven along the vertical space – connotes the sacral:

> Da falteten die beiden ungläubigen Urhasen die Ohren und lobpreisten laut die Allmacht; es war ja ein Wunder geschehen: Hochsprung ist erstanden!/ Wie unendliche Heuschreckenschwärme

> flog das Gerücht vom heiligen Hochsprung über die Welt und allüberall sang man Dankchoräle. Als aber kurze Zeit darauf auch das Kurzstreckenlaufen einen Hochsprung vollführte, glaubte niemand mehr an das Wunder. Und die folgende Generation glaubte überhaupt nichts mehr – – – denn nun konnte ja jeder schon vom dritten Lebensjahre ab hochspringen. (2017, p. 502)[1]

In accord with such explicit miracle-denying secularism, the characters do not perceive their spatial world as magically interfering and thus enforcing ethics. Therefore, the Grimmean humility is replaced by impious behaviour. Ringelnatz's Magdalissimus denies his baptism (1994, p. 239) as he spends two years preparing a "raffinierten Mord- und Racheplan" ["an ingenious plan of murder and revenge"] (ibid., p. 240), i.e., he deliberately intends to break the sixth commandment. Horváth's "eitel" ["vein"] (2017, p. 494) wrestler feels like the only "Weltmeister" ["world champion"] (ibid.). This arrogance drives him to destroy the sacral space of the church tower, whose sacrality is underlined by its verticality – the destroyed tower was built "um Gottes Stimme besser erhören zu können" ["to hear God's voice better"](ibid., p. 495).

Linking this modern moral bedlam to Jude's characterization of turning away from God as "the way of Cain" (2017, Jude 11), both authors allude concentrically to Cain as a biblical "designation of atheist" (Byron, 2011, p. 92) and to the fratricide motif as a biblical prediction of humankind's future moral decline (ibid., p. 208). Ringelnatz's *Das schlagende Wetter* (The Striking Weather) ends with the fratricidal violence of two brothers: "Beide Brüder setzten im nächsten Moment eine Pistole an die Öffnung und schossen los; legten sodann ein Auge an, um die Wirkung ihres Schusses zu genießen" ["Both brothers in the next moment put a pistol to the opening and fired; placed an eye to the opening to enjoy the effect of their shot"] (1994, p. 250). In *Das halbe Märchen Ärgerlich* (Half of the Fairy Tale Annoyingly) Graf Quiekenbach kills his twin in a rivalry for his identity (ibid., p. 259). In Horváth's *Was ist das?* (What is it?), "[z]wei Schwergewichte werden als Zwillinge geboren und hassen sich schon in der ersten Runde ihres Daseins" ["Two heavyweights were born twins and hated each other in the very first round of their existence"] (2017, p. 498). Subsequently, one rejoices in another's death. *Die beiden Magenschwinger* (The Two Stomach Swingers) is a narrative of fraternal rivalry and one brother's feeling of grievance. Its biblical referentiality is underlined by the motif of the "heilig Wort" ["holy word"] (ibid., p. 59).

6. Punishing vertical macrocosm

Just as God punishes Cain for his lack of fear, so does the *magical domain* retain its superiority over the *human* one in Ringelnatz's and Horváth's fairy-tale worlds.

[1] "Then the two unbelieving primordial hares cupped their ears and loudly praised the Almightiness; after all, a miracle happened: Like endless swarms of locusts, the rumor of the holy high jump flew over the world and everywhere people sang chorales of gratitude. But when, a short time later, short-distance running also performed a high jump, no one believed in the miracle anymore. And the following generation no longer believed at all - - - because now everyone could high jump from the age of three" (2017, p. 502).

Importantly, whereas the acting subjects focus on the mundane horizontal, the moments of punishing magical interventions are accompanied by the Christian spatial vertical of hell-earth-heaven.

The murderer Magdalissimus dies in the aftermath of an explosion catalyzed by the fall of the Bible. Whilst dying, his attention shifts for the first time from the horizontal axis to vertically positioned heaven, where his victim evokes an angel: Magdalissimus saw "dauernd seinen Onkel beflügelt in den Wolken kreisen […] und hörte ihn fröhlich zwitschern" ["constantly saw his winged uncle circling in the clouds [...] and heard him cheerfully chirping"] (1994, p. 242). In *Aus Leichtathletikland*, God "[…] erzürnte […] gar sehr ob der allgemeinen Gottlosigkeit" ["became very angry [...] about the general godlessness"] (2017, p. 502) and sent down an apocalypse reminding of medieval visualizations of hell: "Es waren Bilder, wie sie grausiger kaum an Verfolgungswahn leidende Insassen der Hölle hätten malen können. Die wenigen, deren Blut nicht stillstand, hausten in Höhlen und weinten bittere Eiszapfen" ["There were pictures that could hardly have been painted more gruesomely by inmates of hell suffering from paranoia. The few whose blood did not stop dwelled in caves and cried bitter icicles."] (ibid.). In allusion to God's divine chastisement by means of lightning (see 2017, Hiob 37: 13; Jeremia 30:23), the blasphemy of Horváth's vein wrestler is punished by the lightning *from above*: "Da traf ihn der Schlag" ["Then the blow hit him"] (ibid., p. 495).

Despite ridiculing classic fairy tales, both authors preserve the genre's characteristic superiority of the *magical domain* over the *human* one in accord with their faith. In contrast to contemporaneous secular and proletarian tales, their heroes are not completely responsible for establishing justice (Zipes, 2006, p. 104) but are punished by an inherently ethical universe instead. This realization allows for cosmetically adjusting Baur's thesis: Horváth's athletes do not live "in complete meaninglessness" (1989, p. 28). Instead, their secular self-absorption leads to destructive meaningless actions within the context of the transcendental (judging) and inherently meaningful space.

7. Positive ascent along the vertical spatial axis

Messerli points out that religious verticals are abundant in fairy tales (2005, p. 277). For illustration, in Cinderella, "the vertical line is given a Christian aspect by the deceased mother when she says, 'dearest child I must leave you but when I am up in Heaven I shall look down to you'" (2005, p. 277). Classic fairy tale authors affirm the Christianly vertical world image by varying the biblical motif of Christ's ascension "up toward heaven" (2017, Acts 1:10) or "up into heaven" (Luke 24:51) (see KHM 3, 2017, p. 277). In Ludwig Bechstein's *Der König im Bade* (The King in Baths, 1857), an angel admonishes a vein king who "glaubte, es gäbe auf der Welt keinen mächtigen Herrn, außer ihm allein" ["believed there was no mighty Lord in the world except him alone"] (2013, p. 160). Subsequently, the angel ascends to heaven in a reminiscence of Christ in *Luke*: "Der Engel aber verschwand vor den Augen des Königs und flog wieder auf gen Himmel, in die Heimath der Seelen, in das Reich des ewigen Vaters" ["The angel

disappeared before the eyes of the king and flew up to heaven again, to the home of the souls, to the kingdom of the eternal father"] (2013, p. 164). Ringelnatz not only explicitly alludes to Bechstein's name (1994, p. 239) but also follows him by paraphrasing the very same biblical excerpt. In *Luke*, Christ "führte" and "schied [...] von ihnen und fuhr auf gen Himmel" ["flew" and "departed [...] from them and ascended to heaven"] (2017, Lukas 24:50-51). Fidje's final ascension similarly emphasizes the upward motion: Fidje "[f]ährt ein Stück über den Rasen, [...] bewegt sich erst langsam, auf einmal sehr schnell gen Himmel" ["rides a little way across the field, [...] moving first slowly, then all at once very rapidly toward the heaven"] (1994, p. 231). In *Acts*, Christ's ascension is accompanied by the cloud-motif: Christ is "zusehends aufgehoben, und eine Wolke nahm ihn auf vor ihren Augen weg" ["was visibly lifted up, and a cloud took him away before their eyes"] (2017, Apostolgeschichte 1:9). The cloud motif reminiscently accompanies Fidje's first ascension: Fidje "[...] fuhr [...] durch die Luft, auf, über Luft, fuhr schräg aufwärts in die Wolken" ["[...] drove [...] through the air, up, over air, drove diagonally upward into the clouds"] (1994, p. 227).

Whereas Ringelnatz follows Bechstein, Horváth seems to be inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's narrative of "a poor sick boy['s]" (2015, p. 18) redemption from earthly suffering by an ascension to the "heavenly home where all is happiness and joy" (20). In *The Angel* (1844), "[w]henever a good child dies, an angel of God comes down from heaven," collects the flowers from the child's beloved places, and "carries [them] up to the Almighty, that they may bloom more brightly in heaven than they do on earth" (2015, p. 17). Reminiscently, in *Legende vom Fußballplatz* (Legend from Soccer Field), an "armer kleiner Bub" ["poor little boy"] (2017, p. 491) Hansl falls ill, dies, and an angel brings him through a vertical flight to a celestial space of "[u]nermeßliche Seligkeit" ["immeasurable bliss"] (ibid., p. 493), appropriated to his favorite earthly place (a football stadium). The verticality of their motion is emphasized at the very start of the angel's arrival. The angel flies "vor seinem Fenster im vierten Stock" ["in front of his window on the fourth floor"] (ibid., p. 492). Afterwards, "der Engel […] köpfte den Ball kerzengerade in die Höhe; der flog, flog – – – bis er weit hinter der Milchstraße verschwand" ["the angel [...] headed the ball straight up into the air; it flew, flew - - until it disappeared far behind the milky way"] (2017, p. 493). Not only the Christological "flying" but also their climbing emphasizes the verticality of their motion: "[…] sie zuflogen. […] nur noch ein Klimmzug" ["they flew up. [...] just one more pull-up"] (ibid., p. 493).

Overall, in both *Der arme Pilmartine* and *Legende vom Fußballplatz*, the presence of the child hero induces the emergence of the Christian vertical which optimistically cuts through the destructive mundane horizontal of other tales. Thus, these tales establish a relative order, and they are not anti-tales. As in classic tales, the *magical domain* proceeds to protect children through its equilibrium-establishing divine intervention. Both authors thus appropriate the idealization of children's consciousness characteristic of the genre as a "pure" and paradisiacal mode of perception that is close to God, i.e., the cult of childhood which became a fairy-tale convention due to the influence of Grimms' romantic (infantilism adoring) religiosity (Spinner, 1991). In its framework, "ist der gute

Schluß […] als Ausdruck davon zu verstehen, daß das Kind letztlich unverletzlich ist" ["the positive ending [...] is to be understood as an expression of the fact that the child is ultimately invulnerable"] (ibid., p. 145). An exemplary case of such a religiously motivated idealization of childish purity is KHM 209 (Kitzler, 2010, p. 124): a little boy miscomprehends the priest's instruction to follow the right path and arrives at another church, which he, in his positive naivety, confuses for heaven. As a reward for his selfless goodness, God redeems him from sickness by inviting him to real heaven whilst explicitly forbidding the adult parish priest from entering.

In Ringelnatz and Horváth, the child similarly remains a God-protected instance. Fidje is explicitly threatened by his audience, but the magical intervention (the flying bicycle) simply rescues him from dangerous earthly space. Horváth's Hansl is a football fanatic, and so his entry into the afterlife, just like into an endless football match, represents a moment of joy and redemption from his earthly afflictions of poverty (he had no money for seats at the stadium).

Tismar reads Horváth's heaven pessimistically: As being solely metaphorical and lacking "theologische Realität" ["theological reality"] (1981, p. 37) due to its desacralization with sports profanity. Indeed, the angel wears football-shoes his wings are in the colours of football teams, whilst the souls accepted into the heavenly realm are "seligen Fußballwettspielzuschauer" ["blissful betting football match spectators"] (2017, p. 493). However, this desacralization corresponds with Horváth's adogmatism. Heaven is metaphorical in the sense that it is not "literal", but as a metaphor, it situates the divine not into a doctrine (e.g., into the heaven's "literalness"), but into "des armen kleinen Buben Herz" ["the poor little boy's heart"] (ibid.). Its adjustment to the little boys' profane obsession suggests a heartfelt theology emancipating inner goodness over abstract dogma. By Ringelnatz, the child's motion along the Christian vertical axis similarly conjoins with the profane motif of a bicycle as an iconic contemporary means of transport. In contrast to the heaven-longing boy in KHM 209, the modern child heroes experience not sacral but worldly passions: Hansl "liebte den Fußball über alles" ["loved football more than anything"] (2017, p. 491), and Fidje's ascension starts with his desire to visit the moon. Whilst adults are preoccupied with a microcosmic sporting event, the child exceeds them with his intuitive *solar orientation*. In both cases, the vertical motions of child heroes display the infantile inner goodness as an object of theological and transcendental value.

Concluding remarks

The transcendence-signifying verticals optimistically intersect with the destructive horizontal axis, as the innocence of a child's "heart" allows for approximation to the divine numinosity. In parallel to a sociocritical subversion of classic fairy tales, the authors affirm the Grimmean notion of KHM 19, highlighting heart-based faith that suggests a child's infantile inner purity is more important for nearness to God than any intellectual comprehension of the Christian doctrine (Kitzler, 2010, p. 123). Moreover, the characters of Fidje and Hansl demonstrate, according to the authors, that a naive and infantile nearness

to God represents a religiously worthy object of inclination –a response to the secular, sport- and science-centric, Cainian modern world.

Schmidt-Dengler observes the anti-hermeneutic nature of *Sportmärchen*, highlighting their polarity of the anti-rhetorical sport and a fairy tale as a rhetorical art *par excellence*. According to the author, these elements constantly "höhlen einander aus" ["cancel each other out"] (2001, p. 38) and, therefore, deny the possibility of fixed meanings. The space- and genre-focused reading offers a different perspective: the tales do not elaborate on the polar opposition of a sports-fairy tale but instead, emphasise the characteristic fairy tale dichotomy of human-transcendental while contrasting the contemporaneous destructive subject and God-near infantile purity. Both authors use the fairy tale genre to articulate a belief in the possibility of the preservation of a syncretic relationship between the subject and (according to the authors) the inherently ethical macrocosm. Their tales invite hermeneutic endeavours just as much as their society-reflecting horizontals conceal a vertical axis of religious and utopian longing.

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