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The Artificial Woman in the Mirror: Gender Performance and Classicism in Friederike Helene Unger's *Prince Bimbam — A Fairytale for Young and Old* (*Prinz Bimbam — Ein Mährchen für Alt und Jung*, 1802)

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The motif of the artificial human being in literature and culture

While the artificial creation of human life is an immemorial dream of mankind, interests were increasingly directed towards this dream during the eighteenth century. On the one hand, this is a consequence of the materialistic enlightened idea of the man-machine propounded by Julien Offray de La Mettrie in 1747,[1] which was, above all, an affirmation of scientific faith based on the mechanistic world view.[2] On the other hand, the mythological subjects of the creators Prometheus and Pygmalion, namely the motif of animating a statue or a work of art, became very popular.[3] The literary adaptation of the man-made human being reaches its peak in the late eighteenth century, when automatons, machines, puppets, and animated statues populate the

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1 Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *L'homme machine* (Leiden: Luzac, 1747).

2 Jennifer González, 'Envisioning Cyborg Bodies,' in *The Cyborg Handbook*, ed. Chris Hables Gray (London: Routledge, 1995), 267-79, 268.

3 Mathias Meyer and Gerhard Neumann, 'Vorwort,' in *Pygmalion. Die Geschichte des Mythos in der abendländischen Kultur* (Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach, 1997), 9-10, 9; Matthias Pötzsch, ' "Groß beginnet ihr Titanen". Variationen des Prometheus-Mythos um 1800,' in *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus — Der künstliche Mensch von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Rudolf Drux (Bielefeld: Kerber, 1994), 49-57, 51, 54.

literary scene.[4] These adaptations are remarkably gender-specific: the creator of a synthetic human being is always a male,[5] whereas his creation is either a servant or a female.[6] As Manfred Geier points out, the artificial woman has a long history. It starts with the ancient myth of Pandora where the conflict between human beings and nature is described as primordial 'gender trouble.'[7] The end product of this history is the well-known Lara Croft of nowadays. From Pandora to Lara Croft, synthetic women in general serve as a projection to ignite male desire.[8] Prominent research consistently hints at the relevance of glance and eye as a mirror and projection screen in the ignition of (male) desire.[9] A synthetic woman ignites male desire in such a manner at the initial point of the story in Friederike Helene Unger's thoroughly ironic fairytale *Prince Bimbam — A Fairytale for Young and Old* (*Prinz Bimbam — Ein Mährchen für Alt und Jung*), published in 1802 by the famous publishing house that Unger ran with her husband in Berlin, Prussia.[10]

This little-known text, of which literary studies only recently took notice,[11] will be briefly summarized before analyzing how the synthetic

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4   Roland Innerhofer, 'Die technische Modernisierung des künstlichen Menschen in der Literatur zwischen 1800 und 1900,' in *Nach dem Menschen. Der Mythos einer zweiten Schöpfung und das Entstehen einer posthumanen Kultur*, ed. Bernd Flessner (Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach), 69-99, 71.

5   Rudolf Drux, 'Frankenstein oder der Mythos vom künstlichen Menschen und seinem Schöpfer,' in *Der Frankenstein-Komplex. Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte des Traums vom künstlichen Menschen*, ed. Rudolf Drux (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), 26-47, 40.

6   Ibid, 33; Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), 11, 14.

7   Manfred Geier, *Fake. Leben in künstlichen Welten. Mythos — Literatur — Wissenschaft* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1999), 76.

8   Ibid, 32; Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, *Lara Croft — Modell, Medium, Cyberheldin. Das virtuelle Geschlecht und seine metaphysischen Tücken* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 37.

9   Rudolf Drux, *E. T. A. Hoffmann. Der Sandmann. Erläuterungen und Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 59-66, 143-68.

10 All citations of the text refer to the following edition: Friederike Helene Unger, *Prinz Bimbam. Ein Mährchen für Alt und Jung* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1802). Hereafter abbreviated PB.

11 Anne Thiel, *Verhinderte Traditionen. Märchen deutscher Autorinnen vor den Brüdern Grimm* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 2001); Birte Giesler, *Literatursprünge: Das erzählerische Werk von Friederike Helene Unger* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), 245-81.

woman in Unger's fairy tale functions as a typical artificial female. The underlying assumption, which will be examined in the following analysis, is that the story of Prince Bimbam and his female creation offers a certain gender-critical reading of the motif of the synthetic woman beneath the text's surface, in its subtext, and against the backdrop of its pronounced intertextuality. The following interpretation will demonstrate how the text illustrates that the artificial woman functions as a mirror image of the idea of the autonomous male. The supposed autonomy of Unger's maleness turns out to be totally dependent on the projection of the 'Other,' and the male emerges as a puppet of his own projection. Masculinity, in particular, as well as gender identity, in general, turn out to be performances and products of art. At the same time, Unger's story about the procreator includes an implicit poetological statement about the production of art.

The fairy tale

The eponymous hero of Unger's *Prince Bimbam — A Fairytale for Young and Old* is the young and spoiled son of a fairy called Quatscheline. One morning, he awakens from wondrous dreams about girls and bewitched cherry pits. He spontaneously declares that he will marry the girl of his dreams. To identify the sought-after girl, Quatscheline shows her son a crystal mirror that presents all the princesses of the world. The chosen one is called Zenobia. She is an aesthete who keeps company with other aesthetes and critics. Bimbam has to complete an exhausting voyage through the history of culture and literature to win her. However, his specific task and test is to catch a cherry pit between the rotating blades of an enormous windmill and hand it over to the princess. Thereby he is to gain self-assurance. He departs accompanied by Invalido, who is supposed to supervise Bimbam's education. Bimbam then encounters Kronos, who is introduced as the gravedigger of literature. Bimbam passes through different epochs of the history of literature marked by the singings of alexandrines or German poems in antique style, for example. Finally, he reaches the forest of current literature and philosophy. There, among other fairy-tale-figures, he meets a tomcat wearing boots.[12] While observing the marvellous doings, he feels like a silly boy. This is the moment when he gains self-knowledge and merits a change

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12 PB, 80-81.

of name. Thenceforward, he is called Luminos. Bimbam-Luminos now appears as 'manly beauty.'[13] When he presents the cherry pit to Zenobia, an enlightened inscription showing the wording of 'Genuine Wisdom' (*Wahre Lebensweisheit*) appears.[14] Zenobia explains that she was only an instrument of the 'education' (*Bildung*) of Bimbam.[15] She declares that she will retransform herself into 'proper female nature' (*eigenthümliche Weibesnatur*). Nevermore would she be 'an aesthetic woman' (*ästhetisches Weib*).[16] Luminos and Zenobia live happily ever after.

Zenobia as an artificial human and a typical male-created female android

Unger's narration is explicitly set as a fairy tale, which allows the narration to unfold in many different ways. Zenobia is explicitly introduced as a male-created being. The method of Zenobia's creation deserves closer attention, since the eponymous protagonist creates her in a dream at the beginning of the narration. The actual story starts with the awakening of Bimbam who immediately tells his dream to his mother. According to his own declaration, Bimbam was dreaming of girls. The blue-eyed blonde particularly appealed to him. The first encounter between Bimbam and his creation is the moment when Bimbam creates her in his mind; thus, Zenobia is a creation of Bimbam's psyche. On the occasion of Bimbam's second meeting, it becomes obvious that his beloved is an artificial creature and a kind of alter ego. Zenobia emerges in a miraculous crystalline mirror when Bimbam looks at his reflection.[17] Hence, the second encounter appears as a kind of self-adulation.

In her extensive study on the motifs of the artificial human being and the *doppelgänger* in German and English literature, Aglaja Hildenbrock calls 'l'homme machine, the collective doubleganger,'[18] and points out that both motifs — the automaton and the *doppelgänger* — are very

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13 All translations are by the contributor unless signaled otherwise: '*in männlicher Schöne*,' PB, 100.

14 PB, 100-01.

15 PB, 101.

16 Ibid.

17 PB, 8-9.

18 Aglaja Hildenbrock, *Das andere Ich: Künstlicher Mensch und Doppelgänger in der deutsch- und englischsprachigen Literatur* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 1986), 34, 17.

closely connected and are, indeed, basically versions of the same motif, both representing problems of identity. As mentioned above, relevant research points out that the synthetic woman in general serves as a projection to ignite male desire. This is particularly true for Zenobia and her effect on her creator. At the beginning of the narration, Bimbam appears as a small boy. He is obviously an immature milksop spoilt by his mother and several foster mothers. Having evoked Zenobia in his dreams, his sexual desire is suddenly ignited. He declares his wish of possessing and marrying the princess of his dreams. As the male protagonist forms his female creature in a mirror, the male-made synthetic woman explicitly functions as a male-created imago and mirror image. Following Marie-Anne Berr, the male desire of the female android in general shows that the male desire is auto-erotic, aiming to avert irrepressible nature and the 'Other' of reason.[19] Indeed, Bimbam's desire tends towards auto-eroticism since his first meetings with his beloved appear as narcissistic mirrorings.

The synthetic woman as a projection screen for bourgeois masculinity

By configuring a male creator who engenders a female creature in a mirror, Unger draws attention to the gender dimension of the motif of the artificial woman in contemporary popular literature. The tale's plot describes how the protagonist leaves the environment of his origin to become a 'real man.' As Alice A. Kuzniar points out, for the process of becoming a man, it is important that the youth desires the female: 'being a man who desires women became a means of defining one's masculinity.'[20] The female creation serves as a projection screen for the male creator so that he can conceive his 'masculinity' as an autonomous, self-governed, and 'male' individual. It should be remarked that Unger's fairytale demonstratively narrates the process of 'becoming a man.' The name of the eponymous hero already indicates the major subject of the text in the title. The onomatopoetic term 'Bimbam' hints at the ring of a

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19   Marie-Anne Berr, 'Frauenprothese — Prothesenfrau,' in *Maschinenmenschen. Referate der Triestiner Tagung*, eds. Horst Albert Glaser and Wolfgang Kaempfer (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1988), 43-55, 47-48, 53.

20   Alice A. Kuzniar, *Outing Goethe & His Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 7.

bell and was a bawdy slang word in German around 1800 denoting the male genitals.[21]

Be it in the shape of an animated statue, a machine, or revitalised dead matter, in the Age of Goethe the motif of the artificial human emerges in gothic novels, nocturnes, and thrillers. According to Hildenbrock, the automatons presented in literature, which are accompanied by numerous lunatics, demons, and schizophrenics, can be considered embodiments of the dark side of the human mind.[22] In this context, Eva Kormann proposes the thesis that the fictional creators of artificial life in the gothic genre carry the idea of the autonomous subject to extremes with horrible consequences.[23] The creator of human beings can be interpreted as a metaphor for the autonomous subject, and his sometimes malevolent creature stands for the 'Other' of the creator's self-concept. Although Unger's fairytale is by no means gothic, the thoroughly ironic story relentlessly deconstructs the idea of the autonomous male. Unger's female android effectively works against the creator's supposed autonomy as the synthetic woman turns out to be the rejected element of the creator's identity. Moreover, the creator himself emerges as a puppet of this rejection. Bimbam's artificial woman is at once his mirror image and the projection screen for the formation of his masculinity. This becomes clear in light of the intertextual reference to the idealistic contemporary education philosophy of German idealism. The narration explicitly uses the term *Bildung*. Prince Bimbam is supposed to win the princess. He also has to become educated in her 'school of (personal) refinement' (*Bildungsschule*).[24] Unger emphatically sets her narration in relation to the German *Bildungsroman*. There are several allusions to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1795/96), which is considered a paradigm of the genre.[25] In fact, the story about Wilhelm Meister is regarded as a narration of the history of the formation of middle class and bourgeoisie par excel-

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21 Heinz Küpper, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Umgangssprache* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1988), 108.

22 Hildenbrock 1986, 17.

23 Eva Kormann, 'Künstliche Menschen oder der moderne Prometheus. Der Schrecken der Autonomie,' '*Textmaschinenkörper. Genderorientierte Lektüren des Androiden*, eds. Eva Kormann, Anke Gilleir and Angelika Schlimmer, vol. 59 of *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 73-90.

24 PB, 38.

25 Todd Kontje, *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* (Columbia: Camden House, 1993), 13.

lence.[26] It is, for example, quite remarkable that Zenobia allows Bimbam to make his own mistakes,[27] while having a finger in the pie from the beginning of Bimbam's educational journey. Apparently, she acts on the same concept of education as the Tower Society in Goethe's novel.[28] So, the artificial woman turns out to be the guide for the process of male formation. Therefore, the male emerges as a puppet of the female android. Zenobia explicitly declares: 'You enter your school of refinement here: no male not refined by a woman has ever succeeded.'[29] Unger's narration reproduces a statement of the recent gender-oriented reading of the *Bildungsroman*. Its classical female figures are fixated on the male protagonist. They are instruments for his education. In Unger's narration this is clearly stated:

Luminos appeared to her in his manly beauty. His face was expressive, his eye — pensive. With noble dignity he presented her with the cherry pit that would determine both their fates. Hardly had her hand touched it than it exploded violently, and written in fire throughout the hall were the words *Genuine Wisdom*. And throughout the massive residence its reflection could be seen: *genuine wisdom*. 'My dear Prince,' said Zenobia now with endearing amiability: 'this, not I, was worth striving for, for I, too, should be instrumental in your education. The magic is gone; I withdrawn into my proper female nature and will never again become an aesthetic woman or reduce myself to the bestial form of a mouse catcher.' [Translation Dr. Gary H. Toops][30]

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26   Helmut Koopmann, 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795/96),' in *Goethes Erzählwerk. Interpretationen*, eds. Paul Michael Lützeler and James E. McLead (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985), 168-91, 183.

27   PB, 59.

28   Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,' in *Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*, vol. 7 (München: dtv, 1988).

29   'Sie treten hier in Ihre Bildungsschule ein: nie gerieth ein Mann, den nicht ein geliebtes Weib bildete' (PB 38).

30   'Luminos erschien ihr in männlicher Schöne; sprechend war seine Miene und denkend sein Auge. Mit edlem Anstande überreichte er ihr den Kirschkern, der beider Schicksal lösen sollte. Kaum hatte ihre warme Hand ihn berührt, so zersprang er mit Kraft, und auf allen Seiten des Saales war mit Feuerschrift zu lesen: *Wahre Lebensweisheit*. Und in der ganzen großen Residenz war der Wiederschein: *wahre Lebensweisheit*. 'Mein theurer Prinz,' sagte jetzt Zenobia mit herzgewinnender Freundlichkeit: *Diese*, nicht ich, war des Strebens werth; denn auch ich sollte Werkzeug Ihrer Bildung seyn. Der Zauber ist dahin; ich bin in meine eigenthümliche Weibesnatur zurückgetreten, und werde nie wieder, weder ein ästhetisches Weib werden, noch zur Thiergestalt der Mäusefänger herabsinken'' (PB, 100-01. Original emphasis.)

Unger's fairy tale shows the role of the female main character. The text also demonstrates the function of the 'female' as a metaphor in the symbolic order in general. The 'Other' of ratio and calculable mechanics is ascribed to 'nature' and the 'female.' In the process of male self-identification, the 'Other' has to be rejected. The story of Prince Bimbam's formation expressly describes this rejection. The eponymous hero attains his 'masculinity' by washing, which sheds his female attributes. He is emphatically requested to take a bath to remove his womanly essence: 'You have to take a bath here and remove the womanly character which keeps you from becoming strong.'[31] The womanly Prince Bimbam is mocked not only by his ridiculous name with its double meaning but also throughout the whole story. The narration as a whole renders gender identity moot.

Gender performance as a kind of animated Greek statue

Unger's fairytale of Prince Bimbam is a literary satire on all levels. It attacks several concrete works, aesthetic ideas, literary patterns, genres as well as the modern business of literature itself. The narration forms a kaleidoscope of literary allusions. The plot broadly trifles with the subject of Parzival, the young fool who leaves home to make innumerable mistakes and finally becomes wise. Bimbam has to start his journey in the Iron Age, which is — following Ovid's creation myth — the beginning of the history of culture when humanity interferes with God's Creation. Bimbam's descent into hell during the first part of his travels recalls Dante's descent into hell in *La Divina Commedia* (1472). The same applies to the fact that Bimbam sleeps through most of the journey. He is lying on the trolley of books of Kronos. To become a strong man, the eponymous hero has to take a bath in a stream of blood, where 'the sparkling wave breaks against the delicate shoulder.'[32] Bimbam's bath plays on the epic poem *Nibelungenlied*, in which Siegfried has to take a bath in the blood of a dragon to become invulnerable, but his shoulder remains weak and fatally vulnerable due to a leaf falling from a tree and covering this part of his body. Moreover, Bimbam explicitly passes by popular literary characters, representative writers, and aesthetic shapes

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31 "Hier müßt Ihr baden, und das weibische Wesen abthun, das Euch nie zur Kraft gelangen läßt" (PB, 67).

32 '[...] die schäumende Welle brach sich an der zarten Schulter' (PB, 66-67).

of the literary epochs and trends of the eighteenth century. His trip ends up in a forest which is the 'hotbed of the latest literature and philosophy.'[33] Thus, the narration places itself in the real contemporary scene of literature and the arts.

The plot of Unger's *Prince Bimbam — A Fairytale for Young and Old* can be considered a comic parody of the genre, the sub-genre of the 'fairy tale of formation' in particular, and the genre of the classical German *Bildungsroman*. Recent gender-oriented research has argued that the *Bildungsroman* itself is a gendered narrative pattern.[34] It shows the construction of the two sexes and the (re-)confirmation of a heterosexually organised culture by narrating the coming of age of an individual. Women have a specific function in the formation of the male protagonist of the classical *Bildungsroman*. Thus, the female acquaintances of the male protagonist also represent different levels of the history of art.[35] On his educational journey, Prince Bimbam meets a beautiful damsel who personifies German literature. She turns Greek and becomes frivolous.[36] This can be considered a hint at the relevance of the Ancient Greek World for aesthetic theories and fine arts during the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. It also can be considered a satiric reference to Goethe's *Römische Elegien* (*Roman Elegies*, 1795), since the responses of Goethe's contemporaries to these poems were filled with indignation.[37]

Remarkably, Prince Bimbam himself turns Greek while overcoming his frivolity. The process of Prince Bimbam becoming a man bears resemblance to the contemporary fashion of the *tableau vivant*. This performance of people imitating mainly Greek paintings and statues was established by Amy Lyon alias Emma Hart, who became very

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33 'Dieser Wald, den oft die Leute vor Bäumen nicht sahen, ist der Tummelplatz der neuesten Litteratur und Philosophie' (PB, 81).

34 Giesler 2003: 210-38; Todd Kontje, 'Socialization and Alienation in the Female "Bildungsroman," ' in *Impure Reason: Dialectic of Enlightenment in Germany*, eds. W. Daniel Wilson and Robert C. Holub (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 221-41.

35 Hannelore Schlaffer, 'Frauen als Einlösung der romantischen Kunsttheorie,' in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 21 (1977): 274-96.

36 PB, 75-79.

37 On the scandal surrounding Goethe's *Roman Elegies*, see Reiner Wild, *Goethes klassische Lyrik* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1999), 52-53.

popular as Lady Hamilton.[38] In this context, it is quite remarkable that Greek Antiquity is not only of great importance for the arts of the eighteenth century and Western modern aesthetic theories since the eighteenth century. According to Rolf Füllmann's study on 'Men,' the classical Greek statue is also the ideal of modern — and that is to say bourgeois — masculinity. Be it in the fine arts of classicism, in the aesthetics of fascism, or in sales promotion of nowadays, the Apollonian body in its original form has continuously served as the reference point of Western ideal masculinity throughout the centuries.[39]

Although Bimbam-Luminos becomes king in the end, he obviously abandons his aristocratic decadent way of life. The educational trip leads the protagonist from aristocracy to a civic life according to middle-class gender roles. The couple defines themselves as two halves of a whole.[40] The educational journey through the history of literature leads Bimbam from womanliness and physicality, to masculinity and the light of intellect. In the decadent and aristocratic wonderland of his origin, the characters bear names with ridiculous meanings, such as Quatscheline or Invalido — to say nothing of the figurative meaning of the eponymous hero's name. The whole plot of *Prince Bimbam* is organised around a contrastive positioning of the sublime and the low. The colloquial name of the eponymous hero also hints at the contemporary classicist German everyday culture that idolizes the phallus.[41] Bimbam's suggestive name plays on eighteenth-century aesthetics. Following Alice A. Kuzniar, 'The Century of Winckelmann,' which Goethe himself called the 'Age of Goethe,' grounds itself in homoerotic feelings which is shown by Winckelmann's obvious attraction to 'a certain type of youth who resembled his beloved Greek statues.'[42] Kuzniar points out that in works

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38 *Lady Hamilton in Relation to the Art of her Time. An Exhibition Organised by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Greater London Council at the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood 18 July-16 October 1972*, ed. Patricia Jaffé (London: The Arts Council of Great Britian, 1972), 9, 68.

39 Rolf Füllmann, 'Manns-Bilder. Apollinische Variationen von der klassischen Statue über den klassischen Anzug zum künstlichen Körper,' in *Der Frankenstein-Komplex. Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte des Traums vom künstlichen Menschen*, ed. Rudolf Drux (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), 79-118, 80, 99.

40 PB, 102.

41 Angela Borchert, 'Antiquity on Tip Toes: Fashionable Shoes in the "Journal des Luxus und der Moden" ' (Annual conference of the Canadian Society of Eighteenth Century Studies, London, Ontario, October 20-23, 2004).

42 Kuzniar 1996: 13.

written in the eighteenth century, homoeroticism appears as a step that has to be outgrown on the path of becoming a man.[43] For this process of adjusting the individual to heterosexuality, literature was very important, being 'the privileged discourse in which the subjectivity of the bourgeois individual was forged via its amorous affects, a process that included the carving out of a space for the exploration of same-sex desire.'[44] Therefore, Bimbam has to drop his name on his journey through the history of literature (although his homophile past is kept in him becoming Greek). At Bimbam's destination point, the characters are named after Greek figures such as Zenobia or Kronos. As mentioned above, Bimbam merits a change of names after having solved the riddle. His new name 'Luminos' can be considered a wordplay on the Latin term *lumen* and the Greek ending 'o — s' indicating that Bimbam conquers his carnality and attains luminosity. The wordplay also hints at the hero's property of being like Prometheus, who brings mankind fire, *lumen divinum* and *lumen naturale*.[45]

Prince Bimbam or the modern Prometheus as nonautonomous author

Telling his dream to his mother at the beginning of the whole story, Prince Bimbam produces fiction-within-fiction. Thus, Bimbam is introduced as a kind of author. Concepts of authorship and reflections on the work of art were widely discussed around 1800. In this context, the idea of the artist as a genius is a major subject of discussion. Contemporary theories of art conceive of a work of art being created by an autonomous ingenious artist. The occurrence of man-made humans, be it automatons, machines, or puppets, is closely connected with the contemporary discussions of the autonomous subject which then evokes the concept of the artist as a genius. It also is due to this interest in autonomy, that the myth of Prometheus became very popular at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century. The creator of the human being and initiator of culture advances to become the most popular character of

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43 Ibid, 17.

44 Ibid, 31-32.

45 Horst Albert Glaser, 'Prometheus' Wanderung aus der Antike in die Renaissance — und weiter,' in *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus — Der künstliche Mensch von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Rudolf Drux (Bielefeld: Kerber, 1994), 27-35, 32.

Greek Antiquity. Particularly in literature and philosophy, he is an allegory of the celebrated genius poet.[46]

Through its self-referentiality and strong intertextuality, Unger's narration implicitly makes a statement in poetics obviously contradicting the contemporary concepts of authorship and work. As mentioned above, Bimbam's creation is the rejected foundation of his own identity. Furthermore, his fiction-within-the-fiction obliterates his own puppeteering strands in a search for autonomy eventually divorced from reality. The narration itself caters to the margins of the spheres of fiction, imagination, and reality. It is explicitly mentioned that Bimbam conceives of Zenobia as supernatural.[47] Moreover, crowds of jugglers and puppet players mark the border of Zenobia's empire.[48] In addition to all this, Bimbam's primal dream and everything that develops out of it turn out to be a conglomeration of ancient or otherwise well-known figures or elements. Zenobia, the dream girl of the fiction-within-fiction, seems to be made of paper. Showing a kaleidoscope of literary allusions, the whole story appears as a kind of puppet theatre in a *papier-maché* world. Within this atmosphere, both genders appear as synthetic and 'unreal' constructs. Bimbam's psyche, imagination, and artistic creativity are fed by literary and cultural patterns. Rather than creating new creatures, Bimbam's imagination reproduces a collage of well-known stereotypes which obviously prevail in his mind. Such poetics ironically presented imply a statement on poetics arching back to literary aethetic theories of the English Augustan Age. The latter conceive of the history of literature as a kind of net of ancient patterns at which all writers work together. If we follow Ina Schabert and Barbara Schaff, women writers of the Age of Goethe cling to this 'pre-modern' Augustan concept of all-embracing intertextuality, while their male colleagues celebrate the autonomous (male) author who is supposed to create a single ingenious work of art.[49]

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46 Pötzsch 1994: 51.

47 PB, 41.

48 PB, 56.

49 Ina Schabert and Barbara Schaff, 'Einleitung,' in *Autorschaft. Genus und Genie in der Zeit um 1800*, eds. Ina Schabert and Barbara Schaff (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1994), 9-19, 11.