

Michael Ende's "Traumwelten"

Traces of Cultural and Literary-Historical Sources of the Dream Motif in Ende's Complete Work

In Michael Ende's worldwide success "The Neverending Story" (1979), protagonist Bastian realizes with consternation: "When you suddenly face the possibility that your wishful dream might become reality, you only wish for one thing: that you had never wished for it." During the time of the "awakening of the new romantics" (Stoyan), Ende explores the versatile motif of dreams in his works, thus aligning himself with a long literary tradition. Ende's narrated dreams exhibit various characteristics, symbolic meanings, and narrative functions, with some recurring dream types such as wish dreams or visionary dreams being particularly noticeable. In his typical manner, the writer integrates a wide spectrum of cultural, philosophical, and mythological elements into a syncretic overall work. He skillfully synthesizes influences from various cultures, philosophical theories, and traditional narrative motifs into a unique narrative structure.

The aim of the work is, on the one hand, to categorize the dream types in Ende's complete works based on the distinctive features of their content (the dream images) and their functionalization. On the other hand, it aims to make visible the sources and reality references linked to Ende's dream motif by adopting different perspectives based on text-, author-, and context-oriented theories. Key questions include how the author shapes dreams and to what extent these stagings contain traces of traditional dream ideas and conceptions. Based on the intertextuality theory of Broich and Pfister (1985) and applying the transmedial model of motif analysis by Kurwinkel and Jakobi (2022), identifying intertextual references in Ende's dream stagings will be a central concern of the project. Thus, the dissertation aims to uncover insights into how the author reproduces transmitted (dream) elements from collective memory and possibly re-semiotizes them in the process. At the same time, the work also questions the relationship between (children's) literature and social memory, as well as the associated collective and individual memory processes.