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Lovers' Dreams – the Path to Heaven or Hell

The Janus-Face of Dreams and their Discursive Context in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Gelübde* and *Prinzessin Brambilla*¹

Starting from the observation that the metaphorical use of the term ›dream‹/›dreamer‹ is evaluated in E.T.A. Hoffmann's (1776–1822) work in diametrically opposed ways, this essay explores the anthropological assumptions and narratological functions of two sleep dreams: In Hoffmann's *Das Gelübde* (The Vow; 1817) a dream is central in bringing about the protagonist's early death, whereas in *Prinzessin Brambilla* (Princess Brambilla; 1820) it facilitates the hero's happy transformation. The essay argues that Hoffmann's dreams owe as much to Kant's concept of judgement as to G.H. Schubert's notion of a cosmic link between the dreamer and their beloved. The accuracy of the protagonists' insight into the relationship between dream and reality is shown to be the key to understanding both texts, but the narratological function of the dream varies between providing insight for the reader into the protagonists' errors, and constituting the starting point for the protagonists themselves acquiring insight.

The fact that dreams play an important role in Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann's (1776–1822) work is hardly surprising in a Romantic writer. But that dreams and dreamers are evaluated in often diametrically opposed ways is perhaps a little unexpected given that Hoffmann's exuberant imagination has earned him the reputation of embodying the fantastic in literature, both in his own time and among many modern readers. Yet close reading reveals that in Hoffmann's work, the terms ›dream‹ and ›dreamer‹ do not in themselves have positive connotations. Rather, they are frequently used as a metaphor to capture the spiritual nature of the protagonists, or of the object inspiring them to dream. The positive or negative quality of the dream, the

¹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke*. 6 vols. Ed. by Hartmut Steinecke et al. Frankfurt/M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2004; henceforth quoted as H with numbers of volume and page. If not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author. I would like to thank Sheila Dickson warmly for helpful comments on this essay.

dreamer, or the inspiring object is then accentuated by adjectives and the narrative context. Thus Nathanael in *Der Sandmann* (1816) has »sweet dreams« (»süße Träume«; H III, 21) of Clara and sees her spirit reflected in her eyes »like a lovely sweet dream« (»wie ein lieblicher süßer Traum«; 24). He, by contrast, is regarded as a »dark dreamer« (»düsterer Träumer«; 24, also 29) by his friends and the narrator, and his imagined love relationship with the automaton Olympia is ironized by the narrator as mere self-projection and thus as an empty dream of perfection.

Nathanael's counterpart Theodor in the closely related story *Das öde Haus* (1817) has the reputation of being a »dreamy seer of ghosts« (»träumerischer Geisterseher«; H III, 175).² But unlike Nathanael, whose obsession with the marvellous closes his mind to alternative explanations, Theodor is able to view his own preoccupations from another perspective. When his expectations of the fantastic are disappointed, he refers to himself in the third person in this first-person narrative: »at least the demon which is hostile to all things poetic tweaked the sweetly dreaming man by the nose so that it hurt« (168).³ That the dreamer here portrays himself with distance and irony gives an important clue with regard to Hoffmann's aesthetics of balancing enthusiasm with level-headedness, dream with reality.

The term »dream« also functions as a metaphor to convey an artistic vision or an imagined ideal. This is the case in *Der Kampf der Sänger* (1819), when the narrator is inspired to imagine with the utmost intensity the characters he is reading about in Wagenbach's chronicle:

² Cf. the analysis of parallels and differences between these stories in Ricarda Schmidt, »Der Dichter als Fledermaus bei der Schau des Wunderbaren: Die Poetologie des rechten dichterischen Sehens in Hoffmanns *Der Sandmann* und *Das öde Haus*«. In: Richard J. Kavanagh (ed.), *Mutual Exchanges: Sheffield-Münster Colloquium I*. Frankfurt/M.: Lang 1999, 180–192. For analyses of dreams in Hoffmann cf. R.S., *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind: Intermedialität bei E.T.A. Hoffmann*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006, esp. the chapters on *Die Abenteurer der Sylvester-Nacht* and on *Die Jesuitenkirche in G.*, 90–113 and 124–140. Cf. also R.S.: »Schmerzliches Sehnen und böser Hohn: Ambivalenzen in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Darstellung von Künstlern«. In: *E.T.A. Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* 17 (2009), 20–36.

³ »es zupfte wenigstens der allem Poetischen feindliche Dämon den Süßträumenden empfindlich und schmerzhaft bei der Nase«.

an inner voice said, this is the dream whose wings sweep up and down so mellifluously when it nestles like a pious child at man's bosom and awakens the inner eye with a sweet kiss so that it can see the most lovely images of a higher life in full glory (H IV, 332).⁴

While for the narrator of *Der Kampf der Sanger* artistic inspiration is successfully achieved via a dream, in *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.* (1816) the painter Berthold confuses the mundane and the transcendent in the muse which inspires his artistic dream. He expresses his painful disappointment sarcastically:

Ah, what is all our striving for higher things but the clumsy, unconscious squirming of the infant who hurts the wet nurse who is benevolently feeding him! [...] The ideal is a nasty, mendacious dream born of restless blood. [...] The devil cheats us with puppets onto which he glues the wings of angels (H III, 119).⁵

Berthold's denunciation of the ideal as a deceptive dream is, however, not presented as fact in the story, but attributed to Berthold's unstable psychological state: »a mortally wounded mind« (H III, 119).⁶

The diametrically opposed associations in these four texts of the term ›dream‹/›dreamer‹ with light or darkness, mastery or destruction, artistic success or failure, point us to the importance of perspective and narrative function in Hoffmann's work. They indicate that we should expect something complex and multifaceted when, beyond the frequent metaphorical use of the term ›dream‹ for thoughts, desires, visions and ideals, we examine dreams in the narrow sense, i.e. the dreams that occur during sleep. Hoffmann's literary dreams range from the banal to the marvellous, from the uncanny to the nightmarish. The dream at times serves to parody the dreamer (a petty bureaucrat dreaming of the location of a lost file in *Der goldene Topf*, 1814),

⁴ »eine innere Stimme sprach, das ist der Traum, dessen Flugel so lieblich auf und niederrauschen, wenn er wie ein frommes Kind sich an die Brust des Menschen legt und mit einem suen Ku das innere Auge weckt, da es vermag, die anmutigsten Bilder eines hoheren Lebens voll Glanz und Herrlichkeit zu erschauen«.

⁵ »Ach, was ist all unser Ringen und Streben nach dem Hoheren anders, als das unbeholfene bewutlose Hantieren des Suglings, der die Amme verletzt, die ihn wohl­tatig nahrt! [...] das Ideal ist ein schnoder lugnerischer Traum vom garenden Blute erzeugt. [...] Der Teufel narrt uns mit Puppen, denen er Engelsfittige anleimt«.

⁶ »eines bis auf den Tod verwundeten Gemus«.

or to open up the realm of the imagination to the protagonist (Anselmus's dream of the green snake *Serpentina*), or to express a frightening other world (Medardus dreaming of his double while being unable to move in *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, 1815/16). Yet if the reader surmises on the basis of a few texts (e.g. *Elixiere*, *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*, *Der Magnetiseur* and *Das Geliübde*) that in Hoffmann's work dreams function as the harbingers of death and disaster, s/he has not taken into account those dreams which bring about a range of very different happy endings (Anselmus in *Der goldene Topf* embraces the allegorical world of Atlantis with rapture; Giglio turns his initial dream of Princess Brambilla into a combination of happy matrimony, art and entertainment), or those which function successfully as a warning to the dreamer not to confuse ideal and reality (with regard to women in *Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht*, 1815).⁷

Dreams, dreamers, and outcomes of dreams in Hoffmann's work are thus wide-ranging. Inge Stegmann, who wrote the first full-length monograph on dreams in Hoffmann's work, quite rightly highlights

⁷ Cf. Ricarda Schmidt, »Karnevaleske Mesallianzen oder der Autor als Bauchredner der Sprache? Eine Analyse Bachtinscher Ansätze für die Interpretation des Traumes in Hoffmanns *Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht* im Lichte malerischer Intertexte«. In: Sheila Dickson/Mark Ward (ed.), *Romantic Dreams: Proceedings of the Glasgow Conference, April 1997*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications 1998, 77–97 [plus 12 unnumbered pages of illustrations]. While I argue that the dream in *Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht* functions as a warning to the narrating enthusiast to distinguish between his ideal of femininity and its dark side, and thus enables him to re-balance himself by reflecting his own experiences in those of the other protagonists of the story, there is still a tendency to see in Hoffmann the poet of fragmentation and thus the forerunner of modernity. Cf. Christian Baier, »Nur der ›Traum eines Ichs‹? Identitätsspaltung, Ich-Verlust und Doppelgängertum in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht*«. In: *Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* 18 (2010), 7–24. Baier reads the story as »das poetische Psychogramm einer zerfallenden Persönlichkeit« and »Konfrontation mit einer elementaren, unaufhebbaren Verunsicherung, mit der metaphysischen Verlassenheit des Menschen in einer Welt ohne Halt und Gewissheit« (24: »the poetic psychogram of a disintegrating personality«; »confrontation with an elemental, irreconcilable feeling of insecurity, with the metaphysical loneliness of man in a world without security and certainty«).

the prismatic character and the sheer abundance of the heterogeneous dream narratives in Hoffmann's work.⁸

More recent interpretations of Hoffmann's literary dreams range from examinations of the contemporary science that Hoffmann drew on, particularly in his story *Der Magnetiseur* (1814),⁹ to those which tend to make more radical and general claims, often based on only one text. The latter include on the one hand Monika Schmitz-Emans's assertion that in *Der Sandmann* Hoffmann »develops [...] a model of

⁸ Cf. Inge Stegmann, »Die Wirklichkeit des Traumes bei E.T. A. Hoffmann«. In: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 95 Sonderheft (1976), 64–93, here 64. Cf. also: idem, *Deutung und Funktion des Traumes bei E.T.A. Hoffmann*. Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 1973, 9. An earlier work by Paula Ritzler on dream in the Romantic period only devotes a short chapter to Hoffmann. However, Ritzler does notice that dream in Hoffmann can be associated either with a higher spiritual or a demonic realm and that the relationship between dream and reality is at the centre of Hoffmann's exploration of the dream: Paula Ritzler, *Der Traum in der Dichtung der deutschen Romantik*. Bern: Paul Haupt 1943, 19–29.

⁹ The dreams in Hoffmann's story *Der Magnetiseur* have been frequently examined with regard to their relationship to Mesmerism and its many popularisers, particularly G.H. Schubert. Evaluations of the presentation of Mesmerism in *Der Magnetiseur* range from the assertion that Hoffmann and Schubert share a similar outlook, to the claim that Hoffmann stands Schubert on his head. Cf. among others: Monika Schmitz-Emans, »Naturspekulation als ›Vorwand‹ poetischer Gestaltung: Über das Verhältnis E.T.A. Hoffmanns zu den Lehren G.H. Schuberts«. In: *Mitteilungen der E.T.A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft* 34 (1988), 67–83; Stefan Schweizer, »Zwischen Poesie und Wissen: E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Der Magnetiseur*«. In: *E.T.A. Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* 15 (2007), 25–49; Barbara Bayer-Schur, »Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Romantik: Zur narrativen Funktion der Naturwissenschaften in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Der Magnetiseur*«. In: *E.T.A. Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* 15 (2007), 50–76; Jürgen Barkhoff, *Magnetische Fiktionen: Literarisierungen des Mesmerismus in der Romantik*. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 1995. On experiments with magnetism in the Berlin of Hoffmann's time cf.: Wilhelm Erman, *Der tierische Magnetismus in Preussen vor und nach den Freiheitskriegen*. Munich, Berlin: Oldenbourg 1925, and also Eric Engstrom, »Magnetische Versuche in Berlin, 1789–1835: Zur Entkörperlichung magnetischer Glaubwürdigkeit«. In: *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 41 (2006), 225–269. David Ferdinand Koreff, Hoffmann's friend and member of the »Seraphinenorden« (fictionally christened Serapiensorden), practised magnetism and was closely connected with doctors who engaged in magnetic experiments; cf. W. Erman, 43, 52–54, 59, 68; on Hoffmann, 67; cf. also E. Engstrom, 238 and 244.

disempowering both the dreamer and the poet«. ¹⁰ In Schmitz-Emans's reading, the dream is accorded a negative truth value. Gerhard Lauer, on the other hand, argues, particularly with reference to *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, that the dream in literature does not have an unmediated truth value (about human drives, the unconscious, the power of the human imagination or anything else), but, rather, a literary function. According to Lauer, a narrated dream can tell us about how a narrative functions: »the truth of a dream lies in its narration«. ¹¹ Lauer thus tries to locate the literary dream outside the contemporary dream discourse which has inspired it and evaluates it solely as »a narrative means for innovations in telling stories«, ¹² in particular with regard to the presentation of time and the body: »the dream's characteristics of timelessness and disembodiedness make it a suitable narrative means for recounting the most intense time and the most pressing embodiment«. ¹³

I agree with Lauer that the narrative function of the dream is immensely important – and an analysis of its function in *Der Sandmann* can refute Schmitz-Emans's reading, by distinguishing the real dream, dreamt at night while asleep, from poetry (which may be dream-like), and by taking account of the characterization of the fictional poet in a literary text. But I believe a deeper understanding of the function of dreams in narratives is possible, if one takes into account the network of contemporary dream discourses in which a writer situates a text. Manfred Engel, in his reading of *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*, demonstrates that the unconscious in Hoffmann functions within a framework of Romantic anthropology, for which the unconscious is »the

¹⁰ »entwirft [...] ein Modell der Entmündigung des Träumers und des Schriftstellers«; Monika Schmitz-Emans, »Redselige Träume: Über Traum und Sprache bei Jean Paul im Kontext des europäischen Romans«. In: Peter-André Alt/Christiane Leiteritz (ed.), *Traum-Diskurse der Romantik*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 2005, 77–110, here 105.

¹¹ »Die Wahrheit des Traums ist die seiner Erzählung«; Gerhard Lauer, »Hoffmanns Träume: Über den Wahrheitsanspruch erzählter Träume«. In: Alt/Leiteritz (note 10), 129–147, here 132.

¹² Ibid., 145: »ein narratives Mittel für Innovationen des Erzählens«.

¹³ Ibid., 146: »die Merkmale der Zeitlosigkeit und Körperlosigkeit des Traumes machen ihn zum geeigneten narrativen Mittel, um dichteste Zeit und bedrängteste [sic., RS] Leiblichkeit zu erzählen«.

base layer with which the individual extends into the general scheme of things«,¹⁴ not an anticipation of the Freudian unconscious, which is primarily sexual in nature.

Looking at two texts dealing with lovers' dreams, one of which leads to the dreamer's death, and the other to the dreamer's happy transformation, I want to explore here what anthropological assumptions are conveyed in these two variants and how the two dreams' different narrative functions shape the outcome. The overarching aim of this essay is to investigate how Hoffmann's dream discourse not only participates in different contemporary dream paradigms, but also subtly shifts them, plays them off against each other and transforms them into complex oscillating narratives.

1. *Das Gelübde* – Dream and Destruction

Das Gelübde, one of the *Nachtstücke* from 1817, is an analytical story, consisting of two halves presented in reverse chronological order. The first part tells of kind but uncomprehending strangers caring for a mysterious and heavily pregnant young noblewoman, who dies shortly after giving birth. The second part gives an account of the events which lead up to the protagonist's sad end. While a dream plays a central role in the plot of the second part of the narrative, the first part is felt by the simple-minded witnesses of the protagonist's demise to be merely dream-like in its Gothic ambience.

¹⁴ »die Tiefenschicht, mit der das Individuum in den allgemeinen Zusammenhang der Dinge hineinreicht«; Manfred Engel, »Kulturgeschichte/n? Ein Modellentwurf am Beispiel der Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte des Traums«. In: *KulturPoetik* 10 (2010), 153–176, here 167. Cf. also Marc Klesse, »Oszillationsfiguren: Zu einer Poetik des Traums in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*«. In: *E.T.A. Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* 18 (2010), 25–41. According to Klesse, the reader turns into a »Traumwandler, für den Narration wie Rezeption permanent zwischen Realität und Phantasma oszillieren« (41: »dream walker for whom narration and reception permanently oscillate between reality and phantasm«). When Klesse emphasizes that unlike the protagonists Ellis and Ulla, the reader knows that Hoffmann's text operates with two modes of perception, one could add that the artist, too, is aware of both and is trying to educate the reader to balance them.

In part one, a young woman arrives incognito at the house of the mayor in a small Polish border town. She embodies contradictions: she is heavily pregnant, without a husband, yet extremely devout; well-connected and rich, but isolated. Her piety is accentuated by her assumed name Cölestine, which derives from ›celestial‹. Above all, she never reveals her face, not even while giving birth. A white mask underneath her thick veils adds to the atmosphere of the uncanny and of death surrounding her: a woman separating herself from the world, apparently in a process of repentance. Finally, an officer storms the house, claims to be the father of her child and abducts it. The veiled woman is inconsolable and departs to the convent of O., where she soon dies. To the family who looked after her, these events appear like a bad dream: »It appeared to the old man, the whole family, as if they were only now waking from a bad eerie dream that had frightened them greatly« (H III, 294).¹⁵ Rumour has it that the masked and veiled woman is the Polish Countess Hermenegilda von C.

In part two, the narrator tells the story of Hermenegilda's life. A complex range of factors is revealed which lets the reader see how her life experience motivates the story's central dream. These factors pertain to history, culture, psychology, chance, and the impact of an evil agent. On the historical level, Hermenegilda's fate is closely interlinked with the patriotic fight against the partition of Poland. Patriotism as well as superior intelligence and judgement bring Hermenegilda and Stanislaus together as a couple. However, in spite of her intellectual qualities, she overestimates Stanislaus's ability to turn the course of history single-handed. When Stanislaus returns from battle, a beaten and badly wounded soldier, patriotic pride overwhelms love and the bride rejects him scornfully (cf. H III, 296).

Apart from Hermenegilda's excessive patriotism, a further contributing factor to her actions is located within cultural and gender paradigms, namely the alleged moodiness of Polish women (cf. H III, 296 f.). She quickly realizes that she does in fact love Stanislaus and regrets having sent him away. Her feelings of guilt lead to an »overwrought state«, bordering on »pure madness« (»überreizter Zustand«, »heller Wahnsinn«; 297). Her precarious psychological mind-set, an-

¹⁵ »Dem Alten, der ganzen Familie war so zu Mute, als erwachten sie nun erst aus einem bösen spukhaften Traum, der sie sehr geängstet«.

chored in a specific historical situation and cultural setting, is then further heightened by outside developments beyond her control: the appearance of Xaver, the look-alike cousin and emissary of Stanislaus. Xaver falls in love with her and tries to seduce her, »guided by the sure sense of evil inside him«, by talking of his cousin in such a way, »that Hermenegilda in terrible confusion did not know how to separate the two images from each other, that of the absent Stanislaus and that of the present Xaver« (303).¹⁶ Xaver thus embodies both chance in his physical resemblance to Stanislaus, and external evil.

1.1 The Confusion between Dream and Reality

Hermenegilda's confusion between the absent and the present man, in addition to her guilt and desire, culminate in a dream. It is a wish-fulfilling dream which she erroneously perceives as reality, and it is this confusion which leads to her demise. Its narration aesthetically reflects the protagonist's limited knowledge: it is told in two parts, from two different perspectives, the first of which, in its fantastic nature, serves to whet the reader's appetite for the rational explanations provided by the second. First, Hermenegilda informs her father that she is Stanislaus's widow and swears to be forever faithful to him on account of the following dream which to her represents a real event:

You must know that six days ago, at dusk, I was in the pavilion at the south side of our park. All my thoughts, my whole being were turned towards my beloved, and I felt my eyes close involuntarily. I did not sink into sleep, but into a strange state of being I cannot call anything else but dreaming while awake. But soon there was loud movement and noise all around me, I heard a wild tumult, shot after shot close by. I rose and was not a little astonished to find myself in a field hut. In front of me, he himself was kneeling – my Stanislaus. – I embraced him, I pressed him close to my breast – Praise be to God, he cried, you are alive, you are mine! – He told me that immediately after the wedding ceremony I had sunk into a deep faint, and only then did I remember in my stupidity that Father Cyprianus, whom I saw leaving the field hut just then, had married us only a moment ago in the nearby chapel, while the thunder of the canons and the wild tumult of the battle were roaring all around us. The golden wedding ring was gleaming on my finger. The happiness with which I once more embraced my husband was indescribable; I trembled with the unprecedented, inexpressible bliss of an enraptured wife – I fainted – then I was touched by ice-cold frost – I opened my eyes – the horror! in the midst

¹⁶ »von dem sichern Takt fürs Böse im Innern geleitet«, »daß Hermenegilda in arger Verwirrung selbst nicht wußte, wie beide Bilder, das des abwesenden Stanislaus und des gegenwärtigen Xaver, trennen«.

of the tumult of a wild battle – in front of me the burning field hut from which I had presumably been saved! – Stanislaus surrounded by enemy horsemen – friends rushing towards him to save him – too late, from behind a rider strikes him off his horse (H III, 305 f.).¹⁷

Hermenegilda's drifting in and out of consciousness suggests that there might be gaps in her memory of the dream experience. The beginning of the dream functions as a fulfilment of her wish to compensate for her guilt in rejecting Stanislaus by marriage to him. The ending, with the physical proximity of marriage and battle, sex and death, might be read as expressing Hermenegilda's twin passions, patriotic battle and love of Stanislaus. A modern reader might also choose to see death after the consummation of marriage as an unconscious expression of either Hermenegilda's guilt or her desire. In any case, the proximity of sex and death emphasizes the Gothic characteristics of the story.

Why Hermenegilda tells her father this dream six days after she dreamt it is left unexplained – perhaps the reader should assume that the ending of her visionary dream (with Stanislaus being struck down

¹⁷ »Wisse, daß ich vor sechs Tagen in der Abenddämmerung mich in dem Pavillon an der Südseite unseres Parks befand. Alle meine Gedanken, mein ganzes Wesen dem Geliebten zugewendet, fühlt' ich meine Augen sich unwillkürlich schließen, nicht in Schlaf, nein, in einen seltsamen Zustand versank ich, den ich nicht anders nennen kann, als waches Träumen. Aber bald schwirrte und dröhnte es um mich her, ich vernahm ein wildes Getümmel, es fiel ganz in der Nähe Schuß auf Schuß. Ich fuhr auf, und war nicht wenig erstaunt, mich in einer Feldhütte zu befinden. Vor mir kniete er selbst, mein Stanislaus. – Ich umschlang ihn mit meinen Armen, ich drückte ihn an meine Brust – Gelobt sei Gott, rief er, du lebst, du bist mein! – Er sagte mir, ich sei gleich nach der Trauung in tiefe Ohnmacht gesunken, und ich törigt Ding erinnerte mich erst jetzt, daß ja Pater Cyprianus, den ich in diesem Augenblick erst zur Feldhütte hinausschreiten sah, uns ja eben in der nahen Kapelle, unter dem Donner des Geschützes, unter dem wilden Toben der nahen Schlacht getraut hatte. Der goldne Trauring blinkte an meinem Finger. Die Seligkeit, mit der ich nun aufs Neue den Gatten umarmte, war unbeschreiblich; nie gefühltes namenloses Entzücken des beglückten Weibes durchbebt mein Inneres – mir schwanden die Sinne – da wehte es mich an mit eiskaltem Frost – ich schlug die Augen auf – entsetzlich! mitten im Gewühle der wilden Schlacht – vor mir die brennende Feldhütte, aus der man mich wahrscheinlich gerettet! – Stanislaus bedrängt von feindlichen Reitern – Freunde sprengen heran ihn zu retten – zu spät, von hinten haut ihn ein Reiter herab vom Pferde«.

from his horse) did not coincide with his death, and that she felt that his death only occurred six days after she had watched him being struck down. Since Stanislaus has not been seen in months and his death remains unconfirmed at this point in the story, Hermenegilda's dream seems to be a mere nightmare to both her father and the reader, while to Hermenegilda her marriage, its consummation and her husband's death are indisputably real.

When eventually friends and family come to the conclusion that she must be pregnant, and she demonstrates no feelings of guilt or remorse, the contradiction between physical evidence of apparently ›sinful‹ extramarital intercourse and the pure conscience of the protagonist reminds us of Kleist's *Die Marquise von O...* (1808). This intertextual reference signals to the reader that, just as with the Marquise's pregnancy, there is a secret to Hermenegilda's which neither she nor her family yet understand.

1.2 The Supernatural Aspect of the Dream à la G.H. Schubert and Its Critique

When it turns out months later that the time and circumstances of Stanislaus's death were exactly as Hermenegilda had described them in her dream, a supernatural facet comes to the fore (cf. H III, 312). There is no Mesmeric agent involved in Hermenegilda's dream, but the story embodies Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert's (1780–1860) dictum in *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften* (1808) that there is only one step from the special bond which exists beyond time and space between somnambulist and magnetizer to that between lovers which enables the

miraculous knowledge of a distant person about the fate, particularly the death, of a beloved, closely related person. [...] That which is spiritual in us has an effect on all that is kindred to it, unhampered by distance. Often the people who experience such an unusual thing are in a state resembling that of magnetic sleep.¹⁸

¹⁸ »wunderbares Mitwissen eines Entfernten um die Schicksale, vornehmlich aber um den Tod einer geliebten, nahe verwandten Person. [...] Das Geistige in uns [...] wirkt durch keine Entfernung gehindert, auf Alles Verwandte hinüber. Oefters befinden sich dabey die Personen denen ein solcher ungewöhnlicher Zufall begegnet, in einem dem magnetischen Schlaf ähnlichen Zustand«; Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der*

The way Hermenegilda describes entering into the dream state, her use of the term »dreaming while awake« (»waches Träumen«; H III, 305) and her drifting between states of deeper unconsciousness and heightened consciousness would confirm that she was in a state of somnambulism closely modelled on Schubert:

The state of actual somnambulism itself first ensues with the symptoms which precede ordinary sleep, especially after exerting oneself. [...] When however, after a period of longer or shorter duration in this intermediate state, [...] the expression becomes more cheerful, and the face betrays a degree of severe mental tension, full somnambulism has usually commenced. The sick [...] describe their own condition as the most blessed they have ever experienced.¹⁹

The ability to see and to move with closed eyes is also a characteristic of somnambulism, as described by Schubert.²⁰ But it turns out that Hermenegilda's somnambulist dream experience, with her apparently clairvoyant witnessing of Stanislaus's death, has an additional aspect not contained in Schubert's definition. She has had an external onlooker and ›participant‹ she was not aware of, and one who exploited the opportunity offered to him by the somnambulant woman's dream: Xaver. His close physical resemblance to Stanislaus, Hermenegilda's guilt at rejecting her lover, her passionate nature and Xaver's ruthless exploitation of the opportunity by impersonating Stanislaus to the somnambulant woman all contribute to Hermenegilda's inability to distinguish dream from reality.

Naturwissenschaften. Karben: Petra Wald 1997 [repr. of the edition Dresden: Arnold 1808], 350.

¹⁹ »Der Zustand des eigentlichen Somnambulismus selber, tritt Anfangs mit jenen Zeichen ein, die dem gewöhnlichen Schlaf, besonders nach einer Anstrengung vorausgehen. [Die Glieder sinken ermattet, die Augenlieder können nicht mehr offen gehalten werden. Endlich schließen sich die Augen, gemeiniglich mit einem tiefem Odemholen. Der Gefühl- und bewußtlose Zustand, welcher jetzt zuerst eintritt, ist dem gewöhnlichen Schlaf sehr ähnlich. [...] Wenn aber nach einer mehr oder minder langen Dauer dieses Zwischenzustandes abermals ein tiefes Odemhohlen bemerkt wird, wenn jetzt sich auf einmal die Gesichtszüge ungemein erheitern, und alle Mienen eine gewisse hohe geistige Spannung verrathen, ist gewöhnlich der eigentliche Somnambulismus eingetreten. Die Kranken [beantworten nun alle ihnen vorgelegten Fragen mit einer Klarheit und Lebhaftigkeit des Geistes, die man sonst nie an ihnen bemerkte. Sie] beschreiben ihren Zustand selber als den seeligsten den sie jemals erfahren«; G.H. Schubert (note 18), 332 f.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 338 f.

Xaver is as impetuous as Kleist's Count F. in first giving in to his sexual desire for the dreaming woman and then wanting to make amends. He insists on marrying her – on the very day he tells her of Stanislaus's death. Yet he clearly has a more vicious streak than Kleist's count. On having his offer of marriage rejected by Hermenegilda, who had sworn eternal faithfulness to Stanislaus, he cruelly reveals his part in her pregnancy: »you were and will remain *my* par-amour, if I do not elevate you to be my wife« (H III, 314).²¹ Subsequently, he gives a more detailed account of his involvement in Hermenegilda's dream:

In the pavilion I found Hermenegilda in a strange state I cannot describe. She was lying apparently fast asleep and dreaming on the couch. Hardly had I entered when she rose, came towards me, took me by the hand and walked ceremoniously through the pavilion. Then she knelt, I did the same, she prayed and I soon realized that she saw a priest before us in her mind's eye. She took a ring from her finger which she gave to the priest. I took it and put a golden ring, pulled from my finger, onto hers. Then she sank with the most ardent passion into my arms – When I fled, she lay in deep unconscious slumber (H III, 314).²²

The reader will have noticed that here Hoffmann reproduces Kleist's famous dash from *Die Marquise von O...*. But since Xaver uses the superlative of the adjective ›inbrünstig‹ (ardent) just before the dash, and Hermenegilda's pregnancy is already well known to everybody at the time he narrates this, the punctuation holds few secrets for either the protagonists or the reader.

While the secret of the Marquise's pregnancy was hidden from her consciousness in a fainting fit, Hermenegilda's is hidden in her dream experience. Thus Hoffmann capitalizes on the joke in Kleist's story between the Marquise and her mother (before they actually be-

²¹ »*meine* Buhlschaft warst du und bleibst du, wenn ich dich nicht erhebe zu meiner Gattin«.

²² »In dem Pavillon traf ich Hermenegilda in einem seltsamen Zustande, den ich nicht zu beschreiben vermag. Sie lag wie festschlafend und träumend auf dem Kanapee. Kaum war ich eingetreten, als sie sich erhob, auf mich zukam, mich bei der Hand ergriff und feierlichen Schritts durch den Pavillon ging. Dann kniete sie nieder, ich tat ein gleiches, sie betete und ich bemerkte bald, daß sie im Geiste einen Priester vor uns sah. Sie zog einen Ring vom Finger, den sie dem Priester darreichte, ich nahm ihn und steckte ihr einen goldenen Ring an, den ich von meinem Finger zog, dann sank sie mit der inbrünstigsten Liebe in meine Arme – Als ich entfloh, lag sie in tiefem bewußtlosen Schlaf«.

lieve that the Marquise is pregnant) that the Marquise would give birth to Phantasus or Morpheus,²³ the mythological dream gods and sons of Hypnos, the God of sleep.

The fact that in *Das Gelübde* the dream proves to have disastrous consequences, despite the story's verification of Hermenegilda's supernatural connection with her beloved, does not mean that Hoffmann, here or in general, disempowers the dreamer or wants to convey that all dreaming subjects lack control over their lives and are at the mercy of unconscious urges, »which cannot be comprehended through rational concepts«,²⁴ as Peter-André Alt put it in his book on dreams. Rather, Hoffmann explores how and why a particular desire is transformed into a dream, and why the dreamer was unable to distinguish dream from reality. Excessive idealism, insufficient understanding of the historical situation and an overestimation of the power of the individual to shape historical events (both by the dreamer and in her wider environment) are shown to lead to inappropriate actions which subsequently cause guilt and then the desire to expiate this guilt.

Rather than depicting lack of understanding as a general and insurmountable human condition, Hoffmann makes it historically, culturally and individually specific. In trying to make the reader understand how a compensatory dream arose from specific circumstances, he demonstrates that the dream is connected to the dreamer's life, and thus accessible to rational explanation – even if the protagonist did not make that connection herself at the time. However, the necessity of making a distinction between dream and reality is implicitly posited as the precondition for mental health and appropriate judgement.

1.3 Critical Analysis of the Factors Preventing Appropriate Judgement

Appropriate judgement is not only theoretically important to Hoffmann, but was in fact exercised by him on a daily basis, which is evi-

²³ Heinrich von Kleist, »Die Marquise von O...«. In: idem, *Erzählungen, Anekdoten, Gedichte, Schriften*. Ed. by Klaus Müller-Salget (*Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*. Ed. by Ilse-Marie Barth et al., vol. III). Frankfurt/M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1990, 143–186, here 149.

²⁴ »die sich mit den Begriffen der Vernunft nicht fassen lassen«; Peter-André Alt, *Der Schlaf der Vernunft: Literatur und Traum in der Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit*. Munich: Beck 2002, 283.

dent from his *Juristische Schriften*. In *Der Fall Wilhelm S.* (H VI, 641–657), for example, we can see his sharp mind at work in assessing (and rejecting) the accused's claim of diminished responsibility because of »a lack of consciousness due to drink« in which he was »unable to recognize his own actions or those of others« (H VI, 647).²⁵ In highlighting the negative consequences of inappropriate judgements, in this story as well as in *Der Sandmann* and *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.*, Hoffmann's texts align themselves with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). That Hoffmann knew and valued Kant is evident from his reference to Kant's *Anthropologie* (1798) §41 in his assessment of the case of Schmolling (H VI, 691–730, here 699). In the Schmolling case he sides with Kant in the view that madness is better assessed by a psychologist than a physician.

For the analysis of this story, I believe another text by Kant can be illuminating. In his essay of 1764 on *Maladies of the Mind*,²⁶ Kant examines the different ways in which an individual's power of judgement may be impaired. He first distinguishes mental defects which are despised and ridiculed by society (»Narrheit«/foolishness and »Torheit«/stupidity), from those which arouse pity and require care (»Blödsinnigkeit«/lack of reason and »gestörtes Gemüt«/disturbed mind). »Blödsinnigkeit« or lack of reason is regarded as incurable. In the category of »gestörtes Gemüt« (disturbed mind) Kant distinguishes »Verrückung« (derangement), »Wahnsinn« (madness) and »Wahnwitz« (delusion).²⁷

Hermenegilda's case bears close resemblance to Kant's definition of the derangement of a disturbed mind:

The mind of every human being, even in the most healthy state, is occupied with painting all kinds of images of things which are not present, or with finishing off some incomplete similarities with present things in the imagination, by means of one or another chimerical feature which the creative ability for poetry impresses on the sensibility. There is no reason to believe that in the waking state our mind follows different laws from in sleep; rather, one can presume that in the former case only the lively sensuous impressions make the

²⁵ »einer durch Trunk veranlaßten Bewußtlosigkeit«, »keiner Wahrnehmung eigener oder fremder Handlungen fähig«.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, »Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes«. In: idem, *Sämmtliche Werke: In chronologischer Reihenfolge*. Ed. by Gustav Hartenstein, vol. II. Leipzig: Leopold Voss 1867, 211–225.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

more delicate images of the chimera darker and less recognizable, whereas in sleep, during which all external impressions are barred from access to the mind, they possess their full strength. Thus it is no wonder that dreams, while they are lasting, are taken for true experiences of real things. Since they are at that time the strongest perceptions in the mind, they are precisely what sensations are in the waking state. If we now presume that certain chimera, for whatever reason, have damaged one or the other part of the brain in such a way that an impression made on them would be as deep and as real as a sensuous experience can make, then this spectre of the imagination will have to be taken by a healthy mind as a real experience even in the state of waking. For it would be in vain to oppose a sensation or the kind of perception which equals it in strength with reason, since the senses yield much greater conviction than a reasoned argument. At least the person who is charmed by this chimera can never be convinced by reasoning to doubt the reality of his alleged sensation.²⁸

›Verrückung‹ (derangement), according to Kant, is the ability of the mentally ill person ›to imagine certain things as clearly perceived, of

²⁸ »Die Seele eines jeden Menschen ist selbst in dem gesundesten Zustande geschäftig, allerlei Bilder von Dingen, die nicht gegenwärtig sind, zu malen, oder auch an der Vorstellung gegenwärtiger Dinge einige unvollkommene Aehnlichkeit zu vollenden, durch einen oder andern chimärischen Zug, den die schöpferische Dichtungsfähigkeit mit in die Empfindung einzeichnet. Man hat gar nicht Ursache zu glauben, dass in dem Zustande des Wachens unser Geist hiebei andere Gesetze befolge, als im Schlafe; es ist vielmehr zu vermuthen, dass nur die lebhaften sinnlichen Eindrücke in dem ersten Falle die zärteren Bilder der Chimären verdunkeln und unkenntlich machen, anstatt dass diese im Schlafe ihre ganze Stärke haben, in welchem allen äusserlichen Eindrücken der Zugang zu der Seele verschlossen ist. Es ist daher kein Wunder, dass Träume, so lange sie dauern, für wahrhafte Erfahrungen wirklicher Dinge gehalten werden. Denn da sie alsdann in der Seele die stärksten Vorstellungen sind, so sind sie in diesem Zustande eben das, was im Wachen die Empfindungen sind. Man setze nun, dass gewisse Chimären, durch welche Ursache es auch sei, gleichsam eine oder andere Organe des Gehirns verletzt hatten, dermassen, dass der Eindruck auf dieselben eben so tief, und zugleich eben so richtig geworden wäre, als ihn eine sinnliche Empfindung nur machen kann, so wird dieses Hirngespensst selbst im Wachen bei guter gesunder Vernunft dennoch für eine wirkliche Erfahrung gehalten werden müssen. Denn es wäre umsonst, einer Empfindung, oder derjenigen Vorstellung, die ihr an Stärke gleich kömmt, Vernunftgründe entgegenzusetzen, weil von wirklichen Dingen die Sinne weit grössere Ueberzeugung geben, als ein Vernunftschluss; zum wenigsten kann derjenige, den diese Chimäre bezaubert, niemals durch Vernünfteln dahin gebracht werden, an der Wirklichkeit seiner vermeinten Empfindung zu zweifeln‹; *ibid.*, 218 f.

which there is nevertheless nothing present«. ²⁹ »The deranged person is thus a waking dreamer«. ³⁰ That there is considerable overlap between Enlightenment and Romantic anthropology is evidenced by the fact that Kant and Johann Christian Reil (1759–1813) are really quite close in what they say about the dreamer and his sense of vivid reality. ³¹ Hoffmann's artists are such waking dreamers. Yet, in order to produce great art, they need to be aware of their own dreams, that is, of the way their imagination is triggered by reality. This dual perspec-

²⁹ »gewisse Dinge als klar empfunden sich vorzustellen, von denen gleichwohl nichts gegenwärtig ist«; *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁰ »Der Verrückte ist also ein Träumer im Wachen«; *ibid.*, 219.

³¹ Cf. the overlapping of Kant's with Reil's assessment of the dream: »Der Traum ist Produkt eines partiellen Wachens des Nervensystems. [...] Entweder die Phantasie wacht allein, oder einzelne Sinnesorgane, das Bewegungsvermögen u.s.w. wachen mit. Daher der Unterschied zwischen Traum, Schlafreden, Nachtwandeln. Das Selbstbewußtsein wankt in seinen sämtlichen Verhältnissen. Die Phantasie ebet und fluthet in sich selbst, kein Eindruck der Sinne zügelt sie mehr. Der Träumer hat gar keine Vorstellung seiner Objektivität, und sein Subjekt denkt er sich falsch. Er hält seine Gesichte für reale Objekte [...] Er hält weder die wirkliche Zeit noch den wahren Ort fest, ist bald in der Vorzeit bald in der Zukunft; unter Todten und Lebendigen; durchfliegt Parasangen des Raums in einem Augenblick, und hüpfet von einem Welttheil in einen andern über. Die Intensität der Kräfte ist in dem Maaße gestiegen als ihre Extensität beschränkt ist. Die Bilder der Phantasie haben die Stärke der Sinnesanschauungen. Ihr Colorit ist grell. Die Scenen sind wie vom Tageslicht erleuchtet, wenn Tagesscenen geträumt werden« (»The dream is the product of a state of partial wakefulness of the nervous system. [...] Either the imagination alone is awake, or individual sense organs, the ability to move etc., are also awake. Thus the difference between dream, talking in one's sleep, sleep walking. All facets of self-consciousness are in flux. The imagination ebbs and flows within itself, no impression from the senses reins it in any longer. The dreamer has no idea of his objectivity, and he conceives his subject in the wrong way. He takes his visions for real objects [...] He fixes neither on real time nor on actual place, one minute he is far back in the past and then he is in the future; among the dead and the living; he flies through vast space in an instant, and hops from one part of the world to another. The intensity of his powers has increased in proportion to the restriction of their extent. The images of fantasy have the force of sense perceptions. Their colouring is bright. The scenes are illuminated as if lit by daylight when daytime scenes are being dreamt«); Johann Christian Reil, *Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethode auf Geisteszerrüttungen: dem Herrn Prediger Wagnitz zugeeignet*. Halle: Curtsche Buchhandlung, 1803, 92.

tive Hoffmann calls ›duplicity‹ (»Duplicität«; H IV, 68) or the Serapionic principle. According to the discussion of the Serapionsbrüder:

There is an inner world and the mental power to view it in full clarity, in the most perfect glow of vivid life, but it is our earthly inheritance that the outside world in which we are placed functions as a lever which sets that power in motion. The internal appearances are encompassed by the circle which the external ones form around us and which the mind can only soar above in dark mysterious intuitions which never take the shape of a clear picture (H IV, 68).³²

Das Gelübde takes the Kantian notion of ›Urteilkraft‹ (judgement) to a point where the protagonist's failure to exercise it can arouse sympathy in the clear-headed reader. For Hermenegilda's dream experience suggests that there may be borderline situations in which internal guilt and external deception meet and prevent even an otherwise intelligent rational being from arriving at a proper judgement. In other words, Hermenegilda represents an exceptional case which demonstrates the possibility of deception in a guilt-ridden, passionate and intelligent woman in pressing political circumstances – not the impossibility of arriving at appropriate judgements per se.

1.4 Hoffmann's Merging of Kant and Schubert in the Exploration of Dreams

In a fictional experiment, Hoffmann's story has added another layer to Kant's definition of deranged judgment: Hermenegilda's wish of marrying Stanislaus is one she acts out unconsciously in her somnambulistic state. But it is Xaver interacting with the somnambulant Hermenegilda in order to achieve his own gratification, by pretending to be Stanislaus, who represents another major factor in blurring the boundary between dream and reality for her. Hoffmann thus merges, on the one hand, Kant's insistence on the distinction between dream and reality, with, on the other hand, ideas of Mesmerism or animal magnetism that were popularized by Schubert among others. While drawing on

³² »Es gibt eine innere Welt, und die geistige Kraft, sie in voller Klarheit, in dem vollendetsten Glanze des regesten Lebens zu schauen, aber es ist unser irdisches Erbteil, daß eben die Außenwelt in der wir eingeschachtet, als der Hebel wirkt, der jene Kraft in Bewegung setzt. Die inneren Erscheinungen gehen auf in dem Kreis, den die äußern um uns bilden und den der Geist nur zu überfliegen vermag in dunklen geheimnisvollen Ahnungen, die sich nie zum deutlichen Bilde gestalten«.

the Romantic fascination with somnambulism, and accepting the Romantic anthropological claims for a spiritual connection beyond space and time as accurate, *Das Gelübde* explores a different feature of this fascination: the possibility that it is exploited for selfish ends and that this damages the somnambulist. The thirst for power over a somnambulist is something Hoffmann had already thematized in *Der Magnetiseur*, which forms part of his *Fantasiestücke* of 1814. I would argue that the dream in *Das Gelübde* is indebted both to Kant's rationalism and to the Romantic claim of the spirit transcending time and space, but that it focuses on the dark side of the Romantic tenet and awakens understanding for the victim.

Many critics have read Hoffmann as demonstrating that rationality is powerless and that the irrational holds sway. My reading, by contrast, emphasizes Hoffmann's text as an exploration of various possible shortcomings which the reader is to contemplate and learn from. On the basis of this reading I propose a more differentiated generalization than those of Lauer and Schmitz-Emans, namely that many of Hoffmann's literary dreams explore the limitations of both unbridled imagination and narrow-minded reason.

1.5 The Need for Level-Headedness

The need for ›Besonnenheit‹ (level-headedness), a key term in Hoffmann's poetics, is something Hoffmann derives not only from Kant, but also from Johann Christian Reil, from whose *Rhapsodien über die Anwendung der psychischen Curmethode auf Geisteszerrüttungen* (1803) he quotes extensively, and with approval, in his legal assessment of the Schmolling case. Reil defines ›Besonnenheit‹ as the

continuation of the mind's ability to perceive during exertion, and is founded on a sensitivity to strange impressions which the inner and outer sense still retains while concentrating on other things. The mind changes its activities. [...] It changes them according to rules with which level-headedness provides it. Hence the apparent spontaneity in the use of its powers according to the demands of reason.³³

³³ »Fortdauer des Wahrnehmungsvermögens der Seele, während ihrer Anstrengungen, und [sie] gründet sich auf eine Irritabilität für fremde Eindrücke, die dem inneren und äußeren Sinn noch zur Zeit übrig ist, wo er auf ganz andere Dinge haftet. Die Seele wechselt ihre Geschäfte. [...] Sie wechselt dieselben nach Regeln, die ihr die Besonnenheit an die Hand giebt. Daher die scheinbare

In other words, ›Besonnenheit‹ is the elasticity of mind which permits a focus on one thing while preserving sufficient peripheral vision to notice everything which might impact on this focus. That a balance between ›enthusiasm‹ and ›level-headedness‹ is not only desirable, but also possible, is something Hoffmann tries to convey in the literary texts that function as the constructive counterparts to those which explore the fatal consequences of its absence in a fictional hero's demise. I have already discussed *Der Sandmann* and *Das öde Haus* elsewhere as such complementary pieces, exploring a similar problem with regard to the protagonists' differing attitudes to the marvellous.³⁴

2. *Prinzessin Brambilla* – Dream as the Beginning of the Protagonist's Transformation

In respect of dreams, I would contrast *Das Gelübde* with *Prinzessin Brambilla* (1820). The latter situates the protagonist's dream at the very beginning of the story in a synthetic comic narrative, in which the appropriate understanding of the dream and its integration into Giglio's everyday life as an actor constitute the plot of a highly complex and fantastic tale – a Romantic variant of the *Bildungsroman*.

On seeing his beloved, the seamstress Giacinta, in the dress she was sewing for a princess, Giglio recognizes her as identical to the princess he had dreamt of the night before:

»Let me tell you,« he began, »my lovely child, my sweet life, what a fantastic dream I had last night, when I had flung myself on my couch, weary and worn out by the part of Prince Taer, which, as you know, and the world knows likewise, I play with outstanding excellence. I fancied I was still on the stage, quarreling bitterly with that dirty miser, the impresario, who obstinately refused to advance me a miserable couple of ducats. He loaded me with all manner of stupid reproaches; I tried to defend myself better by making a fine gesture, but my hand unexpectedly struck the impresario's right cheek, producing the melodious sound of a good slap. The impresario promptly assaulted me with a large knife; as I retreated, my beautiful Prince's cap fell on the ground, the cap that you, my sweet hope, adorned so nicely with the fairest feathers ever plucked from an ostrich. The monster, the barbarian, seized upon it in his rage, and stabbed the poor thing with his knife, so that it writhed and

Spontaneität in dem Gebrauche ihrer Kräfte nach den Forderungen der Vernunft«; J.C. Reil (note 31), 98 f.

³⁴ Cf. R. Schmidt (note 2, 1999).

whimpered at my feet in the agony of death. I wanted – I was compelled – to avenge the unfortunate cap. Throwing my cloak over my left arm, and drawing my princely sword, I assailed the infamous murderer. He, however, fled swiftly into a house, and from its balcony he fired at me with Truffaldino's rifle. Strangely enough, the flash of the fire-arm stopped in mid-air and shone upon me like sparkling diamonds. And as the smoke gradually dispersed, I realized that what I had taken for the flash of Truffaldino's rifle was nothing but the precious adornment of a lady's hat. O all ye gods! All ye seven blessed heavens! A sweet voice said – no, sang! – no, breathed out the fragrance of love in musical sounds: »Oh, Giglio, my Giglio!« And I beheld a being of such heavenly grace, such lofty charm, that the scorching sirocco of ardent love shot through all my veins and nerves, and the fiery stream turned into lava surging forth from the volcano of my flaming heart. »I am«, said the goddess, drawing closer, »I am the Princess ...«³⁵

³⁵ E.T.A. Hoffmann, »Princess Brambilla«. In: idem, *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*. Trans. by Ritchie Robertson. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics 2008, 119–238, here 125 f.; »Laß dir's erzählen, mein holdes Kind, mein süßes Leben, welch ein märchenhafter Traum mir gestern Nachts aufging, als ich ganz müde und ermattet von der Rolle des Prinzen Taer, den ich, du weißt es, eben so die Welt, über alle Maßen vortrefflich spiele, mich auf mein Lager geworfen. Mich dünkte, ich sei noch auf der Bühne und zankte sehr mit dem schmutzigen Geizhals von Impressario, der mir ein paar lumpige Dukaten Vorschuß hartnäckig verweigerte. Er überhäufte mich mit allerlei dummen Vorwürfen; da wollte ich, um mich besser zu verteidigen, einen schönen Gestus machen, meine Hand traf aber unversehends des Impressario rechte Wange, so daß dabei Klang und Melodie einer derben Ohrfeige herauskam; der Impressario ging ohne weiteres mit einem großen Messer auf mich los, ich wich zurück und dabei fiel meine schöne Prinzen-Mütze, die du selbst, mein süßes Hoffen, so artig mit den schönsten Federn schmücktest, die jemals einem Strauß entrupft, zu Boden. In voller Wut warf sich der Unmensch, der Barbar über sie her und durchstach die Ärmste mit dem Messer, daß sie sich im qualvollen Sterben winselnd zu meinen Füßen krümmte. – Ich wollte – mußte die Unglückliche rächen. Den Mantel über den linken Arm geworfen, das fürstliche Schwert gezückt, drang ich ein auf den ruchlosen Mörder. Der floh aber schnell in ein Haus und drückte vom Balkon herunter Truffaldinos Flinte auf mich ab. Seltsam war es, daß der Blitz des Feuergewehrs stehen blieb und mich anstrahlte wie funkelnde Diamanten. Und so wie sich mehr und mehr der Dampf verlor, gewahrte ich wohl, daß das, was ich für den Blitz von Truffaldinos Flinte gehalten, nichts anderes war als der köstliche Schmuck am Hütlein einer Dame – O all' ihr Götter! ihr seligen Himmel allesamt! – eine süße Stimme sprach – nein! sang – nein! hauchte Liebesduft in Klang und Ton – »O Giglio – mein Giglio!« – Und ich schaute ein Wesen in solch göttlichem Liebreiz, in solch hoher Anmut, daß der sengende Scirocco inbrünstiger Liebe mir durch alle Adern und Nerven fuhr und der Glutstrom erstarre zur Lava, die dem Vulkan des aufflammenden Herzens

Here we have the metamorphoses that are so characteristic of the dream, told in the mock-heroic style of the *commedia dell'arte*. The dreamer sees the sparkle of a shot fired from Truffaldino's rifle (Truffaldino was one of the famous servants in the *commedia dell'arte*) turn into the jewellery on the hat of a lady who introduces herself as a princess. The fireworks of imagination and sexuality thus produce a princess out of thin air. But unlike Novalis's dream of the blue flower, this dream is not teleological.

Giglio's dream is repeatedly referred to as his »Traumbild« (H III, 793, 794, 802, 809, 852). The term »dream image« here conveys his desire for an ideal. Giglio is encouraged to pursue his ideal by the magician Celionati who acts as the »director« of Giglio's education and who provides him with a purse which magically refills itself. On it is embroidered the motto Giglio is to adopt: »remember your dream image« (»Gedenke Deines Traumbildes«; 802). But the text does not make it the task of the protagonist to find fulfilment in the possession of his ideal. Rather, his task is to recognize the simultaneity of the dream/ideal and the real. Thus in a fantastic carnival with a variety of costumes and masks, and a dizzying array of different narrative levels, Giglio eventually learns, after many setbacks and half-hearted attempts for which he is given dreamlike punishments, that Giacinta Soardi and Princess Brambilla, the real woman and the idealized woman, are two sides of the same (human) coin. He also has to shed the vain self of the tragic actor and develop enough self-irony to laugh at himself and see himself simultaneously as Prince Cornelio Chiapperi and Giglio Fava.

Thus the doubling itself is doubled, as both Giglio and Giacinta have to recognize themselves as well as the other in their double aspect of potentiality and reality. This doubling is projected even further into myth, by reflecting the learning curve Giglio and Giacinta have to go through in the mythic tale of King Ophioch and Queen Liris, as well as Princess Mystilis in Urdargarten. They gain insight by looking at their reflection in the Urdarquelle. »Reflection« and »level-headedness« are the key terms often overlooked in Hoffmann because

entquellen – »Ich bin«, sprach die Göttin, sich mir nahend, »ich bin die Prinzessin« (H III, 776 f.).

he is exceptional in German literature in combining them with such an exuberant imagination.

3. Conclusion

While in Novalis's fiction the dream shows the dreamer his future development allegorically,³⁶ in Hoffmann the prophetic function of the dream, if it is there at all, is much more indirect. I would argue that behind the prismatic multiplicity of dreams in Hoffmann lies the principle that the dreamer has to work hard to understand and to integrate the dream into his or her life. This may end in failure (as for Nathanael, Ellis Fröbom, Berthold, Hermenegilda and others) or success (for the eponymous Ritter Gluck, Theodor in *Das öde Haus* and Giglio).

Dreams in Hoffmann's fiction can only offer vital insights to the dreamer if used judiciously, if both external and internal conditions allow a balance between imagination and judgement. If the dreamer fails to reach the balance, then the reader is invited to ascertain why. Borgards and Neumeyer argue that Enlightenment and Romanticism should not be viewed as diametrically opposed tendencies, but rather as an interlinked project. They see the fascination with the night as »the joint project of enlightened science and Romantic literature [...]: science and literature bring the night into the subject in order to discover it there – as the condition of the dual nature of man«. ³⁷ I would

³⁶ Cf. among others, Harald Neumeyer, »Traum-Literatur um 1800: Körperreize, Psychenbilder und die Macht des Wortes«. In: Markus Dauss/Ralf Hackel (ed.), *Leib/Seele – Geist/Buchstabe: Dualismen in der Ästhetik und den Künsten um 1800 und 1900*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2009, 59–80.

³⁷ Roland Borgards/Harald Neumeyer, »Der Mensch in der Nacht – die Nacht im Menschen: Aufgeklärte Wissenschaft und romantische Literatur«. In: *Athenäum* 11 (2001), 13–39, here 39: »das gemeinsame Projekt von aufgeklärter Wissenschaft und romantischer Literatur [...]: Wissenschaft und Literatur tragen die Nacht in das Ich hinein, um sie dort – als Bedingung des Doppelwesen [sic] Mensch – zu entdecken«. By contrast, Kinzler posits a sharp caesura between concepts of the dream in Enlightenment and Romanticism; Sonja Kinzler, »Wenn sich die Seele »ihrer Gewalt über die Maschine nicht bedienen« kann: Der Schlaf in Aufklärung und Romantik«. In: Hannah Ahlheim (ed.), *Kontrollgewinn – Kontrollverlust: Die Geschichte des Schlafs in der Moderne*. Frankfurt/M., New York: Campus, 2014, 25–35, here 32. For the impact of a slightly later his-

see Hoffmann's literary dreams as part of this project: multifaceted experiments exploring the origin and the understanding of dreams (or lack thereof), and the ensuing consequences of this understanding. They attempt to throw light on the dark recesses of the human mind, and challenge narrow-minded shallow rationalism as much as woolly mysticism.

torical constellation, the experience of history as contingency one cannot control, on the motif of the state of dreamless exhaustion cf. Ingo Uhlig, »Die helle Seite der Träume: Schlaf und Traum um 1800«. In: H. Ahlheim, 37–50.