

A STUDY OF THE MAJOR NOVELLAS OF
E. T. A. Hoffmann

Birgit Röder

A Study of the Major Novellas of E. T. A. Hoffmann

The German Romantic writer and composer E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) is perhaps best known to the English speaking world through Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, which was based on the novella *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*, and through Jacques Offenbach's opera *Tales of Hoffmann*. During his lifetime, Hoffmann struggled to convince his predominantly bourgeois public of the merits of art and literature. Not surprisingly, many of his most important novellas are bound up with the dilemmas of art and the challenges faced by the Romantic artist, and it is these *Künstlernovellen* that are the focus of this study. Birgit Röder argues that Hoffmann's artists are not simply individuals who create works of art, but rather figures through whom the author explores the predicament of those who reject the conventional world of bourgeois reality and seek to assert the claims of the imagination in a world dominated by prosaic rationalism. Contrary to previous scholars however, Röder demonstrates that Hoffmann's novellas clearly warn against a view of art as an autonomous aesthetic realm cut off from the world of reality. This is particularly apparent in Röder's analysis of gender relations in Hoffmann's oeuvre — especially the relationship between (male) artist and (female) muse — which underlines the extent to which art, literature, and the imagination are inseparably bound up with the prevailing social reality. The novellas that are given extensive consideration are *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, *Der Sandmann*, *Die Jesuitenkirche in G.*, *Die Fermate*, *Der Artushof*, *Don Juan*, *Das Sanctus*, and *Rat Krespel*.

Birgit Röder teaches German language and literature at the University of Reading, UK.

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Edited by James Hardin
(*South Carolina*)

A STUDY OF THE MAJOR NOVELLAS OF

E. T. A. Hoffmann

Birgit Röder

CAMDEN HOUSE

Copyright © 2003 Birgit Röder

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2003
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
PO Box 41026, Rochester, NY 14604-4126 USA
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK

ISBN: 1-57113-271-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Röder, Birgit, 1965-

A study of the major novellas of E. T. A. Hoffmann / Birgit Röder
p. cm. — (Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57113-271-6 (alk. paper)

1. Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus), 1776-1822 —
Criticism and interpretation. I. Title. II. Studies in German literature,
linguistics, and culture (Unnumbered)

PT2361.Z5 R63 2003

833'.6 — dc21

2002034931

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgments | vii |
| Abbreviations | ix |
| Chronology of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Life and Works | xi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| 1: Hoffmann and the Romantic Dilemma | 10 |
| I. Madness | |
| 2: <i>Das Fräulein von Scuderi</i> | 39 |
| 3: <i>Der Sandmann</i> | 57 |
| II. Love | |
| 4: <i>Die Jesuiterkirche in G.</i> | 79 |
| 5: <i>Die Fermate</i> | 94 |
| 6: <i>Der Artushof</i> | 105 |
| III. Death | |
| 7: <i>Don Juan</i> | 129 |
| 8: <i>Das Sanctus</i> | 142 |
| 9: <i>Rat Krespel</i> | 153 |
| Conclusions | 169 |
| Works Consulted | 175 |
| Index | 189 |

Acknowledgments

I WISH TO RECORD MY GRATITUDE to the Conference of University Teachers of German in Great Britain and Ireland, who provided me with a very generous scholarship towards the publication costs of this manuscript. I am similarly indebted to the Department of German Studies at the University of Reading, which also offered considerable financial support for my project.

I would like to thank the Editors of *Colloquia Germanica* for permission to use again the material which forms part of the argument in chapter 7, and which originally appeared as “‘Ich sah aus tiefer Nacht feurige Dämonen ihre glühenden Krallen ausstrecken.’ The Problem of the Romantic Ideal in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Don Juan*,” *Colloquia Germanica* 34 (2001): 1–14. I would also like to thank the Editors of *German Life and Letters* for permission to reproduce some material which forms the basis of chapter 9, and which originally appeared as “‘Sie ist dahin und das Geheimnis gelöst!’ Künstler und Mensch in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Rat Krespel*,” *GLL* 53 (2000): 1–16.

A great many people helped with the preparation of this volume. I would particularly like to thank my Ph.D. supervisor, Mr. Graham Jackman, as well as my examiners Dr. Ian Roe and Professor Martin Swales for their helpful comments and suggestions. Needless to say, any remaining errors are entirely my own responsibility. I am especially grateful to the editorial team at Camden House, in particular to Jim Hardin, Jim Walker, and Christine Menendez. Finally, I would also like to thank Julia Allen, who offered many invaluable suggestions as to how the manuscript might be improved.

Abbreviations

IN THE TEXT, THE FOLLOWING abbreviations for primary sources are used. In each case the abbreviation is followed by the volume number, page number and line/paragraph number (when appropriate):

- FW* Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. *Fichte Werke*. Ed. Fritz Medicus. 6 vols. Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1908-12.
- GA* Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe, und Gespräche*. Ed. Ernst Beutler. 24 vols. Zurich: Artemis, 1949.
- HSW* Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm. *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Georg Lasson und Johannes Hoffmeister. 30 vols. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952.
- SW* Hoffmann, E. T. A. *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Walter Müller-Seidel. 5 vols. Munich: Winkler, 1960-65.
- All quotations are taken from the edition published by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, which is identical to that cited above. In accordance with current practice I have adopted the following system when referring to individual volumes in the above edition:
- *Fantasie- und Nachtstücke* [= I]
 - *Die Elixiere des Teufels. Lebensansichten des KaterMurr* [= II]
 - *Die Serapionsbrüder* [= III]
 - *Späte Werke* [= IV]
 - *Schriften zur Musik* [= Va]
 - *Nachlese* [= Vb]
- Briefwechsel* E. T. A. Hoffmanns *Briefwechsel*. Ed. Friedrich Schnapp. 3 vols. Munich: Winkler, 1967.
- Tagebücher* E. T. A. Hoffmann. *Tagebücher*. Ed. Friedrich Schnapp. Munich: Winkler, 1971.
- NS* *Novalis Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. 2nd ed. Ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel with the collabo-

- ration of Hans-Joachim Mähl und Gerhard Schulz. 5 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960-88.
- SSW Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Schellings Werke*. Ed. Manfred Schröter. 12 vols. Munich: Beck und Oldenburg, 1927-54.
- KA Schlegel, Friedrich. *Kritische Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler with the collaboration of Jean-Jaques Anstett, Hans Eichner, et al. 35 vols. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958.
- SFSW Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Sämmtliche Werke*. 30 vols. Berlin: Reimer 1843.

The following acronyms are used to refer to periodicals in the bibliography:

- DVjs *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*
- FMLS *Forum for Modern Language Studies*
- GLL *German Life and Letters*
- GQ *The German Quarterly*
- GR *The Germanic Review*
- GRM *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*
- HoffmannJb *E.T.A Hoffmann Jahrbuch*
- JEGP *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
- JWGV *Jahrbuch des Wiener Goethe-Vereins*
- MHG *Mitteilungen der E. T. A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft*
- MLN *Modern Language Notes*
- MLR *Modern Language Review*
- Monatshefte *Monatshefte für den deutschen Unterricht, deutsche Sprache und Literatur*
- NGC *New German Critique*
- NGS *New German Studies*
- PEGS *Publications of the English Goethe Society*
- SiR *Studies in Romanticism*
- WB *Weimarer Beiträge*
- ZfdPh *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*

Chronology of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Life and Works

- 1776 Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann born in Königsberg (24 January).
- 1778 Divorce of parents. Hoffmann and his mother move to her (widowed) mother Louise Doerffer.
- 1786 Meets Theodor Hippel, who will become his lifelong friend.
- 1790 Takes lessons in music and drawing. His teachers acknowledge his artistic talent.
- 1792 Embarks on the study of law at the University of Königsberg. Affair with Dora Hatt (until 1797) who is a married woman nine years his senior.
- 1795 Having passed his first degree (“erstes juristisches Staatsexamen”) he starts to work for the judiciary in Königsberg.
- 1796 Death of mother. Hoffmann moves to Glogau to join the family of his uncle, J. L. Doerffer. Works for the judiciary in Glogau.
- 1797 Death of father.
- 1798 Engagement to his cousin Minna Doerffer. Having passed his second degree (“zweites juristisches Staatsexamen”) he moves to Berlin to work for the Berlin Kammergericht.
- 1800 Passes final examinations (“drittes juristisches Staatsexamen”). Hoffmann appointed to the post of “Assessor” in Posen. Travels with Hippel to Leipzig and Dresden.
- 1802 (February) Hoffmann's caricatures of leading members of Posen society are distributed during the carnival celebrations. Scandal ensues and Hoffmann is punished by being posted to Plock in Poland. (March) Breaks off engagement to Minna. (July) Marries the Pole, Maria Thekla Michaelina Rorer-Trzcinska (Mischa). Moves to Plock in the summer.
- 1804 Appointed “Regierungsrat” of the southern Prussian administration in Warsaw. Start of his friendship with Julius Eduard Hitzig.

- 1805 Birth of his daughter, Cäcilia. Hoffmann's first public appearance as a conductor. Changes his name to Ernst Theodor Amadeus in honour of his musical idol, Mozart.
- 1806 French troops occupy Warsaw. Hoffmann relieved of his post.
- 1807 Hoffmann takes Mischa to relatives in Posen. He sets up in Berlin where he suffers from illness and the "Not- und Hungerjahre" begin. (August) Death of his two year-old daughter.
- 1808 (April) Hoffmann appointed musical director in Bamberg.
- 1809 *Ritter Gluck* published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. Hoffmann writes regularly for the journal. Makes the acquaintance of the wine merchant, F. C. Kunz.
- 1810 (September) Publication of *Johannes Kreisler, des Kapellmeisters musikalische Leiden*.
- 1811 Hoffmann falls in love with his pupil, Julia Marc.
- 1812 Infatuation with Julia intensifies. (December) Julia marries Johann Gerhard Graepel.
- 1813 Appointed choirmaster in Dresden.
- 1814 Returns to take up service for the Prussian Civil Service at the Berlin Kammergericht. *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* published in installments.
- 1815 Friendship with Ludwig Devrient. *Die Elixiere des Teufels* published in installments.
- 1816 Appointed "Kammergerichtsrat." Successful production of the opera *Undine*.
- 1817 Fire at the Berliner Schauspielhaus. The set for *Undine* is destroyed in the fire.
- 1818 Publication of *Seltsame Leiden eines Theaterdirektors*.
- 1819 Appointed to membership of the "Immediat-Untersuchungskommission zur Ermittlung hochverrätherischer Verbindungen und anderer hochverrätherischer Umtriebe." Publication of *Klein Zaches*. First installment of *Die Serapionsbrüder* appears. Severely ill.
- 1821 Death of Hoffmann's cat, Murr.
- 1822 Illness continues. The manuscript of *Meister Floh* is confiscated. Start of disciplinary proceedings against Hoffmann on account of the "Knarrpanti-Episode." Publication of *Kater Murr*. (25 January) Hoffmann's death.

*Alles geben die Götter, die unendlichen,
Ihren Lieblingen ganz,
Alle Freuden, die unendlichen,
Alle Schmerzen, die unendlichen, ganz.*

— Goethe

Introduction

ÜBER HOFFMANN KÖNNTEN WIR leicht einerlei Meinung sein. Sein Genie kann nur von Genielosen verkannt, von Absprechern geläugnet werden,” wrote Heinrich Voß, the son of the well-known translator of Homer, Johann Heinrich Voß, in his letter of March 1821.¹ Hoffmann, had he learned of this encomium, would surely have been flattered. Nonetheless, it was an opinion shared by few people during his lifetime and even fewer after his death. Hoffmann’s oeuvre, much like Hoffmann’s biography was then — and still is today — the subject of considerable disagreement. Despite harsh criticism, especially from Goethe,² Hoffmann attracted an enthusiastic readership during his lifetime. However, in the years following his death, he gradually developed the reputation as “Gespenster-Hoffmann,” a reputation that, at least in the German-speaking world, lasted for almost a century. Although this hardly spoiled the enjoyment of those readers attracted to his fiction, it was partly responsible for his works being largely ignored by critics.

It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that there was a revival of interest in Hoffmann’s work, at least on the part of literary scholars. This interest was prompted by the predominantly biographically-oriented studies of Georg Ellinger, Carl Georg von Maassen, and Hans von Müller,³ and was the first serious attempt to produce a critical edition of Hoffmann’s collected works.⁴ In the early 1920s Hoffmann’s fortunes rose, possibly because his reputation as a tortured and misunderstood artist coincided with the view of the artist figure espoused by the Expressionist writers of the period. Drawing on the more positivistically-oriented scholarship of Gustav Egli and Ernst Heilborn, Walther Harich came to the conclusion that the artist figures in Hoffmann’s fiction are confronted with the eternal question of finding meaning in a world of chaos. Insofar as Harich praises what he regards as the “irrational” dimension of Hoffmann’s work, his approach to the author reflects the idealized image of the artist as a Nietzschean figure detached from the lives of ordinary human beings, which is found in so many literary works in the early part of the twentieth century.⁵

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Hoffmann suffered the fate of many German authors: his work was exploited by the Nazis for the pur-

poses of propaganda and, in the process, became seen through the spectacles of National Socialist ideology. Accordingly, we find Hoffmann's characters being praised for the qualities of "Heldentum," "Führertum," and "Deutschtum," which they were alleged to display. The distorted character of literary scholarship during this period of history hardly requires further comment. It is clear that the irrational elements in Hoffmann's work — like those in a number of other writers of his time — lent themselves readily to such ideological exploitation. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that in the immediate postwar period, when scholars were struggling to re-establish the German literary canon, Hoffmann's work, with its particular emphasis on the irrational, was largely ignored.

Given the Romantic nature of Hoffmann's oeuvre, it is something of a paradox that the renewed interest in his work in the 1950s and 1960s was promoted by two Marxist scholars, Georg Lukács and Hans Mayer. Although Lukács never tired of emphasizing what he regarded as the inherently reactionary outlook of the Romantic school, he makes an exception of Hoffmann, praising him both for his realistic streak and for his sharp-eyed critique of bourgeois philistinism.⁶ Hans Mayer also emphasizes the difference between Hoffmann and the other members of the Romantic school, but for slightly different reasons. He points out that Hoffman's writing shows him to be an opponent of conservative political tendencies in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁷ Although both Lukács and Meyer laid the groundwork for Hoffmann's rehabilitation in the Marxist literary canon, their treatment of his work was sketchy at best; it was left to Hans-Georg Werner to provide a more detailed study of the individual works from a Marxist perspective. Werner questions Lukács's generally positive view of Hoffmann's work by highlighting the author's tendency to seek solace in a metaphysical haven. Of course, this is a charge that has often been leveled at Romantic artists by critics with Marxist leanings, but although Werner concedes that Hoffman had little alternative at the point in history when he was writing, he remains sharply critical of the "irrational" elements in his works.⁸

Although this criticism may hold good for some of Hoffmann's stories, Werner's position is open to objection on several grounds. In *Der Sandmann* (1816), for instance, Hoffmann goes to some lengths to point out the tragic consequences that ensue when an individual — in this case Nathanael — turns his back on reality and attempts to seek refuge in a "metaphysical haven." The same could be said in the case of such figures as Cardillac in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* (1819) or Berthold in *Die Jesuitenkirche in G.* (1816). Indeed, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Werner's reading of the texts is as much conditioned by his interpretative

model as by the texts themselves; it is precisely the one-sidedness of this approach that the literary scholar and well-known East German author, Franz Fühmann, was to criticize in an essay published in the mid-1970s.⁹ Werner's approach has also been criticized by those who would prefer to approach Hoffmann's work via the existentialist categories that are so characteristic of a number of schools of German literary criticism in the mid 1960s. Wulf Segebrecht, who published his important full-length study in 1967, also starts out from this perspective.¹⁰ However, it soon becomes clear that his target is not the historical materialism of Werner et al., but what Segebrecht refers to as the "unselige Biographismus"¹¹ of the positively-oriented scholars at the beginning of the century. Given that well over a third of the book is devoted to an analysis of methodology, the reader soon comes to realize that Segebrecht's study is as much concerned with the methodological underpinnings of literary biography as it is with an analysis of Hoffmann's individual works. Segebrecht does indeed offer an analysis of the way in which Hoffmann's work not only reflects the existential despair of its author, but also represents an attempt to confront it. But although Segebrecht is correct to attack the crude, biographically-oriented criticism of his predecessors, his own metaphysical approach to Hoffmann's work is open to the charge of a certain reductionism. To claim that Hoffmann's works represent the author's attempt to resolve existential questions of identity is not only to overlook the important role played by social factors throughout Hoffmann's work, but also to ignore the very different types of artist figures that confront us in the texts.

The existential crisis of the artist and, by extension, the individual is also a central theme in Rüdiger Safranski's literary biography *E. T. A. Hoffmann: Das Leben eines skeptischen Phantasten*, published in 1987. Safranski claims that Hoffmann's existential despair was the driving force behind his creativity;¹² he arrives at the bleak conclusion that Hoffmann's work excludes the possibility of human redemption and anticipates the solipsistic position of man in the modern era. Safranski's interpretation of Hoffmann's oeuvre has pre-empted the attempts of certain critics, notably the Deconstructionists, to go further than this and see Hoffmann as a precursor not of modernist, but of postmodernist aesthetics. And in his explicitly deconstructionist study Manfred Mombberger contrasts Hoffmann's work with that of earlier Romantics, believing that he represents an extreme phase of Romanticism, "wo die romantische Apotheose des Unendlichen im Werk zerfällt,"¹³ and that interpretation is out of place. What we are left with instead is the endless free-play of the signifier, and it is from this, paradoxically, that Hoffmann's texts derive their coherence. But in sidelining interpretation as a legitimate critical activity,

Momberger ignores precisely that which has fascinated readers and critics alike over the years.

Inevitably, Hoffmann's portrayal of apparently irrational human behavior has prompted critics of a psychoanalytic persuasion to take a close interest in his work. Following the publication of Freud's rather idiosyncratic essay on *Der Sandmann* in 1919, the concept of the "uncanny" ("das Unheimliche") has been inextricably linked with Hoffmann's novella.¹⁴ Subsequent psychoanalytic critics have tended to approach Hoffmann's works either as individual case studies or seen them as symptoms of Hoffmann's alleged neuroses. In recent years, the main proponent of this approach has been James M. McGlathery, who published a comprehensive two-part study of Hoffmann's work in 1981 and 1985. He claims that, "Hoffmann [is] perhaps the greatest sexual humorist of all time, and certainly [the] master at portraying unconscious sublimation."¹⁵ Although sexual desire unquestionably plays an important role in some of Hoffmann's works, McGlathery, like many other critics writing from a Freudian perspective, is often guilty of focusing his attention on this one aspect of the text to the exclusion of all else. Furthermore, this type of literary criticism is open to the charge of reductionism since the determination to interpret the text in accordance with a (highly speculative) *a priori* model of human behavior inevitably means that the work will be made to fit the theory, rather than vice-versa.

Although such psychoanalytic readings of the text are unlikely to convince those skeptical about psychoanalysis, the contribution made by this line of inquiry to the development of theories of narration should not be underestimated. In their quest to uncover new levels of latent meaning in the texts, psychoanalytic critics have prompted other scholars to turn their attention to the narrative structure of Hoffmann's texts and particularly to the role of the narrator. Very often such analyses of the role of the narrator have been confined to essays that deal with specific texts; where this is the case, I have discussed them in the context of my own analysis of the story.¹⁶ Sheila Dickson offers perhaps the most detailed study of the role of the narrator and narrative perspective in Hoffmann's work, although her study is not solely confined to Hoffmann but embraces other writers from the Romantic period.¹⁷ Dickson challenges, quite correctly in my view, the assumption that the Romantics turned their backs on reality and provides a comprehensive analysis of Romantic thought and philosophy. Drawing on a wide range of examples, she identifies a number of different narrative strategies, including the interplay of first and third person narrators, and the creative role of the reader. Her main argument is "to consider form rather than content as

a reflection of the experience of the world.”¹⁸ The disruption of narrative perspective brought about by a combination of the devices listed above reflects the fundamental Romantic view that the subjectivity of all individual perspectives precludes the existence of an objective truth.

Dickson challenges the assumptions of such theorists as Joseph Kunz, who have seen the lack of a unified narrative perspective as a weakness of Romantic fiction;¹⁹ for Dickson, of course, it is its very essence. Her study of narrative strategies is extremely wide-ranging, however it is largely confined to questions of form and touches on questions of interpretation only when she discusses Romantic fiction as an expression of a world experience that is both fragmented and relative. As a result, the reader in search of a new interpretation of Hoffmann’s fiction is likely to be disappointed.

The Ideal and Reality

The aim of the present study is to show how Hoffmann explores the conflicts that arise whenever an individual becomes conscious of the discrepancy between a Platonic, metaphysical realm of ideas and the world of everyday reality. In the novellas, these conflicts are almost always presented by means of a central figure who considers himself an artist and who is regarded by society as an outsider. This narrative strategy is, of course, one used by others. Three of Hoffmann’s near contemporaries — Tieck, Wackenroder, and Eichendorff — often present the conflict between the Ideal and reality via the figure of an artist. However, the close correlation between art and questions of an existential, philosophical nature is particularly pronounced in Hoffmann’s work — above all in the figure of Kreisler, the long suffering and misunderstood artist. This itself may be a reflection of the fact that Hoffmann not only thought of himself as an artist first and foremost, despite working for the judiciary, and was active in a variety of disparate artistic genres as a theater director, caricaturist, composer, and writer. The term artist, however, requires some clarification. Although it is true that a number of Hoffmann’s characters earn their living from the arts as painters, musicians, and composers, he nevertheless saw a wider Romantic connotation to the term artist, which goes beyond those endowed with the skills to practice the arts to embrace the individual who longs to capture the Ideal in his creative life. This approach is entirely in keeping with the spirit of Friedrich Schlegel’s remark: “Nicht die Kunst und die Werke machen den Künstler, sondern der Sinn und die Begeisterung und der Trieb.”²⁰ And it is in this sense that Hoffmann treats, for example, the character

Krespel in *Rat Krespel* as an artist even though he is not, strictly speaking, a professional artist in the sense that the painter, Berthold, in *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.* is.

Furthermore, as Hoffmann shows, the crisis experienced by the artist is not simply played out at the level of the individual. As we shall see, the reasons for the downfall of a number of Hoffmann's figures can be traced back to social factors; it is often the values and conventions of bourgeois society that make the artist feel isolated. The most pernicious of these bourgeois values is a philistine attitude to art, which regards it in purely functional terms, as something decorative, and does not recognize it as a means of cognition in its own right. In such conditions the artist will find his creative imagination severely restricted, and in order to free it, he is tempted to take up positions of an increasingly extreme nature. In this context, it is important to remember that the artist is not simply financially dependent upon his patrons, but also needs an "interlocutor," a partner who is both willing and able to participate in the dialogue of art — and although Hoffmann remains fascinated by the figure of the artist, on another level his novellas are about the consumers of art. When the latter refuse to participate in this dialogue and are interested only in the superficial, decorative aspects of the artist's work, the consequences can be catastrophic. For if an artist is shunned by his public, he is cut off from society and becomes isolated, a development that, in extreme cases, can lead to madness, suicide, and even murder. This can be seen perhaps most clearly in the figures of Nathanael in *Der Sandmann* and Cardillac in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, whose deaths can both be attributed partly to social factors.

In Hoffmann's presentation of the artist, there is another important factor that has all too often been ignored by the critics, namely the question of gender relations. In all the novellas dealt with in this study (and in many of Hoffmann's others novellas), Hoffmann explores the relationship between the male artist and his work on the one hand, and on the other, a woman who plays a crucially important role for that artist. Hoffmann's artists are shown to be all too willing to endorse an idealized image of woman, and almost all of them raise one particular woman to the status of an ideal. The consequences of this Romantic idealization — a process for which the individual artists and the society in which they live are both partly responsible — vary considerably in each case. However, the resulting crisis that the artist experiences can almost always be traced back to the same cause, the realization that what he had believed to be the Ideal is, in fact, "merely" a (female) human being, a discovery that underlines the illusory nature of the Ideal he has pursued hitherto. Individual artists will all react differently to this process of disillusionment depending on their