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Romantic Boredom in *Fantasies about Art* (*Phantasien über die Kunst*) and “The Rune Mountain” (“Der Runenberg”). A Study of Affinities with Schopenhauer’s Philosophy of Art and Existence

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Abstract: The present article aims to analyze the literary representations of boredom in a selection of Romantic works—*Fantasies about Art* by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, and “The Rune Mountain” by the latter—as well as the main themes with which these are bound up, examining to what extent it can actually be spoken of possible affinities with Schopenhauer’s philosophy of art and existence. Following Ros Velasco’s research on boredom, it will be found that the most frequent typology within the Romantic period consists in situation-dependent and chronic boredom, as well as in its profound variant, fact which reflects the Romantic character’s experience of crisis and existential emptiness towards an increasingly mechanized perception of time. A little part of the Romantic representations of boredom will reflect aesthetic ideas defended also by Arthur Schopenhauer in his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation*. Moreover, it will be found that Schopenhauer’s different backdrop concerning the thing in itself compared to the view of the Romantics determines significantly the narrow segment of affinities between the writers and the philosopher. That being said, it is also true that 1) both Schopenhauer and the Romantics gave a special status to art and, more specifically, music—an important affinity which appears to be bound up with boredom in “A Wondrous Oriental Fairy Tale of a Naked Saint”; and 2) the representations of boredom help to elucidate the complex amalgam of ideas that were circulating around 1800—for example, Tieck’s mystical and philosophical influences.

Keywords: Situation-dependent and chronic boredom, profound boredom, Ludwig Tieck, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetic experience.

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1. Introduction

This article aims to trace the literary representation of boredom in German Romanticism and its affinities with Schopenhauer's philosophy of art through the following selection of works: *Fantasies about Art* (*Phantasien über die Kunst*) written by Wackenroder and Tieck, and "The Rune Mountain" ("Der Runenberg") by Tieck. Starting from the research question 'to what extent do the literary representations of boredom in early Romanticism anticipate themes that later appear in Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and existence?', both affinities and differences between the writers and the philosopher will be displayed, in order to gain insight into the representations of boredom around 1800.

Given the important differences between Schopenhauer's theory of the will and the Romantic's longing for the Absolute, aesthetics affinities between the two have to be considered partially: whenever the literary representation of boredom appears in relationship with an idea which seems akin to Schopenhauer's aesthetics, this given supposition will carefully be presented in its full context. This article is split into four main sections: at first, this introduction (1.)—which briefly explains the scope and division of the article—and a second section (2.), which includes both the methodology (2.2.) as well as the historical contextualization of boredom (2.1), which additionally explores the different perspectives on the 'thing in itself' by Schopenhauer and the Romantics, and its repercussions with regard to their aesthetic affinities and differences. Given the important role of music in both Schopenhauer's thought and the Romantic oeuvre, the third section (3.1) begins with a comparative study of the two, in order to introduce the reader into the fundamental point. This is followed by the analysis of the Romantic oeuvre in itself: the different literary representations of boredom will be examined to find out to what extent, like the hypothesis states, those representations anticipate (or not) themes which later appear in Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and existence. Thus, the main part of the third section contains two subsections: (3.2.) is dedicated to Wackenroder's and Tieck's *Phantasien über die Kunst*, the other (3.3.) is devoted to Tieck's literary fairy tale "Der Runenberg." Finally (4.), the last part of the article describes the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

2. Theory

2.1. Historical Contextualization

During the nineteenth century, the term *Langeweile* attracted the interest of many German philosophers and writers. As Ros Velasco (2017) points out, it was etymologically linked to a particular perception of time, "which seems to stretch on too long, which is experienced as empty, in which nothing happens, stagnant and leaden" (p. 211, a. trans.). But before discussing the temporal perception of boredom, note the interesting relationship that Kant (1798) establishes between positive pain and negative pain in his *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. As Ros Velasco (2021a) explains in her article "Kantian Lange Weile Within the Contemporary Psychology of Boredom," positive pain constitutes, for Kant, the driving force that guarantees the normal life cycle of human beings, thus immersing them in a wave oscillating between two peaks of pleasure and pain. In Kant's (1798) own words: "Nor can one pleasure immediately

follow another; rather, pain must intervene between one and the other. They are small inhibitions of the life force” (p. 155, a. trans). Boredom arises when there is no positive pain to fuel that cycle; that is why it is an

emotional void which a person accustomed to emotional fluctuations perceives within themselves—whilst striving to fill that void with something to satisfy their life force—often affects them to such an extent that they feel compelled to do something to their own detriment rather than do nothing at all (Kant, 1798, p. 172, a. trans).

The bored person therefore perceives time as passing slowly whilst they are bored, but, looking back, precisely because those moments were meaningless, that time has gone by very quickly (Ros Velasco, 2021a). According to Kant (1798), boredom must be countered through work, as it is through work that the pleasure of rest emerges by contrast (see p. 172). Of particular interest here is Ros Velasco’s (2021a) observation regarding the “social, cultural and economic context [...] of the Enlightenment, in which people are unable to find satisfaction” (p. 178, a. trans). This is precisely the situation faced by Romantic artists at the turn of the century, which is often reflected in characters portrayed as geniuses bored by a life that is temporarily rationalized, yet devoid of meaning for them (Ros Velasco, 2022, 2026). Such is the case, for example, with the profound boredom of the character of the naked saint in the *Phantasien*, as well as with the figure of Christian in “Der Runenberg,” who suffers from situation-dependent and chronic boredom. On the other hand, the literary portrayal of the bored artist (especially in Tieck) sometimes also becomes a symbol “of the cultural exhaustion and weariness that Tieck and his contemporaries experienced” (Ros Velasco, 2022, p. 125, 2026, p. 82), that is to say, a weariness with the then-common practice of dissecting the self.

This concludes our look at the Kantian view on boredom on the one hand and the Romantic one on the other. What place does boredom have in Schopenhauer’s philosophy? While the German romantic writers do intentionally place their invented and talented artists in a boring situation, Schopenhauer (1897) describes the genius as an individual whose intellectual and contemplative capacities make him less prone to boredom. Furthermore, he explains that the aesthetically sensitive depend much less on external stimuli, so that they spend their time engaged in “idealities,” which are “inexhaustible” (Schopenhauer, 1897, p. 47). As opposed to the “principle of sufficient reason” (PSR), the genius can devote himself, in certain moments of inspiration, to contemplation, because his essence “lies precisely in the predominant capacity for such [the pure] contemplation” (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 209, a. trans). By doing so the object “of its contemplation” detaches from the relationships it usually has to the striving self, so that it “becomes [...] a representative of the whole [that is to say, of the stream of the world’s course]” (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 209, a. trans). Thus, the genius is able to perceive Ideas and communicate them in the work of art, in which “The artist lets us look into the world through his eyes” (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 220, a. trans). Far from those artistic occupations, boredom arises within the blind striving-cycle of the will:

Desire and striving constitute the very essence of [human] existence, entirely comparable to an unquenchable thirst. The basis of all desire, however, is need, lack—and thus pain—to which he is consequently subject from the very outset and by virtue of his very nature. If, on the other hand, he lacks objects of desire—because too easy a satisfaction immediately takes them away from him again—then he

is overcome by a terrible emptiness and boredom: that is to say, his very nature and existence become an unbearable burden to him. His life thus swings, like a pendulum, back and forth between pain and boredom. (Schopenhauer, 1844a, pp. 351–352, a. trans.).

This passage from *The World as Will and Representation* suggests that human life is based on a constant oscillation between suffering and boredom, in a cycle without end or transcendence. In the *Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life*, Schopenhauer (1897) appears to explain two levels in this regard: firstly, the world of necessity, in which the individual does everything possible to escape pain; and secondly, an existence in which basic needs are finally met, but which remains subjectively unsatisfied if the subject lacks “intellectual needs”:

The great affliction of all philistines is that they have no interest in ideas, and that, to escape being bored, they are in constant need of realities. But realities are either unsatisfactory or dangerous; when they lose their interest, they become fatiguing. But the ideal world is illimitable and calm, something afar from the sphere of our sorrow (p. 47).

The philistine tries to escape boredom through, so to speak, worldly pursuits, which nevertheless do not eliminate boredom, because his own intellect “is absolutely nothing more than the means by which the motive power of the will is put into force” (Schopenhauer, 1897, p. 27). By contrast, “the ideal world is boundless” and therefore only “the inexhaustible activity of thought” protects against the “inner vacuity of soul” (Schopenhauer, 1897, p. 24). The fact that in the works of Tieck and many other Romantic writers boredom is not experienced by a philistine, but by an artist in “constant self-observation” (Ros Velasco, 2022, p. 128, 2026, p. 84), seems to reflect the distinct framework (distinct from Schopenhauer’s) within which Romantic literature found expression; all the more so when one bears in mind that it was no stranger to post-Kantian philosophy (Köpke, 1855). In this regard, as Safranski (2025) explains, the ideas which Schopenhauer was seeking to develop and organize into a system of thought of his own differed entirely from those of Fichte and Schelling; for, unlike them, Schopenhauer does not interpret Kant as holding that the thing-in-itself must be constructed by the subject of knowledge. Schopenhauer’s radically different philosophy required, for its development, sources other than those of the present. Although the German Romantic writers immersed themselves in Hindu wisdom through Herder, their interpretation inevitably circled back to the Absolute and sought, in the delights of Eastern imagery, aesthetic inspiration for the longed-for reconciliation between the self and the world. The context in which Schopenhauer reads Hindu philosophy is different: he is developing a philosophy whose roots lie in the suffering of the world, finding in the Upanishads interesting echoes of his own duality of the world (Safranski, 2025).

Taking all this into account, literary depictions of boredom in Romanticism are set against a different backdrop to that of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, as the latter is framed within a concept of immanence that the others are unfamiliar with. Moreover, in his *Kritik der kantischen Philosophie*, Schopenhauer (1844a) refers to the search for the Absolute as an attempt “halfway between a plea and a challenge” [“halb erbettelt, halb ertrokt”] to recover the cosmological argument in favor of the existence of God, even though the latter has “lost all his rights [...] as a result of the judgement passed on him by Kant” (p. 544, a. trans.). It is equally necessary to clarify the philosopher’s position on God as compared with that held by certain Romantic writers

such as Tieck. The following anecdote recounted by Karl von Holtei (2017) in his *Nachlese. Erzählungen und Plaudereien* illustrates this more clearly:

In Dresden, a few years ago, I met the aforementioned eccentric [Arthur] at Tieck's house [...] Discussions had arisen between him and Tieck concerning various philosophical systems; little by little this led, via Jacobi—whom Tieck held in high regard—to religious disputes; and when Tieck spoke of God, Schopenhauer leapt up as if stung by a tarantula and, whirling about like a whirlwind, shouted with a sardonic laugh: "What? Do you need a God?" A scream that Tieck would never forget for the rest of his days (p. 42, a. trans.).

Although Tieck was never a staunch supporter of either Protestantism or Catholicism (Köpke, 1855), his curious spirit, perpetually open to all manner of ideas, brought him closer to God than Schopenhauer could ever be. It is essential to bear these differences in mind when analyzing representations of boredom and their possible affinities (or divergences) with Schopenhauer's philosophy.

2.2. Methodology: Ros Velasco's Theory of Boredom

Considering the strong historical component of this research and the importance of updating and contrasting the literary motif with the latest studies on boredom, the methodology of Ros Velasco (2022, 2026) will be followed, since her theoretical framework unifies the historical component of boredom with an updated analysis, allowing both the historical component of boredom and its present to be assimilated into the same approach or perspective. In her book *The Disease of Boredom*, Ros Velasco (2022, 2026) sets out the following fundamental types:

Table 1. Ros Velasco's boredom typology synthesized (see Ros Velasco, 2022, pp. 30–31, 2026, p. 7–8).

(1) Situation-dependent and transient boredom	Whereby a particular situation bores an individual or a group of individuals, who will cease to be bored as soon as that situation ends.
(2) Individual-dependent and chronic boredom	Which affects only individuals who are highly prone to boredom, whether due to their personality or a mental disorder. In this case, the boredom never ceases: the individual is always bored.
(3) Situation-dependent and chronic boredom (or chronified situation-dependent boredom).	Caused (individually or collectively) by a specific context that does not change. It can lead to strong behaviors and reactions in an attempt to put an end to the situation causing the boredom.
(4) Deep boredom.	Which consists either of chronified situation-dependent boredom or chronic boredom that persists over time. It can be experienced both by an individual alone and by a group.

With the exception of (1), the other types are dysfunctional or pathological, as in such cases the individual (or the group, where applicable) is unable to take action to combat the boredom they are experiencing (Ros Velasco, 2022, 2026). Ros Velasco (2021b) therefore distinguishes two levels: a first stage, which involves becoming aware of the situation, and a second level, in which the individual (or group) takes action to put an end to the boredom that is consuming them. Despite the negative context in which boredom may arise, Ros Velasco (2022, 2026) clarifies that, in most cases, it is not a disease, but rather “a *symptom*, a sign of dissatisfaction and contempt for what is before us” (p. 26, p. 4). The cases in which it can indeed be considered a pathology are those that have become chronic, where the individual or group is unable to take action to put an end to it (Ros Velasco, 2021b).

Hence, in a particularly interesting way, it can be spoken of “situation-dependent and chronic boredom” (Ros Velasco, 2022, p. 28, 2026, p. 6) in those prototypical Romantic characters who possess the traits and dispositions of the genius and so they seem to feel weary because of the ordinary, bourgeois world in which they are compelled to live. Thus, boredom is profoundly rooted in the prevailing social order, and so its literary representation seems to serve as a source of criticism, a mirror reflecting a backward social and aesthetical context that still does not understand the enthusiastic mood of romantic inner inspiration.

Framed by the substitution of natural time for productive time (Ros Velasco, 2025), both the chronified situation-dependent and the profound boredom of the Romantic genius signal not only the vital uneasiness, but also an aesthetic dilemma: the romantic artist feels misunderstood by his time-schematized environment, which does not share his aesthetic enthusiasm.

As for the chosen corpus—comprising the work co-authored by Wackenroder and Tieck, *Phantasien über die Kunst*, and Tieck’s “Der Runenberg”—its selection stems from two possible, interesting indications of affinity that will be explored in relation to boredom: (1) the ideas concerning art and music contained in the *Phantasien*, which are strikingly reminiscent of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics; and (2) the study and reading, by both Tieck and Schopenhauer, of the mystic Jakob Böhme, who is thought to have influenced Tieck whilst he was writing “Der Runenberg” (Köpke, 1855).

It is assumed that these points merely concern *possible* affinities between the philosopher and the writers, so that it is therefore necessary to analyze each of their ideas separately, in order to ultimately determine whether or not a similarity actually exists. It is interesting to note the difference between the ideas to be analyzed in the *Phantasien* and those to be examined in “Der Runenberg”: *Phantasien über die Kunst* contains descriptions of art that appear to bear a resemblance to Schopenhauer’s own aesthetic ideas, as set out in *The World as Will and Representation*, such as the notion of art as an agent capable of glimpsing the world’s most intimate mysteries, or the momentary solace it provides amidst the painful and mundane hustle and bustle of life. Written at a time of youthful artistic ecstasy, the two friends, Wackenroder and Tieck, captured in *Phantasien* the essence of an aesthetic founded on enthusiasm and feeling, which they both forged during their travels to Nuremberg, Bamberg, Pommersfelden, and the Fichtelgebirge. Raised in the Protestant faith, there they encountered images of Catholic devotion, which captivated and intrigued them (Paulin, 1987). It is from those impressions that

they will distil their well-known “religion of art” (in German *Kunstreligion*) (Paulin, 1987, p. 65, a. trans.), banishing the Enlightenment’s affinity for the concepts and forms of reason. In contrast to the individual cut off from the present, the lives of sixteenth-century geniuses, such as Albrecht Dürer, “do not look to the right or to the left, but act as if there were no other way to act” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 27, a. trans.). The work will therefore be devoted to conveying, with feeling, what the artist can achieve if he devotes himself entirely to art—not even doubts will be enough to dampen the enthusiasm.

Throughout this article, aesthetic similarities—as well as differences—between the writers and the philosopher in relation to the literary motif of boredom will be explored. It is interesting to note that, despite their different contexts, the *Phantasien* can be regarded as to the literature of the period what *The World as Will and Representation* was to the philosophy of its time: a radically new proposal in its field, as Wackenroder laid the foundations there for an original aesthetic, which was strongly influenced by the art historian Johann Dominicus Fiorillo (Littlejohns, 1996).

On the other hand, adding another work by Tieck to the corpus is particularly interesting given that the author—ambiguous by definition—at the time he wrote the story analyzed here, “Der Runenberg,” was engrossed in reading the mystic Jakob Böhme (Köpke, 1855), whom Schopenhauer also read and in whose writings the philosopher found certain parallels with his own ideas concerning the will (Pérez Cornejo, 2004).

Given the central role played by boredom in the story—for it is boredom, and nothing else, that sets the protagonist in motion, setting the entire plot in motion—and its echoes in Böhme, one might well ask whether there is any affinity in his work with Schopenhauerian themes; this will be the subject of section 3.2.

The two works differ from one another in the distinct vision of nature they offer: the description of nature in *Phantasien* bears no resemblance to the gloom of the mountains in “Der Runenberg.” From this, a possible and interesting shift can be inferred: the lack of a stable principle, which had already been dragging Berglinger into a profound boredom—but which ultimately dissolved once more into the conviction that “one must reach out to the great, to art” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, pp. 179–180, a. trans.)—seems to reach a climax in “Der Runenberg”: the story of its protagonist, Christian, reflects the incompatibility between life and art.

The prototypical romantic ambiguity underlying both works raises the question of whether what had hitherto been believed to be immutable might in fact be an intimate reflection of reality. At a certain point, the Romantic artist encounters the unknown, however much his inner self may reflect on his own activity. It is within this existential unknown that, in certain passages, music enters the scene, embodying a “celestial spirit” unmediated by reason (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 186, a. trans.).

3. Analysis

3.1. Schopenhauer's Conception of Music Compared with the Romantic View

To gain a better understanding of the relationship between boredom and certain aesthetic ideas in the *Phantasien*, it is necessary first to familiarize oneself with Schopenhauer's ideas on music, as well as the Romantic view regarding this art form. For Schopenhauer (1844a), the peak of all the arts is music, since, unlike the others, it requires no medium—music does not objectivate the will through the Ideas; music is “an immediate objectification and reflection of the whole Will” (p. 292, a. trans.). The following fragment of *The World as Will and Representation* explains it as follows:

The [Platonic] Ideas are the adequate objectification of the will: the purpose of all other arts is to stimulate the recognition of these ideas through the representation of individual things (for such are, after all, the works of art themselves), which is possible only through a corresponding change in the perceiving subject. They all, therefore, objectify the will *only indirectly, namely through ideas*: and since our world is nothing but the appearance of ideas in multiplicity, through access to the principium individuationis (the form of knowledge possible of the individual as such); music, since *it passes over the Ideas*, is also entirely independent of the appearing world; it ignores it altogether and *could*, so to speak, *still exist even if the world did not exist at all*: something which cannot be said of the other arts. For music is, in fact, an immediate objectification and reflection of the whole Will, just as the world itself is, *indeed as the Ideas are*, whose multiplied appearance constitutes the world of individual things (Schopenhauer, 1844a, pp. 291–292, a. trans.).

Without forgetting the important difference between Schopenhauer and the Romantics that the former's philosophy roots in will's immanence while the latter in the Absolute, both of them recall the superiority of music by referring to its ethereal character and its direct relationship with the essence of the world. Schopenhauer's (1844a) emphasis on music's independency from the phenomenal world since “it passes over the Ideas” so that it “could [...] still exist even if there were no world at all” (p. 292, a. trans.) suggests an affinity with the Romantic depictions of absolute music:

In instrumental music, however, art is independent and free; it lays down its own laws, it fantasizes playfully and without purpose, and yet it fulfils and attains the highest; it follows its dark impulses entirely, and expresses the deepest, most marvelous things through its frolics (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 261, a. trans.).

In their *Phantasien*, Tieck and Wackenroder conceived and described music as an autonomous realm, idea which had gained force within some artistic circles at the time. In the late 1700's it was being claimed that the superiority of music had to do with its capacity to express the unconcreted (Wiesenfeld, 2022). At the same time, music was somehow mysteriously bound up with life, since, when hearing a music piece, the composer Joseph Berglinger is absorbed by “the sensation of a marvelous blend of joy and sadness [...] a feeling we experience very often in life and which no art form other than music is capable of expressing” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1819, p. 167, a. trans.). At a first glance, it might seem that there is an affinity with the following description of melody put by Schopenhauer (1844a, p. 294, a. trans.): “[The melody] depicts every emotion, every aspiration, every movement of the will—everything that reason summarizes under the broad and negative concept of feeling and cannot incorporate any further into its abstractions.” At this point, though, the affinity with Schopenhauer remains superficial,

since the narrator in the *Phantasien* refers to music as a heavenly power: “What words can I use to express that heavenly music, with its rich tones and its hearth-warming echoes, exerts over our hearts? It enters straight into the soul with its angelic presence” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 221, a. trans.). Both Schopenhauer and the Romantics describe music by means of its closeness to the ‘thing in itself,’ but for each of them the ‘thing in itself’ is completely different. Under this light, it must be stated the important fact that the literary representations of boredom which anticipate themes in Schopenhauer’s aesthetics—for example, the profound boredom of the naked saint in the *Phantasien*—do so just partially, because of this gap between their existential worldviews.

3.2. Literary Representations of Boredom and Aesthetic Ideas Linked with Them in *Phantasien über die Kunst*. Affinities (and Differences) with Schopenhauer’s Thought

Tieck and Wackenroder’s *Phantasien* sometimes seem to reflect a kind of boredom that arises as a result of the discrepancy between the artist’s inner world and the external world, the latter being alien to him. The tale “A Wondrous Oriental Fairy Tale of a Naked Saint” (“Ein wunderbares morgenländisches Märchen von einem nackten Heiligen”) portrays this discord: the saint is a victim of the ‘monster of time,’ which plunges him into profound boredom (Ros Velasco, 2022, 2026), which leads him to do all sorts of crazy things:

This strange creature found no rest, day or night, in his dwelling; it always seemed to him that he could hear, ceaselessly in his ears, the wheel of time turning at a dizzying pace. Faced with that din, it could do nothing, nor undertake anything [...] It was enraged to see that the travelers who came to it on pilgrimage stood there in complete tranquillity, observing it, or that from time to time they walked about and spoke amongst themselves. It trembled with fury and showed them the unstoppable turning of the eternal wheel, the monotonous and rhythmic roar of time (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, pp. 136, 138–139, a. trans.).

The fact that the saint can no longer escape his boredom, as well as his existence trapped in an environment that does not change but rather always constitutes “the eternal wheel, the monotonous and rhythmic roar of time” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 139), suggests that this is a chronified situation-dependent boredom prolonged over time which therefore has become profound (Ros Velasco, 2022, 2026). After several painful and hopeless years, one night, the sound of music coming from a lovers’ boat suddenly redeems him from boredom: “Once, however, there was a beautiful, moonlit summer’s night [...] Ethereal music welled up from the barge into the expanse of the heavens; sweet horns and I know not what other enchanting instruments conjured up a floating world of sounds” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, pp. 142–143, a. trans.). This liberation from mechanical time through aesthetic time seems, however, to be merely momentary, as the narrative leaves open the possibility that it is merely a sweet dream or a delusion on the part of the unstable protagonist:

At the very first sound of music and song, the whirring wheel of time had vanished from the naked saint. It was the first sound to fall upon this wasteland; the unknown longing was satisfied, the spell was broken, the lost genius freed from its earthly shell. The figure of the saint had vanished; an angelic and beautiful ghostly form, woven with a faint fragrance, floated out of the cave, stretched its slender, yearning arms towards the sky and rose from the ground in a dancing motion to the sound of the music (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 145, a. trans.).

In addition to this comes the distant setting: the escape takes place in the East. In the narrative, therefore, it remains unclear whether the artist can free himself from the torment of his boredom for good, not even through what was at that time the most revered of the arts. However, it is a fact that, thanks to music, the drudgery of everyday life has faded away for a moment. This idea of momentary consolation provided by the aesthetic experience also appears in Schopenhauer's philosophy of art: aesthetic contemplation leads to a momentary suspension of willing, and so the individual ceases to suffer for an instant. Thus, the used terms 'liberation,' 'redemption' or 'escape' for the saint's listening experience do not define a permanent or radical break with suffering: instead, they refer to the intensity with which he experiences the fleeting relief. This brief solace resembles the Schopenhauerian idea of aesthetic contemplation as a momentary suspension of willing, so it does not correspond at all to the permanent, ascetic denial of the will. See the similarity in this passage from *The World as Will and Representation*:

The true and profound understanding of being [...] does not [...] serve as a quietus to the will, nor does it redeem him from life forever, but only for a few moments; and so it is not yet the way out of life for him, but merely a temporary consolation within it (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 302, a. trans.).

The reason for the character's profound boredom thus reflects the weariness of an external world whose planned activities are diluted within an equally planned division of time; the terms "time's trolling" (*Fortrollen der Zeit*) or "the wheel of time" (*das Rad der Zeit*) refer to the Romantics' present moment, which is becoming increasingly mechanized (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 145, a. trans.). Faced with this present, Tieck and Wackenroder (1799) revere a past in which art and life were united, in which the artist's self was not yet split—an ideal which, as already mentioned, they found in Albrecht Dürer. In this regard, it is important to emphasize the difference in meaning between the Romantics' term 'wheel of time' and its counterpart in Schopenhauer's work. Schopenhauer's 'wheel' forms part of the cycle of the will and, as such, dates back to something that has been taking place ever since, as suggested by the following passage from *The World as Will and Representation*:

Whether we hunt or flee, fear misfortune or strive for pleasure, it does not really make any difference: the concern for the ever-demanding will, in whatever form, constantly fills and moves the consciousness; however, without rest, no true well-being is at all possible. Therefore, the subject of the will lies permanently on the spinning wheel of Ixion, is forever draining the Danaids' sieve, and is the eternally languishing Tantalus (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 222, a. trans.).

This Schopenhauerian structure of willing and striving can be interpreted as an everlasting "constant wheel of wanting and suffering, obtaining, getting bored, and then wanting and suffering all over again" (Ros Velasco, 2016, p. 117, a. trans.), whilst the "wheel of time" (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 136, a. trans.) criticized by the Romantics constitutes a specific problem which they attribute to their mechanized age. In this regard, as Hermann Wolf (1914) emphasizes in his essay *Schopenhauer's Relationship with Romanticism and Mysticism* (*Schopenhauers Verhältnis zur Romantik und Mystik*), in Schopenhauer's philosophy, the unreality of the sensible world does not stem from the same source as it does in the Romantic framework. Whilst for the Romantic, reality causes pain due to their unfulfilled longing and nostalgia for the Absolute, in Schopenhauer's system the *topos* of the world as a dream rests on a different foundation, namely "the metaphysical aspect and the mystical aspect," that is to say, the will, on the one hand, and

the mystic's "relative" nothingness, on the other (Wolf, 1914, p. 278, a. trans.). Despite this fundamental difference, Schopenhauer's philosophy of art contains aesthetic ideas that are significantly akin to those expressed by Wackenroder and Tieck in their *Phantasien*, which the philosopher read in his younger years, before his period of study in Göttingen (Pérez Cornejo, 2004). In this regard, the saint's profound boredom—momentarily alleviated by music—serves as an example that confirms the article's hypothesis insofar as, as has already been explained, both in the narratives of Tieck and Wackenroder and in Schopenhauer's philosophy, the aesthetic experience allows one to forget, for a moment, the suffering of life.

However, the article's hypothesis does not fully hold true, as literary depictions of boredom do not always foreshadow themes from Schopenhauer's aesthetics. The passage entitled "Das eigentümliche innere Wesen der Tonkunst," for example, does not address boredom at any point; yet it sets out ideas concerning art that show a close affinity with the philosopher's thinking: "It [the music] boldly strikes the mysterious harp, sounding out certain dark, wondrous notes in a specific sequence in the dark world—and the strings of our hearts resonate, and we understand their sound" (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 19, a. trans.). The metaphor of acoustic resonance between the artist, the artwork and the audience conveys the idea that art appeals solely to the emotions and not to the intellect, which was also shared by Schopenhauer (Pérez Cornejo, 2004). Furthermore, that reference in *Phantasien* to the universal understanding of music—"we understand its sound," states the narrator (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 194, a. trans.)—suggests an affinity with the following idea contained in *The World as Will and Representation*:

[Music] has such a powerful effect on the very depths of the human soul, and is understood there so completely and so profoundly as a universal language, the clarity of which even surpasses that of the visible world itself: that we certainly have more to seek in it than an *exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*, as Leibniz described it (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 290, a. trans.).

Tieck and Wackenroder share the philosopher's view of music as something beyond a merely arithmetical and unconscious exercise, expressing in "Das eigentümliche innere Wesen der Tonkunst" how, alongside that 'system' of technique transformed into sounds, there is something more which defies all conceptualization: they imagine it as a powerful "celestial spirit" (1799, p. 186, a. trans.). Naturally, it is necessary once again to distinguish between the Romantic backdrop—always framed by the constant search for the Absolute—and the immanence of Schopenhauer's philosophy; to the same extent, each will situate that 'something more' in music in a different place. But what does seem similar is that, for both, the art of sound expresses something that nothing else is capable of conveying, that it does so in a distinct and fascinating way, and that it relates to the mystery of the world and of the self. In *The World as Will and Representation*, this seems to be expressed in the following statement: "we [must] recognize a much more profound and deeper meaning in it, one that relates to the innermost essence of the world and of our very selves" (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 290, a. trans.); the *Phantasien* will depict it as follows:

That maddening arbitrariness with which, in the human soul, joy and sorrow, the natural and the forced, innocence and ferocity, jest and dread become friends and, often, suddenly join hands: what art portrays on its stage these mysteries of the soul, with a meaning so obscure, mysterious and moving? (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 263, a. trans.).

In short, not all passages in *Phantasien* contain depictions of boredom bounded up with themes that later appear in Schopenhauer's philosophy of art; often, the hypothesis of the article is not borne out. In some cases, such as in the analyzed text "The Unique Inner Nature of Musical Art" ("Das eigentümliche innere Wesen der Tonkunst"), aesthetic themes akin to Schopenhauer's appear on their own, without any reference or allusion to the boredom of the narrator or any character.

Another interesting case when analyzing Romantic depictions of boredom is that portrayed in "A Letter from Joseph Berglinger" ("Ein Brief Joseph Berglingers"), for in this letter written by a fictional character it seems clear that he does not feel a profound weariness with the world around him, but rather his account reveals a weariness with himself, with his inner world: "I can never find a firm foothold within myself. My thoughts jostle and intertwine ceaselessly, and I feel dizzy when I try to find a beginning, an end and a sense of calm" (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, pp. 213–214, a. trans.). The composer not only mentions feeling dizzy from searching for a beginning he cannot find, but also describes lying "stretched out" and "rejected" (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 207, a. trans.). The boredom stemming from a lack of certainties or principles to believe in was a real feature of Tieck's life (Köpke, 1855). Whilst Schlegel and some of his contemporaries celebrated this as a hallmark of modernity and originality characteristic of Romanticism, Tieck was aware of its negative side, which consisted in losing "the yardstick [...] for the world, for life and for the human mind" (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 206, a. trans.). In his biography of Tieck, Köpke (1855) recounts how, from a very young age, Tieck had been prone to frequent inner crises and fluctuating moods, and how these, once reflected in his literary work, became a "scathing critique to which he subjected himself and his younger colleagues" (p. 206). His emotional ups and downs are linked to a lack of firm convictions; in the following passage, Berglinger expresses the despair of the artist cut off from active life:

My fantasies tremble, shattered and in disarray, and all my feelings fade away into tears. My lustful artistic pleasures are deeply poisoned from their very source; I wander with a sick soul and, from time to time, the poison spills through my veins. What am I? Why am I here, what am I doing in this world? What evil spirit has distanced me so far from all mankind, to the point where I do not know how to define myself? [...] I do nothing but toss and turn in the sea of my inner doubts (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, pp. 205–206, a. trans.).

In a similar vein, Wackenroder reflects on his emotional ups and downs in a letter to Tieck, dated 27 November 1792. The young musician and poet begins the letter by joyfully recalling an idyllic morning spent with his friend in Wörlitz, only to suddenly lament the boredom caused by his law studies: "I have no zest for life! Half my soul has been snatched away! And my time is all too often taken up with unworthy pursuits and distractions. Alas, jurisprudence!" (1864, p. 226, a. trans.). In Wackenroder and Tieck's worldview, the artist is bored and suffers not only because of his inner doubts, but also due to the mismatch between a monotonous world and his far more ambitious desires and longings. One can see here an affinity with the idea contained in *The World as Will and Representation* that "he [the artist] himself bears the costs of representation [...] and remains in constant suffering" (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 302, a. trans.), for Berglinger's entire letter can be read as a testimony to the artist's suffering as he reflects on

his own existence. Through the character of Berglinger, as well as Wackenroder's desperate letters, early Romanticism already reflects a considerable degree of pessimism (Paulin, 1987).

The literary portrayal of boredom in "Ein Brief Joseph Berglingers" is complex because, whilst at first glance it appears to relate solely to the artist's inner world, it simultaneously refers to an external world that is alien to that inner world; consequently, it remains unclear to what extent this is a case of individual and chronic boredom or of chronified situation-dependent boredom that has become profound. Given the ambivalence of Tieck's texts and the author's penchant for a very subtle use of satire, it seems plausible that the text allows for both interpretations. If one opts for chronified situation-dependent, whose root lies in the external world alien to the artist's aspirations and ideals, then one can see in Berglinger a certain affinity with the misunderstood genius in *The World as Will and Representation*: "Genius, in its very actions and achievements, [is] usually at odds with and in conflict with its own age" (Schopenhauer, 1844b, p. 391, a. trans.), which is reminiscent of the sense of alienation Berglinger feels towards his fellow human beings.

3.3. Literary Representations of Boredom and Ideas on Nature Linked with Them in "Der Runenberg." Affinities (and Differences) with Schopenhauer's Thought

Around 1801, Tieck found himself in the grip of a profound existential and poetic crisis, due in large part to the serious losses he had suffered during that period. At that time, the Norwegian philosopher and poet Henrik Steffens had become an important friend to the Romantic: the two would engage in lengthy conversations on the philosophy of nature, religion and poetry, as well as on Jakob Böhme, whose works they both read avidly (Köpke, 1855). It was also around this time that Jena was undergoing a period of change in terms of philosophical influences: Fichte's philosophy had given way to "a Romanticism permeated by *Naturphilosophie* through the influence of Henrik Steffens, linked above all—in a very Schellingian manner—to a fundamental, hidden and threatening nature that cannot be tamed" (Carrasco Conde, 2015, p. 284, a. trans.). Absorbed by his readings of Schelling and Böhme, as well as by his conversations with Steffens, Tieck created "Der Runenberg" in a single night in 1802, a tale which depicts how the inner vital forces repressed by the individual turn against him in the form of a "vengeful spectre," to the point of determining his fate (Rath, 1996, p. 271, a. trans.).

The "Kunstmärchen" tells the story of Christian, a young man whose chronified situation-dependent boredom towards the "circles of repetitive routine" ["Kreise der wiederkehrenden Gewöhnlichkeit"] (Tieck, 1892, p. 51, a. trans.) leads him to venture into the mysterious world of the mountains, thereby abandoning his parents and acquaintances. He is intensely drawn to all things rocky. As he ventures into the forest, far from the bourgeois plain, an old man tells him of the wonders to be found on the "rune mountain" ["Runenberg"] (Tieck, 1892, p. 56, a. trans.)—a motif that some scholars have interpreted as an allegory of poetic practice (Kremer, 1989). Christian feels so captivated by the infinite promise of that inorganic natural world that he completely overlooks the danger inherent in the steep ascent: "The abyss opening up beneath his feet, threatening to swallow him whole, went completely unnoticed by him, such was the drive fueled by his wild ideas and incomprehensible desires" (Tieck, 1892, p. 57, a. trans.). Up there on the top of the mountain, the sight of a woman of dazzling beauty and extraordinary proportions

immediately captivates him. When the Venus figure takes “a panel that sparkled with numerous inlaid stones” (Tieck, 1892, p. 59, a. trans.), Christian feels deeply moved:

an abyss of forms and melodies, of longing and lust; a multitude of joyful, soaring melodies swept through his soul, which was stirred to its very depths: he saw a world of pain and hope welling up within him, mighty, miraculous pillars of confidence and defiant optimism, great currents of water flowing, filled with melancholy (Tieck, 1892, p. 59, a. trans.).

It is noteworthy that negative and positive connotations coexist in relation to this idealized female figure, who, on the one hand, instils “confidence and optimism” but, at the same time, gives rise to “great currents of water [...] filled with melancholy” and a world described, paradoxically, as both “pain” and “hope” (Tieck, 1892, p. 59, a. trans.). Here and in other passages, the story reflects its marked ambiguity: is the figure of that woman with the fascinating board a sign of a revelation full of promise following a long period of boredom, or is it, on the contrary, a danger lurking for the protagonist?

The scene is decisive because, as Rath (1996) explains, the parallel with the motif of Mary and the book makes the handing over of the panel to Christian a crucial moment, for it is precisely that moment that opens up the possibility for him to choose between awakening and self-denial:¹ “He did not recognise himself, and was startled when the Beautiful One opened the window, handed him the magical stone tablet and spoke these few words: ‘Take this in memory of me!’” (Tieck, 1892, p. 59, a. trans.). The words spoken at the Last Supper reaffirm the potentially revelatory nature of that experience for Christian (Rath, 1996). But instead of surrendering to his true inner strengths, he is plunged into “a dark night veiled by clouds” and, where he had previously felt “enthusiasm” and “love,” he now finds himself “exhausted, dizzy and half-asleep” as he makes his way down the hill towards the plain (Tieck, 1892, p. 59, a. trans.). This repression of his true essence therefore has drastic consequences: he continually hears the “terrifying subterranean groan” (Tieck, 1892, p. 53, a. trans.) that the earth utters every time, whilst working as a gardener, he pulls up a root (for nature gives back to him what he himself has repressed) and, possessed by a violent, instinctive passion, he sacrifices hours of sleep to devote himself to boundless adoration of gold: “It calls to me when I sleep; I hear it when music plays, when the wind blows [...] So I have to go out at night, just to satisfy its craving” (Tieck, 1892, p. 66, a. trans.). According to Rath (1996), Christian’s true fault lies in his indecision, in the fact that he never manages to make up his mind, despite having had the opportunity to do so.² Had he chosen to follow the path dictated by his own nature, he might have attained pleasure, which, in Tieck’s work, leads to self-realization (Rath, 1996).

¹ This self-denial has to do with the artist’s repression of his own nature (Rath, 1996), not with the Schopenhauerian denial of the will.

² Tieck himself (1937) experienced something similar during his first year of university studies in 1792 when, walking along “a beautiful path amongst willow trees” and climbing “a few hills” on his way to the imposing Harz mountain range, suddenly, as the sun rose, he was overcome by a sense of ecstasy that transformed him (p. 41, a. trans.). Such is the content of his letter to Ida von Lüttichau, written in 1853. The unique nature of the moment becomes clear when reading the following words by Tieck (1937): “Where can I find the words to describe, even vaguely, the miracle, the vision that appeared before me and transformed my soul, my inner being, all my strength, and swept me away and led me towards the invisible, towards the divinely great and ineffable?” (p. 41, a. trans.). However, shortly afterwards the young Tieck descends the hill, returning to the ordinary world: “I made my way down the steep mountain with difficulty and, about an hour’s walk away, in a village, I had my first breakfast. Never again did I encounter that indescribable personal love, so palpable and compelling” (1937, p. 41, a. trans.).

Thus, Christian's boredom sets in motion his initial estrangement from bourgeois society: it prompts Christian to climb the mountain, bringing him closer to a rediscovery of himself through pleasure. The story therefore revolves around the human being's capacity to discover or repress "the energy of the soul" (Rath, 1996, p. 271, a. trans.), which is developed through a struggle of forces with Schellingian echoes and a trial akin to the 'point' that Böhme (1832) establishes as a choice of the individual between "light" and "darkness" (p. 6, a. trans.). In this thematic area, there does not seem to be any profound affinity with Schopenhauer, primarily because, for Tieck, the revelatory path that leads to self-discovery involves surrendering to pleasure (Rath, 1996). But there is another reason: the influence that his readings of Schelling and Böhme had on Tieck whilst writing "Der Runenberg." On this point, the following comment by Schopenhauer (1860) in his *Parerga und Paralipomena* is illuminating, particularly with regard to Schelling, regarding the fact that the pre-eminence of the will over the intellect in philosophies preceding his own is merely an element which, whilst constituting "a foreshadowing" or "a premonition" of his philosophy, does not attain its level of foundation:

of every great thought, before it has been discovered, there is a foreshadowing, a premonition, a vague image, as if in a mist, and a fruitless attempt to grasp it. However, only he who has recognized a truth from its very foundations is its author. Even if, at one time or another, it has been uttered semi-consciously and almost as if spoken in a dream, this means little more than if it were written in so many letters, even if it were written in so many words—just as the finder of an object is solely that person who, recognizing its value, picked it up and kept it, but not the one who accidentally picked it up and let it fall again; or, in the same way, Columbus is the discoverer of America, but not the first shipwrecked person whom the waves washed up there (pp. 166–167, a. trans.).

The concept of the will as defined by Schelling is therefore not of the same nature as that established by Schopenhauer; consequently, the story, which was influenced by the former, does not appear to be based on a framework truly akin to that of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Nor is the reception of Böhme akin to it, for, unlike Schopenhauer, Tieck—despite not being a devout believer—had seen in Böhme a "prophet" capable of uniting faith and poetry in his own person (Mayer, 1999, p. 57). This interpretation of Jakob Böhme's writings by the Romantics was not shared by Schopenhauer, who enjoyed reading the mystic from an immanent perspective.³

Through boredom, "Der Runenberg" explores the crossroads faced by the Romantic artist, who is torn between a bourgeois, Catholic life and a solitary existence of poetic ecstasy (and madness). What is at stake in the "Kunstmärchen" therefore concerns "God, the Absolute and the Spirit"—those pieces of the jigsaw which, as Safranski (2025) asserts, are the "majestic, meaning-bestowing figures" with which the Romantics answered the question "What lies behind the phenomenal world?" (p. 280, a. trans.)—a question to which Schopenhauer (1844a), as is well known, gave a radically different answer through his famous "will" (p. 113, a. trans.).

³ See Chapter 56 of *WWR I*: "The will, at every level of its manifestation [...] is entirely devoid of any ultimate end or purpose [...] No body is devoid of [...] aspiration, or of longing and desire, as Jakob Böhme would say" (Schopenhauer, 1844a, p. 364, a. trans.).

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the various representations of boredom in the corpus suggests aesthetic affinities at a superficial level; however, underlying this, the Romantic and Schopenhauerian worldviews could not be more different. Whilst in the Romantic texts there are at times 1) certain ‘echoes’ of Schopenhauer’s philosophy of art alongside the motif of boredom—such as the momentary solace provided by the aesthetic experience (in “Ein wunderbares morgenländisches Märchen von einem nackten Heiligen”) or the separation of the genius from the rest of mankind (in “Ein Brief Joseph Berglingers”)—there are points at which either 2) boredom does not appear, despite the existence of an aesthetic affinity (see what has already been said regarding music in “Das eigentümliche Wesen der Tonkunst”), or 3) despite the presence of the motif of boredom in the literary text in question, it appears linked to existential and artistic dilemmas that do not seem to bear any relation or affinity to Schopenhauer’s ideas (see “Der Runenberg”). “Ein Brief Joseph Berglingers” constitutes a special case because, on the one hand, Berglinger’s boredom can be interpreted as a weariness with himself and his own inner world (which would place him in category 3), but, on the other hand, the Romantic ambiguity leaves open a more veiled allusion to the radical gulf between the external world and the artist’s “aspiration” (Tieck & Wackenroder, 1799, p. 206, a. trans.), which, once again, suggests affinities with Schopenhauer. Another interesting point in common is the similar perception of music as an art form very close to the mysterious essence of the world, a subject briefly touched upon here—as it goes beyond the scope and objectives of this article—and which can be examined in greater depth in existing research, such as Dahlhaus’s (1989) *The Idea of Absolute Music* or Fubini’s (2005) *Musical Thought of Romanticism (Il pensiero musicale del Romanticismo)*. Ultimately, the initial hypothesis of this article is not fully borne out, and this seems to stem, fundamentally, from the radically different ways in which Schopenhauer and the Romantics defined the ‘thing in itself.’

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