

REVIEW OF THE COLLECTION *FASCINATION: E.T.A. HOFFMANN*

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Structure and Content

Svetla Cherpokova, the compiler of the collection, has skillfully structured the edition into seven thematic parts called “Vigils”, inspired by the structure of Hoffmann’s “The Golden Pot” (Cherpokova 2024). This structure gives the collection depth and consistency in the study of Hoffmann’s work, with each part examining different aspects of his work and influence.

In the first *Vigil* entitled “The Hoffmann Magic,” Bernhard Schemmel analyzes the magical elements in works such as “Little Zaches” (Schemmel 2024). Schemmel examines how Hoffmann uses magical motifs to comment on social and political themes. Christina Schmitz presents *The E.T.A. Hoffmann Archive and the E.T.A. Hoffmann Portal of the Berlin State Library* (Schmitz 2024). Schmitz shows the wealth of resources dedicated to Hoffmann and their accessibility to researchers.

In the second *Vigil*, “Fantastical Visions and Interpretations”, Kamelia Nikolova analyzes Teddy Moskov’s theatrical interpretations of “Little Zaches Called Cinnabar” (Nikolova 2024). Nikolova explores how Moskov transfers Hoffmann’s fantastic world to the stage. Anna Topaldzhikova depicts Hoffmann’s fantastical visions as a challenge to modern dramaturgy and theater (Topaldzhikova 2024). She emphasizes the visions and the way they inspire new theatrical forms and interpretations.

The third *Vigil*, “Sociocultural (De/Re)constructions”, includes an article by Dimitar Kambourov, who examines Hoffmann between Zaches and Cinnabar in the context of post-Romantic publicity and the culture of post-truth (Kambourov 2024). Kambourov analyzes Hoffmann anticipation of some of the contemporary social phenomena. Mladen Vlashki presents “Sonderbare Begegnungen... in Prag und in Sofia” (Vlashki 2024). Vlashki describes the cultural connections and influences between these two cities. Darin Tenev

discusses Hoffmann and the *cats of deconstruction* (Tenev 2024). Tenev explores how Hoffmann uses cats as a symbol for the deconstruction of social norms.

The fourth *Vigil*, “Literary Parallels” includes an article by Ognyan Kovachev, who examines *The Anxiety of Gothic Kinship: Generic and Aesthetic Heterogeneity in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Novel The Devil’s Elixirs* (Kovachev 2024). Kovachev draws parallels between the Gothic elements in Hoffmann’s work and British Gothic literature. Ivan Popov explores the influences of trivial literature from the 18th and early 19th centuries in Hoffmann’s work (Popov 2024). Popov depicts Hoffmann’s uses of elements from the popular literature to enrich the narrative. Vitana Kostadinova draws literary parallels between E.T.A. Hoffmann and the English Romantics (Kostadinova 2024). She examines the common themes and motifs in the works of Hoffmann and the English Romantics.

The fifth *Vigil*, “The Elixirs of the Doppelgänger,” includes an article by Boris Minkov, who examines the reception of “The Devil’s Elixirs” in the translation by Panayot Chinkov (Minkov 2024). Minkov analyzes in what way Chinkov’s translation influenced the perception of the novel in Bulgaria. Kamelia Spassova discusses *Das Unheimliche, the Mimetic Machines and the Negative Anagnorisis* (Spassova 2024). Spassova explores how Hoffmann uses the motifs of the uncanny and the double. Iliya Tochev makes observations on the dichotomy and the doppelgänger by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Knut Hamsun (Tochev 2024). Tochev compares the two authors in the themes of dichotomy and the double.

The sixth *Vigil*, “Temporal Optics,” includes an article by Cleo Protokhristova on Temporal Designations in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s works – *Idiosyncrasies and Subversion* (Protokhristova 2024). Protokhristova analyzes the uses of time as an element for undermining social norms. Laska Laskova examines *The Golden Pot: A Modern Fairytale of Tenses. Grammatical Notes* (Laskova 2024). Laskova explores how Hoffmann uses time to create a sense of harmony and ideal. Maria Endreva describes retrotopia as an ideological instrument of Romanticism in “Little Zaches Called Cinnabar” (Endreva 2024). Endreva explores Hoffmann retrotopia as a comment on contemporary issues. Elitsa Dubarova inspects *Techniques of awakening. Reflections on the narrative and theoretical dimensions of optics in the works of Hoffmann and Musil* (Dubarova 2024). Dubarova compares the two authors’ use of optics as a metaphor for insight.

The seventh *Vigil*, “Extraliterary Extensions,” includes an article by Svetla Cherpokova, who scans *Little Zaches Called Cinnabar – Extraliterary References in Bulgaria (1989 – 2010)* (Cherpokova 2024). She analyzes the Hoffmann’s work in political and social contexts in Bulgaria. Iliana

Eldarova evolves *The International Scientific Interdisciplinary Forum “Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann in Bulgaria” in the context of Cultural Policy and Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture 2019* (Eldarova 2024). Eldarova shows the forum contribution to the popularization of Hoffmann’s work and cultural exchange.

Scientific Contribution

The collection demonstrates a high scientific standard due to the participation of established specialists from Bulgaria and abroad, as well as the trilingual format (Bulgarian-German/English), which makes it accessible to an international audience. The interdisciplinary approach, which combines literary studies, theater studies, cultural studies, and philosophy is particularly valuable.

Among the strongest aspects of the collection are the in-depth analyses of key works such as “Little Zaches” and “The Devil’s Elixirs,” the study of the influences between Bulgarian culture and Hoffmann’s work, and the introduction of new interpretations of the themes of doubling, the fantastic, and time in Romantic literature.

Style and Layout

The collection impresses with its attention to detail in both content and visual design. Lyubomir Mihailov has created a stylish graphic design that complements the theme of the publication. The bilingual format is executed professionally, with translations by established specialists.

Conclusion

“Fascination: E.T.A. Hoffmann” is a significant contribution to the study of European Romantic literature and culture with a particular emphasis on the reception of Hoffmann in Bulgaria. The collection is suitable for both specialists in the field of literary studies and a wide range of readers interested in Romanticism and its legacy. This publication not only marks important anniversaries related to the life and work of Hoffmann, but also affirms his role as an inspiring cultural phenomenon in a global context.

I recommend the collection as a valuable resource for academic libraries, university courses in literature and cultural studies and for any lover of Romantic literature.

Acknowledgements and Conference Information

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Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for hosting the international scientific conference “E.T.A. Hoffmann in Bulgaria”, held on November 28 – 29, 2019, in Plovdiv. The conference was dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the publication of the novella “Little Zaches Called Cinnabar” (1819) and brought together researchers from Bulgaria, Germany, and other countries.

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