

THREE *MÄRCHEN* - MUSICAL, MEDIEVAL, AND MODERN: MOZART'S *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE*, FOUQUÉ'S *UNDINE*, AND HOFFMANN'S "DER GOLDNE TOPF"

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Abstract: External and internal evidence suggest that Hoffmann's "Der goldne Topf" involves a conscious recasting and fusion of Mozart's musical and Fouqué's medieval fairy-tales. Hoffmann began the novella in Dresden, just after conducting performances of *Die Zauberflöte* and while composing his own operatic setting of *Undine*. The connection is borne out by a comparative examination of the characters, prominent themes, and plots of each story. However, Hoffmann sets the story in his own time, the 1810s, occasioning the pervasive irony that makes his "modern-day fairy-tale" distinct from the other two. His complex manipulations of the resulting clashes between fantasy and reality set into sharp relief the problem that haunted his unlikely protagonist no less than it haunted Wackenroder's Joseph Berglinger or Mann's Tonio Kröger, namely, how is the creative artist to function in a society ignorant of, or indifferent to, his utmost concerns.

1 INTRODUCTION

In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany, the *Märchen*, or fairy tale, gained prominence as a literary and dramatic form before it became, with the collections of the Grimm brothers, the object of folkloristic preservation and study. While many fairy tales were more or less freely reworked from traditional sources, others were completely artificial creations (*Kunstmärchen*), often with patently allegorical intent (e.g., the *Märchen* in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*). Inevitably, the literary genre spread to the musical genre most closely attuned to literature, namely, opera, following the longstanding convention that events too marvelous for real life were specially suited for music. In the kind of opera indigenous to German-speaking regions, namely, Singspiel, the *Märchen* soon constituted a subgenre called *Zauberoper* (magic opera), wherein seemingly miraculous scenic effects combined with farcical plots. From among the dozens of magic operas enjoying a fleeting popularity, one work survives to the present day: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), first performed in a Viennese suburban theater shortly before the composer's death. Regarded as a model for its subgenre and for German Romantic opera in general, *Die Zauberflöte* also exerted an impact on at least one work of literature. In his story "Der goldne Topf" (The Golden Pot), E. T. A. Hoffmann drew upon Mozart's musical fairy tale and upon Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué's *Undine*, a fairy tale set in medieval times, to create a piece of sheer fantasy (a *Fantasiestück*) set in contemporary Dresden. If a musicologist ventures to trace symmetries and dissymmetries between three works of German literature, it is in the interdisciplinary spirit of the present journal and of the musical scholar honored with the present issue.

Die Zauberflöte is itself a fusion of manifold elements. In writing the libretto, actor-impresario Emanuel Schikaneder tapped sources ranging from Chrétien de Troyes's medieval romance *Yvain* to several tales in Christoph Martin Wieland's three-volume collection *Dschinnistan, oder Feen- und Geistermärchen, theils neu erfunden, theils neu übersetzt und umgearbeitet* (Jinnistan, or Fairy- and Ghost-tales, some newly invented, some newly translated and reworked; 1786-89). As has long been recognized, the opera also incorporates extensive references to the symbols, rituals, and ideals of Freemasonry. In this connection, Mozart and Schikaneder, Freemasons themselves, drew upon Ignaz von Born's essay "Ueber die Mysterien der Aegypter" (Concerning the Mysteries of the Egyptians, 1784), which linked Masonic ritual with the ancient mysteries of Isis, and Abbé Jean Terrasson's *Sethos* (1731; transl. in 1777 by Matthias Claudius as *Geschichte des ägyptischen Königs Sethos* [History of the Egyptian King Sethos]; see Abert 8/1973; Csampai and Holland 1982, and Branscombe 1991).

Fouqué published *Undine*, perhaps his most successful work, in spring 1811. The following year he revised it as a *Zauberoper* libretto for Hoffmann, who began composing the music in February 1813 (Hoffmann 1971, 194). Shortly thereafter, Hoffmann accepted a post as conductor of Joseph Seconda's opera troupe in Dresden and Leipzig. In this capacity he directed performances of *Die Zauberflöte* on 20, 23,

and 24 Oct. (Hoffmann 1971, 231). The opera was given again one month later, on 26 Nov., although Hoffmann, to judge from his diary entry for that day, may have been too sick to conduct. Instead, he reported that he had begun to write “das Märchen ‘Der goldne Topf’.” He suspended work on the opera *Undine* until he had finished the fairy-tale, on 15 Febr. 1814 (Hoffmann 1971, 237, 247; Schnapp 1981, 298).

The connections suggested by this chronological proximity are borne out by a comparative examination of the three works. When one considers the constellation of characters, the prominent themes, and the plot in each story, one finds striking symmetries at every turn. The dissymmetry is no less striking, for Hoffmann transposed what he borrowed into his own time, creating a distinctive and disconcerting “Märchen aus der neuen Zeit”. The resulting clashes between fantasy and reality set into striking relief a problem that haunted Hoffmann’s protagonist no less than it haunted W. H. Wackenroder’s Joseph Berglinger or Thomas Mann’s Tonio Kröger: namely, how is the creative artist to function in a society ignorant of, or utterly indifferent to, his inmost concerns.

2 CHARACTERS AND CONFLICTS

Each story involves a handsome young male protagonist of the *amoroso* character-type: the Japanese prince Tamino, the Swabian knight Huldbrand von Ringstetten, and the Dresden student Anselmus. Each protagonist is caught in a conflict between two realms of experience. In *Die Zauberflöte* these are moral realms: the dark forces of evil and of superstition versus the Enlightenment (and Masonic) virtues of humanity, learning, and tolerance. *Undine* pits the human sphere against that of elemental, supernatural spirits. In “Der goldne Topf”, one finds a conflation of these basic conflicts. Anselmus, an awkward, artistically-inclined student preparing for a civil servant’s career, is riven between the claims of mundane human existence and those of a transcendent realm of poetic fantasy; and this transcendent realm is inhabited by elemental spirits who represent good and evil powers.

The conflict in *Die Zauberflöte* assumes the symbolic trappings of a struggle between male and female principles, between Sarastro (keeper of the Sevenfold Circle of the Sun) and the Queen of Night. The symbol of conflict in *Undine* is a choice between spouses, between the Undine (water-sprite) and her mortal foster sister Bertalda, who embodies the “haughty sister” character-type familiar from such folk tales as *Cinderella*. Hoffmann once again conflates the two symbolic conflicts. Like the opera, his story portrays the forces of light and of darkness as male and female, respectively. Archivarius Lindhorst, as representative of light, assumes the guises of the Salamander (or elemental fire-spirit) and of a luminous “Geisterfürst” (spirit-prince). His nemesis is Liese Rauerin, an old fortune-teller whose powers as a practitioner of the black arts fully unfold at the midnight hour of the autumnal equinox. Yet the fundamental struggle also entails a choice between ideal and prosaic mates for Anselmus, that is, between

Lindhorst's daughter Serpentina and Veronika Paulmann, the daughter of his former headmaster at school.

Each ideal spouse occupies an intermediate position between the conflicting realms. In *Die Zauberflöte*, Pamina is the daughter of the Queen of Night and of Sarastro's predecessor as "sun-king". Sarastro has abducted her before the opera begins, and both he and the Queen promise her to Tamino as reward for the fulfilment of wholly contradictory tasks. Undine is the daughter of an elemental water-prince but is raised by human foster parents. She is a nix who takes on a human soul. Serpentina, issue of the union of the Salamander with a green snake, can assume the form of her mother or that of a young maiden. Her true status is complicated by Anselmus's confusion (which Hoffmann takes care to instill in the reader) whether she is real or only an imaginary distortion of her rival Veronika, whose deep blue eyes and bell-like voice she shares. Veronika, in a way, occupies an intermediate realm herself. Her father may be an utterly conventional bourgeois schoolmaster, but she grew up with the sorceress Liese Rauerin as her nanny, which likens her to Pamina.

The benevolent father figures grow increasingly complex, not only from story to story but, to a certain extent, within each story. As portrayed by the Queen of Night toward the beginning of *Die Zauberflöte*, Sarastro is ostensibly a brutal villain. When he finally takes the stage at the end of act 1, he seems the typical fairy-tale king, who returns from his daily hunt in a magnificent chariot (drawn by six lions) to a chorus of acclamation. In the second act he becomes a religious authority, the leader of the priestly cult of Isis and Osiris. One character in effect has three different roles, depending upon the dramatic situation. In *Undine* there are instead three paternal characters, each of advanced years and hoary countenance. The fisher is Undine's human guardian, the water-spirit Kühleborn her supernatural guardian, and Pater Heilmann the guardian of the human soul she gains by consummating her marriage with Huldbrand.

Here, too, Hoffmann proceeds symmetrically by conflating elements of the two stories. Anselmus, like Undine, has three fatherly guides. Chief among them is the eccentric Lindhorst; the Konrektor Paulmann (would-be matchmaker) and the Registrator Heerbrand (would-be career-maker) are comic adjuncts. (A *Konrektor* is an associate headmaster; a *Registrator*, a registrar in civil service. Hoffmann seldom gives the names without the titles, as if to emphasize the characters' rootedness in the everyday world.) Lindhorst, like Sarastro, assumes three different roles: the earthbound civil servant (*Archivarius*), the Salamander (elemental spirit), and the *Geisterfürst* (his guise as "spirit-prince" in the central, sixth vigil of the story).¹ Like Kühleborn (and elemental spirits in general), Lindhorst tends to be puckish in his contacts with humans; but when, as spirit-prince, he initiates Anselmus into the trials that await him, he is a figure of Sarastrian gentleness and regality.

3 THE THEME OF THE DOUBLE WEDDING

Moving from character-types to prominent themes, one sees that each story employs the common fairy-tale theme of the double wedding, albeit in distinct ways. Schikaneder works with the conventional arrangement of serious and comic pairs of lovers. Tamino and Pamina are balanced by the prince's companion, Papageno, to whom a Papagena is promised. Papageno, a quick-witted coward, represents a comic type (called Kaspar or Hanswurst) omnipresent in Viennese popular theater of the time (Branscombe 1991, 98-101). While Papageno's scenes (originally played by Schikaneder himself) provide comic relief from Tamino's progress toward moral perfection, he indulges in none of the bawdiness typical of Kaspar figures. Rather, he is an allegorical child of nature who, by virtue of his ignorance of worldly distinctions and prejudices, makes some of the central ethical points in this opera about brotherhood and tolerance.

Fouqué varies the conventional theme of the double wedding insofar as both weddings involve Huldbrand as husband. The ideal union, with which most fairy-tales end happily, is consecrated in the first half of the story. In the second half, the human foster sister gradually supplants Undine in Huldbrand's affections. After Undine returns to her watery element, Huldbrand weds Bertalda but dies before the ill-starred marriage can be consummated.

In this case, Hoffmann creates a more complex symmetry between his tale and the earlier ones. Like Huldbrand, Anselmus is suitor to two different women. His cloddishness with Veronika is such that one might speak of a comic pair of lovers, as if he were playing Papageno with her and Tamino with Serpentina. The humor in the former role stems from Anselmus's ungainly attempts to play the worldly galant with a woman for whom class distinctions and social aspirations are crucial. The momentary (and illusory) possibility of Anselmus's promotion to the office of court councillor (*Hofrat*) is as appealing to Veronika as his personal qualities. Anselmus has too much in common with the grown child Papageno ever to fit in with Veronika's ambitions. However, his childlike, poetic disposition turns out to be his chief personal asset in wooing Serpentina, for to Lindhorst, a "kindliches poetisches Gemüt" is the *sine qua non* for a son-in-law.

The ideal marriage in each story is portrayed as part of a supernaturally ordained plan. Sarastro declares the union of Tamino and Pamina to be divinely determined, and their eventual initiation into the priestly elect, Sarastro explains, is to usher in a new age free of prejudice and superstition, where humanitarian ideals will hold sway (II, 1). The joining of Undine with Huldbrand stems from no such grand designs for humanity; it is arranged as a bit of social climbing on the great chain of being by Undine's father, a Mediterranean water-lord. As Undine herself explains to her astonished husband the day after their wedding (ch. 8),

“alles will höher, als es steht. So wollte mein Vater, der ein mächtiger Wasserfürst im Mittelländischen Meere ist, seine einzige Tochter solle einer Seele teilhaftig werden und müsse sie darüber auch viele Leiden der beseelten Leute bestehen”.

(“All things aspire to rise higher than they are. Thus my father, who is a mighty water-prince in the Mediterranean Sea, desired that his only daughter should acquire a soul, even if for it she must endure the many sufferings of those endowed therewith”.)

One is struck by the apparent cleft between this relatively shallow motivation for the story and the seriousness of the author’s purpose in telling it. Fouqué evidently adapted the common strategy of mythic narrative that explains some aspect of moral suffering by reference to supernatural whim.

Hoffmann once again combines elements of the other stories in a fantastical way. In the eighth vigil, Serpentina explains to Anselmus the strange supernatural destiny to be fulfilled by their eventual union. Lindhorst is a fallen fire-spirit, an elemental Lucifer. Before he can cast off the burden of human existence - this “armselige Zeit der innern Verstocktheit” (“wretched time of inner callousness”) - Lindhorst must help three youths escape it first by marrying his daughters to them. So far, Hoffmann is varying the situation in *Undine*: a human spouse is sought for a supernatural daughter as a result of machinations in the elemental realm, and no general redemption of humankind is entailed. Yet he also follows *Die Zauberflöte* by having Lindhorst invoke the allegory of initiation into an elect. In an age of disharmony with nature, when concern with petty mundanities crowds all love and faith from the human heart, Serpentina’s suitor might, after suitable trials, partake of the marvels of a higher plane of existence through a life devoted to poesy. Marriage to Serpentina goes hand-in-hand with a recognition of nature’s deepest secret, “der heilige Einklang aller Wesen” (“the holy unison of all beings”, twelfth vigil).

4 THE THEME OF LOVE

As one generally expects in fairy-tales, love happens at first sight. Tamino falls in love with the mere image of Pamina (the aria “Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön” in I, 4). Undine is transfixed at the very sight of Huldbrand, then seems to recognize him as a friend at long last returned and uses the familiar *du* with him from the start. Even before seeing Undine, Huldbrand has entered the fisher’s cottage under the uncanny impression of returning home. Serpentina’s eyes have a similarly instantaneous effect upon Anselmus (first vigil). He is figuratively electrified (an appropriate simile for a “modern-day fairy-tale”), and his soul filled with such bliss and pain all at once that he feels his breast will explode. Veronika exerts no such impact upon him.

In exploring the phenomenon of love, however, each story goes well beyond the typical folk tale. The opera presents three different views on the subject. For Tamino and Pamina, love is a highly ethical matter, bound inextricably with a quest for virtue and

knowledge that compels them to undergo trials of purification and initiation. Before the priests admit Tamino to the trials, they must be convinced that he is virtuous, moderate in speech, and beneficent (II, 1). He must be able seemingly to deny his love to maintain an oath of silence, and both prince and princess must be willing to face death in their confrontation with the elements (the trials of fire and water) for the sake of their love (II, 18). For those whom the gods would unite, the path to marriage is at once initiation, enlightenment, and training in the duties of a ruling caste. Love for Papageno has nothing to do with such lofty concerns. When acquainted with the nature of the trials through which he is to gain his mate, he unhesitatingly declares, "Ich bleibe ledig" ("I'll stay single"; II, 3). For him, love is simply the satisfaction of the natural desire for companionship and procreation (expressed in the song "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen"), and on these terms the priests eventually grant him his Papagena. The libidinous perversion of love is embodied in Monostatos, the duplicitous servant of Sarastro, who would force his affection on Pamina through violence (I, 11), through blackmail (II, 10), and ultimately by allying himself with the Queen against his master (II, 30).

Throughout the opera music itself symbolizes the magical power of love, manifest in the flute and the glockenspiel that Tamino and Papageno receive as talismen in their quest. The magic flute has the power positively to transform human passions: "der Traurige wird freudig sein, / den Hagestolz nimmt Liebe ein" (I, 8; "The mournful one will become joyful, and love will overcome the hardened bachelor"). It brings the lovers safely through the ordeals of fire and water: "Wir wandeln durch des Tones Macht / froh durch des Todes düstre Nacht" (II, 28; "We tread with music as our shield / Through murky death's own darkest field"). Playing the flute gives Tamino solace and strengthens his resolve through the trials (I, 15, and II, 17). Like the lyre of Orpheus, the flute even exerts its attraction upon wild animals (Tamino's arietta "Wie stark ist nicht dein Zauberton", I, 15). Papageno's bells have similar effects, entrancing his would-be captors at one point (I, 17) and finally leading him to Papagena (II, 29). Both magic flute and bells exemplify the age-old use of musical harmony as a metaphor for the harmony of man with himself, with his fellow man, and with nature.

The story of Undine treats love in explicitly Christian terms, as part of the problem of the human soul. In Fouqué's portrayal (inspired by Paracelsus, *Liber de nymphis*), the presence of a soul is what distinguishes the biblical crown of creation from the rest of it; it sets humankind apart from the other natural kinds and from the elemental creatures thought to inhabit them. The capacity to love is an attribute of this soul, as is the capacity to feel a moral responsibility for one's actions (the conscience). These combine in the ideal of fidelity, the notion that the highest expression of love is steadfastness. The problem lies in the fact that, while the power to love may raise humans to *instances* of great self-sacrifice and courage (as Huldbrand somewhat chauvinistically declares in ch. 14), love itself, like all human emotions and circumstances, is transitory (a point belabored by Fouqué as narrator in ch. 16). Long-term fidelity may be possible in the novel's initial Arcadian setting, a secluded spit of land

where the distractions of continual change are minimal; but amidst the throng of life (symbolized by the city in chh. 2 and 9-12), one day's affection may be rejected the next. Rejection of course causes pain, but so does the consciousness of responsibility (which entails the awareness of irresponsibility). The most seductive escape from pain of conscience is the pernicious distraction of continued contact with its very source, which Huldbrand has in the ever-presence of Bertalda. Another common refuge is self-delusion, as when Huldbrand seeks to excuse his growing irritation at Undine with the lie that "Ich hab es ja nicht gewut, da sie ein Meerfräulein war" (ch. 15; "But I did not know she was a mermaid"). Of course, these remedies neither restore the love nor remove the guilt, which has its source in Huldbrand's recognition that, "Wenn ich ihr eine Seele gegeben habe, gab ich ihr wohl eine bessere, als meine eigene ist" (ch. 12; "If I gave her a soul, I certainly gave her a better one than my own"). Undine has come into possession of a soul with all of the virtues that make it immortal and none of the defects - fickleness, pride, jealousy - that make it human. Indeed, she cannot understand how, given the existence of a soul, such feelings can even exist. When Bertalda arrogantly scorns her true parents (who are none other than the old fisher and his wife), Undine cries in astonishment, "Hast du eine Seele? Hast du denn wirklich eine Seele, Bertalda?" (ch. 11; "Have you a soul? Have you really a soul, Bertalda?").

The analysis of love in "Der goldne Topf" shares with that in *Undine* the quality of emotional complexity; love arouses not only "höchste Seligkeit" (supreme bliss) but also "tiefsten Schmerz" (deepest pain). But Hoffmann has little use, in this tale, for the pious moralizing of Fouqué. Anselmus's pain is part and parcel of the poet's condition of *Sehnsucht*, a dissatisfaction with ordinary, prosaic existence and a yearning for a higher state of being wherein any number of vague, ineffable desires might find fulfilment. Seized by this "wonnevollen Schmerz, . . . der eben die Sehnsucht ist" ("the blissful pain that constitutes *Sehnsucht*"), the lover becomes newly responsive to the beauties of nature; he "hears their voices" with uncanny comprehension. During his first vision of Serpentina, Anselmus is directly addressed by the elder tree, the evening breeze, and the rays of the sun. In his enamored state, he understands their language of fragrance, breath, and flame. In the eighth vigil, where Anselmus ponders the story of the Salamander and the green snake, these arcana of nature are intimated with a scrambling of sensual imagery that anticipates Charles Baudelaire's synaesthetic poem "Correspondances": fragrances are perceived as musical tones, and tones as rays of light, as if the distinctions normally made between sense impressions were but another symptom of the "inner callousness" that prevents humans from understanding nature's symbols. Love has given Anselmus, as it gives Tamino, a premonition of the significance of such symbols, but before he can understand them fully, he (again like Tamino) must demonstrate steadfastness and faith in the presence of temptation. As Anselmus resolves to undertake the copying of the eccentric Archivarius's arcane manuscripts (beginning of the sixth vigil), he begins to convince himself that his scribal work is really a "mühevoller, gefährliche Arbeit" ("a difficult, perilous task") with Serpentina's love as the prize.

Lindhorst leads him first into a curious garden room luxuriant with tropical flowers and trees, where Anselmus is teased by all manner of forest spirits (as Huldbrand is mocked by elemental spirits in *Undine*); only Lindhorst's scolding puts an end to the jests, which actually come from the children of a voluble grey parrot (in German, *Papagei*; cf. Papageno). Lindhorst then takes Anselmus to the work-room, which resembles a stage set in act II, scene 1 of *Die Zauberflöte*:

Aus den azurblauen Wänden traten die goldbronzenen Stämme hoher Palmbäume hervor, welche ihre kolossalen, wie funkelnde Smaragden glänzenden Blätter oben zur Decke wölbten.

(From the light-blue colored walls there jutted the trunks of stately palm trees with trunks of golden bronze, their colossal leaves, glittering like sparkling emeralds, arching across the ceiling far above them.)

Das Theater ist ein Palmenwald; alle Bäume sind silberartig, die Blätter von Gold.
(The theater is a palm forest; all the trees are like silver, their leaves are of gold).

As Anselmus sets about copying Lindhorst's Arabic manuscript (cf. the Egyptian trappings of Sarastro's realm), he hears Serpentina's voice encouraging him: ". . . sei mutig - sei standhaft, lieber Anselmus! - ich mühe mit dir, damit du mein werdest!" ("Be brave. Be steadfast, dear Anselmus! I am working with you so that you may be mine!") With similar words of encouragement Tamino begins his trials (I, 15):

Zum Ziele führt dich diese Bahn,
doch mußt du, Jüngling, männlich siegen.
Drum höre unser Lehre an:
Sei standhaft, duldsam und verschwiegen!

(This path will lead you to your goal; yet you, young fellow, will have to seize victory like a man. Therefore, heed our teaching: be steadfast, forbearing, and discreet.)

As Lindhorst examines the completed manuscript, his usual ironic mien gives way to "tiefen, feierlichen Ernst", and he assumes features resembling those of Sarastro: "Bald schien er nicht mehr derselbe. . . . Die ganze Gestalt war höher, würdevoller; der weite Schlafrock legte sich wie ein Königsmantel in breiten Falten um Brust und Schultern. . . ." ("No longer did he seem the same. . . . His body seemed taller and statelier; the wide dressing gown spread over his breast and shoulders like a royal mantle unfurling in broad folds. . . ."). His solemn words to Anselmus conflate the admonition to Tamino (quoted directly above) with Sarastro's first words to Pamina: "Denn ohne erst in dich zu dringen, wei ich von deinem Herzen mehr: du liebest einen Andern sehr" (I, 18; "For even before urging anything upon you, I know more [than you suspect] about your heart: you love another greatly").

"Junger Mensch, . . . ich habe, noch ehe du es ahntest, all die geheimen Beziehungen erkannt, die dich an mein Liebstes, Heiligstes fesseln! . . . Aber nur dem Kampfe entspringt dein Glück im höheren Leben. Feindliche Prinzipien fallen dich an, und nur die innere Kraft, mit der du den Anfechtungen widerstehst, kann dich retten von Schmach und Verderben. Indem du hier arbeitest, überstehst du deine Lehrzeit; Glauben und Erkenntnis führen dich zum nahen Ziele, wenn du festhältst an dem, was du beginnen mußt."

("Young man, . . . I knew before you dreamed of them all the secret relationships binding you to my dearest and holiest one! . . . But your happiness will issue only from struggle; hostile forces will attack you, and only the inner strength with which you withstand these conflicting powers, can spare you from disgrace and ruination. By working here, you will pass your trial period. Belief and insight will lead you to the goal close before you, if only you keep to that which you had to begin".)

The reward for successful completion of the trial is not only a bride but also enlightenment and a dual induction (cf. Tamino and Pamina) into a poetic priesthood in the Atlantean temple housing the pot of gold.

The "hostile force" is none other than the fortune-teller Liese Rauerin, whose machinations the well-meaning but misguided Veronika implements (the correspondence with the Queen of Night and Pamina is plain). In the course of the equinox ritual (seventh vigil), Veronika must undergo her own trials of water (the raging storm) and fire (the brewing of Liese's magic concoction). The irony-laden symmetry of the two central vigils is noteworthy. Just as Lindhorst loses his derisive mien when he appears to Anselmus as *Geisterfürst*, so too Liese loses her horrific aspect and becomes more like a character from one of Veronika's novels. Having led their respective protégés to the sanctum sanctorum appropriate to each, both Lindhorst and Liese arrive at the appointed spot with the words "Nun sind wir an Ort und Stelle!" Veronika hears from Liese the same admonition that Anselmus receives from Lindhorst and Serpentina (and that Tamino hears from the three boys): "Bleib fein standhaft!" And the pot of gold, in which Anselmus can behold his beloved, has its grisly counterpart in Liese's kettle, in which Veronika sees the image of Anselmus. Waking from the experience as from a nightmare, Veronika is still able to view Anselmus in a magic mirror: "da lächelte er ihr freundlich aus dem Spiegel entgegen wie ein lebhaftes Miniaturporträt" ("his friendly face smiled at her out of the mirror, as if she held in her hand a living miniature portrait"). While the circumstances may be wholly ironic, the allusion to Tamino's "Bildnis"-aria is nonetheless clear.

In "Der goldne Topf", as in the other two tales, magic represents both the workings of love and those of evil, and often the magic is musical. In his very first encounter with Serpentina, Anselmus hears a triad of crystalline bells, then a wondrous song seemingly intoned by a thousand flutes - precisely the instruments given magical status in Mozart's opera. (Hoffmann was all the more familiar with the role of bells in *Die Zauberflöte* for having played the glockenspiel in actual performances of the opera. See Schnapp [1981], p. 100.) After Veronika enters into league with the sorceress, Anselmus's wavering between potential mates arises largely from the alternating exertions of Lindhorst's and Liese's supernatural powers. Since, however, Veronika's aspirations for a higher world reach no further than an oriel above the Dresden Neumarkt (that is, a life of material ease), the agent of their fulfilment is interchangeable. When Heerbrand bids to make her a *Frau Hofrätin*, Veronika is able to dismiss her infatuation with Anselmus and her dark dealings with Liese as a "recht albernen Traum" ("a rather stupid dream", eleventh vigil). Anselmus's case is more difficult; one hardly knows whether to ascribe the strange episodes that befall him (including his final

disappearance) to *Liebeszauber* or to a morbidly overactive fantasy, even schizophrenia. His bitter recital of woes in the first vigil, which by implication gives equal weight to bread falling butter-side down and to ruining a crucial job interview, may be taken either as Hoffmann's ironic deflation of the Werther-pose or as evidence that Anselmus truly cannot distinguish between the accidental and the essential.

More explicitly than either Schikaneder or Fouqué, Hoffmann instructs the reader to find the symmetrical relations between the fantastic and the everyday worlds he portrays (beginning of fourth vigil). Accordingly, one might make a case for Veronika and Serpentina being one and the same. Both have deep blue eyes and a "voice like a crystal bell". When Veronika invokes his image in her magic mirror (end of seventh vigil), Anselmus asks, "Aber warum belieben Sie sich denn zuweilen als ein Schlänglein zu gebärden?" ("But why is it that you sometimes prefer to appear as a little snake?"), thus further confusing their identities. Moreover, in whatever terms of sensual rapture Anselmus may describe Serpentina, his most grotesque visions of persecution also involve snakes, which crush his limbs (end of second vigil) or paralyze him with cataracts of icy fire (end of ninth vigil), in either case causing him (somewhat unheroically) to faint. Both passages bring to mind the first scene of *Die Zauberflöte*, in which Tamino is pursued by a gigantic snake and, like Anselmus, loses his senses. They may, however, represent warped extensions of another fantasy that Anselmus has even as he thinks he is devoted to Serpentina: the feeling that he is chained to Veronika and must follow her whither she wills (ninth vigil; "... er müsse ihr folgen, wohin sie nur wolle, als sei er festgekettet an das Mädchen").

All of this might suggest a Freudian reading of Anselmus, as a young man pathologically terrified of confronting the responsibilities of marriage and career (McGlatheery 1978). When his long history as an albatross (*Pechvogel*) no longer seems adequate insurance against these obligations, he invents an alternative fantasy world, justifies it with a stock of neo-Platonic catchwords about a higher reality, and ends by submerging himself in it. After failing miserably in a crucial trial (the end of the ninth vigil), Anselmus imagines himself confined within a crystal flask on a bookshelf in Lindhorst's library; yet five passing students, whom he imagines to be similarly imprisoned, assure him (tenth vigil) that he is really standing on a bridge in town, staring into the river. Anselmus hurls himself against the crystal, witnesses the final struggle between the sorceress and the Salamander, then feels the crystal burst as he falls into Serpentina's arms. In the next vigil, though, Veronika refers darkly to a hole in the ice beneath the bridge. Hence, the evil prophecy, "Ins Kristall bald dein Fall" ("Into the crystal, soon will be your downfall"), hurled after him by Liese in the first vigil, would seem to be fulfilled by a suicidal plunge into the Elbe, which in turn would lend a sinister significance to Anselmus's supposedly harmonious union with the elements (described in the twelfth vigil) and especially to the words addressed to him by the springs and brooks: "Geliebter, ... schaue in unser Kristall - dein Bild wohnt in uns, das wir liebend bewahren, denn du hast uns verstanden" ("Beloved, ... look into our crystal! Your image dwells in us, and we preserve it with love, for you have understood us").

5 THE RELATIONSHIP OF FANTASY TO REALITY

Such complications of interpretation arise because Hoffmann's handling of the relationship between make-believe and reality first coaxes our credulity, then strains it to the breaking point. In *Die Zauberflöte*, by contrast, the characters dwell entirely within the realm of make-believe. The setting shifts freely between a highland forest, an enchanted garden, and a quasi-monastic complex of Egyptian temples. The characters represent a fanciful mixture of the exotic and the allegorical: Tamino is a Japanese prince, Papageno half man and half bird, Pamina the daughter of a sun-king and a star-queen, and so forth. Mozart's musical characterizations draw upon a correspondingly varied range of styles, from *opera buffa* and German folksong to "Turkish" music and imitative counterpoint reminiscent of Johann Sebastian Bach. However, what is most fairy-talish about the opera is the ostensible illogic of the plot. Toward the end of act 1, the "good guys" and "bad guys" change places. Sarastro is no longer a kidnapper but the noble rescuer of a divinely predestined maiden from the malevolent influence of an overweening, power-hungry mother. The Queen, whose ladies chastise Papageno for his boastful lies and present Tamino with a magic flute to convert malice to love, is in truth eager to renounce all ties of nature if her daughter will not murder Sarastro for her (cf. the aria "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen"). The three lads whom the Queen deposes to guide Tamino turn out to be emissaries of Sarastro, while Monostatos crosses over to the side of the Queen, in hopes of obtaining Pamina as compensation for evil services rendered. These reversals of role have too often been cited as evidence of careless construction, or that, at the very least, the authors' conception of the work changed radically in midstream and little was done to camouflage the fact. In a *Märchen*, though, logic and consistency are concerns secondary to those of providing an entertaining moral (if not simple escape). In this case, the inconsistencies and reversals form an essential part of Tamino's and Pamina's trials, by testing their ability to pursue the higher good amidst the shifting and deceptive appearances of the earthly sphere. Moreover, Mozart's musical characterizations are quite consistent. The Queen of Night is never *musically* portrayed as anything but a passionate and imperious woman; Sarastro's music is, by contrast, almost always dignified and hymnlike. Even though the action of *Die Zauberflöte* is the most remote from daily life and couched in that dramatic medium, *opera*, whose conventions depart furthest from everyday reality, Mozart's music provides the sustained atmosphere of enchantment that holds together the motley characters and illogical plot.

Fouqué situates the action of *Undine* more clearly in space and time: Swabia during the middle ages. To be sure, the evocation of a medieval golden age (the era of *Schwabenherrlichkeit*) appealed to a political and cultural nostalgia widespread among Fouqué's German contemporaries; but it also softens the impact of fantastic events upon daily life by placing them in a time when superstitions involving elemental spirits were common. The very first sentence of the story strikes the soothing *Märchentone*: "Es mögen nun wohl schon viele hundert Jahre her sein, da gab es einmal einen alten,

guten Fischer. . .". ("Once upon a time - it must be now many hundred years ago - there lived a good old fisherman . . .".) In this fairy-tale atmosphere, pious songs can tame forest goblins, and a handsome knight can emerge from an enchanted wood on a white steed that seems hardly to touch the ground (ch. 1). So long as Huldbrand and Undine live on the peninsula, the idyll remains more or less intact. When they depart to live in the city (the central chapters of the story), the mood is first threatened, then shattered, along with Undine's illusions about the virtues of possessing a soul (ch. 11). Fouqué goes beyond the formulaic fairy-tale ending to show that, in human affairs, there is no "happily ever after". Most of the last third of the novel (chh. 13-19) takes place in another remote setting, Huldbrand's castle, but contains far less idyllic description. The narrator's voice is increasingly that of sad experience; he directly invites the reader to compare with his own life the sorry events to follow. The action itself is no longer so remote from the everyday, so that fantastic occurrences, despite the temporal cushion of the medieval setting, now intrude upon reality in a way that Papageno's appearance in *Die Zauberflöte* never does. The greatest intrusion becomes the presence of Undine herself, and the source of the greatest discomfort, because her steadfastness demonstrates the mutability of human emotion and resolve. When Undine appears as a white dove (at the end of ch. 14) to bear Huldbrand and Bertalda safely out of the Schwarztal (comparable to the psalmist's "valley of the shadow of death"), we know she is rescuing two humans who will continue to hurt her. Human failings render all magic useless.

The central conflict in *Die Zauberflöte* unfolds within the fantasy realm. In *Undine* the conflict is between the human and the fantastical realms. "Der goldne Topf" combines both - the cosmic struggle of light with darkness (the Salamander vs. the sorceress) and the antagonism between natural and supernatural. Yet Hoffmann radically juxtaposes fairy-tale fantasy with mundane realism and provides absolutely no cushion of temporal or geographical displacement. He places events in streets and amusement parks that would have been immediately familiar to many readers. Indeed, the Schwarze Tor, the northwest gate of Dresden through which Anselmus stumbles into the story, had been demolished only one year before Hoffmann began writing his tale. Contemporaneity is most vividly established, however, through merciless portraiture of Dresden's petty bourgeoisie. Complacently materialistic and bound by quotidian reality, the bourgeois mentality provides the most effective possible foil to Anselmus's fantasies, which an anonymous *Familienvater* attributes to drunkenness, and Paulmann to physical ailment. Only Heerbrand professes sympathy with the protagonist's strange visions; in the second vigil, he takes Anselmus's part by confessing,

"So ist mir in der Tat selbst einmal nachmittags beim Kaffee in einem solchen Hinbrüten, dem eigentlichen Moment körperlicher und geistiger Verdauung, die Lage eines verlorenen Aktenstücks wie durch Inspiration eingefallen. . .".

("I have myself had such an experience; for instance, one afternoon while at coffee, in the kind of mood produced by that special time of salutary physical and spiritual digestion, I suddenly remembered - as if by inspiration - where a misplaced manuscript lay. . .".)

Lest the reader miss the ironic point, Hoffmann has Paulmann exclaim, in response to this perilous affirmation of the irrational,

“Ach, geehrtester Registrator, . . . Sie haben immer solch einen Hang zu den Poeticis gehabt, und da verfällt man leicht in das Fantastische und Romanhafte”.

(“Ah, most reverend Registrar, you have always been inclined to the *poetica*, and one lapses thus into fantasies and romantic flights”.)

Hoffmann's contents lists at the head of each vigil also reflect the clash of realms, either by juxtaposing the familiar and the fantastic (e.g., “Konrektor Paulmann's Medicinal Tobacco and the Gold-green Snakes” in the first vigil) or by circumscribing the patently fanciful in utterly prosaic terms. The “News of the Family of Archivarius Lindhorst”, with which the third vigil begins, constitute a pedigree cum creation story that in sheer extravagance far surpasses the similar passages in *Die Zauberflöte* (e.g., the Queen's speech in II, 8).

Yet Hoffmann's directs his irony equally at the protagonist. Anselmus has only to set foot into the story to upset the proverbial apple-cart (note the specificity of time and place):

Am Himmelfahrtstage, nachmittags um drei Uhr, rannte ein junger Mensch in Dresden durchs Schwarze Tor und geradezu in einen Korb mit äpfeln und Kuchen hinein, die ein altes Weib feilbot, so das alles, was der Quetschung glücklich entgangen, hinausgeschleudert wurde. . . .

(On Ascension Day, about three in the afternoon, a young man ran through the Black Gate of Dresden straight into a basket of apples and cakes, which an old woman was offering for sale, so that everything lucky enough to escape being squashed was scattered to the winds. . . .)

By the end of the first vigil, Anselmus is clasping the elder tree and shouting up into the branches after blue-eyed snakes - a grotesque parody of Romantic hankering after transcendent visions. He has no particularly striking creative gifts, though he makes music agreeably enough. His true passion is copying manuscripts neatly. Nonetheless, having made his protagonist the object of not wholly unjustified derision, the author asks in the fourth vigil for the reader's sympathy, even identification with Anselmus. In the seventh vigil, he makes the “gentle reader” a character in the equinox scene, and in the very role that Anselmus *should*, by conventional fairy-tale standards, have played himself, namely, that of rescuing his beloved from the clutches of evil. Finally, at the end of the twelfth and last vigil, the narrator climbs into his protagonist's shoes and visits Lindhorst himself.

The pointed immediacy of “Der goldne Topf” forces the reader's interpretative response but leaves a barb in every possible answer. To reject the fantastic elements categorically is to find oneself in the company of the patent philistines Paulmann and Heerbrand. Taking the Freudian point of view, one might regard Anselmus's chief motivation not as aspiration towards a higher world but as compulsion to escape the nuptial responsibilities of this world; but then what is one to make of the last vigil, with

its allegorical lushness and the author's expressed yearning to follow in the footsteps of his protagonist? One might explain away the magical events as an allegory for Anselmus's passage from the dreariness of daily routine into a dream world of poetic fantasy; but it is difficult to distinguish that passage from insanity and suicide. One is left to take it on faith that Anselmus's final fall into the arms of his beloved is not really a jump into the Elbe.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Hoffmann's diaries and letters say nothing about the impact of *Die Zauberflöte* or of *Undine* upon his modern-day *Märchen*. In a letter (19 August 1813) to his publisher, Hoffmann mentioned the Italian author Gozzi and Fouqué's *Sigurd* as influences (Schnapp 1974, 91). (At this early stage, the golden pot was to be a chamber pot, and Anselmus, as the first to urinate therein, would be transformed into a dragon.) And in the final vigil of the story, Hoffmann has Lindhorst ironically cite two other sources of information about elemental spirits, Gabalis (*recte* Nicolas de Montfaucon) and Emanuel von Swedenborg. Admittedly, the tidy, symmetrical equation Mozart + Fouqué = Hoffmann takes one only so far. Still, it seems hardly coincidental that Hoffmann refined his initial, somewhat scurrilous conception of "Der goldne Topf" while working on an operatic version of *Undine*, which hinges on the clash of ordinary life with the elemental realm; no less coincidental that he actually set about writing his story under the immediate impact of Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, which most likely suggested the "Egyptian" trappings and the notion of progress through symbolic trials toward both spiritual perfection and an ideal spouse. What places "Der goldne Topf" is a dissymmetrical relationship to the earlier works is, as Hoffmann explained to his publisher on 4 March 1814, "the idea of making the utterly fantastic, to which [as I believe] a deeper interpretation will lend the proper weight, impudently enter ordinary life, [which] is rather daring and, so far as I know, has not been used to this extent by any German author" (Schnapp 1974, 95).

In the final analysis, the symmetries among the three *Märchen* only highlight the dissymmetries among their conclusions. *Die Zauberflöte* is a musical morality play with an optimistic ending. Humankind may count fewer Tamins than Papagenos willing to forswear the joys and responsibilities of wisdom for a glass of good wine. Nonetheless, the opera seems to promise that, given sufficiently enlightened leadership, virtue and justice will ultimately prevail and create a paradise on earth (as the chorus sings in the finale of act 1). *Undine*, on the other hand, is more like a Passion play, wherein the supernatural represents not so much a model as it does the bright stone against which humanity is the foil. The workings of magic cannot transform human nature (as they do in Mozart's opera) but only reveal its tragic shortcomings. Love triumphs only after Huldbrand's death.

In “Der goldne Topf”, it is difficult to say what triumphs. Hoffmann’s withering irony sharpens the clash between the magical and the mundane but leaves the outcome undefined. All we know in the end is that Anselmus has escaped the earthly sphere, be it through insanity, suicide, or some manner of poetical transfiguration - what Lindhorst calls “life in Poesy, to which the holy unison of all Beings reveals itself as utmost secret”. Even this pleasant allegory allows the exact avenue of escape to remain unclarified, as if to express both the power and the danger of creative activity as Hoffmann viewed it: its power to lift the artist beyond the world of getting and spending, and the danger that he might never find his way back to it.

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NOTES

- ¹ The chapters of “Der goldne Topf” are labelled as “vigils”, for the narrator of the tale supposedly writes through successive nights (cf. *The Arabian Nights*), fortified and inspired by strong punch. For ease of reference to the various editions of the story, all internal references will be to the vigils. English translations of excerpted passages are adapted from Hoffmann (1969). Likewise, references for *Die Zauberflöte* will cite the given act and scene (e.g., I, 1), and references for *Undine* will cite the given chapter. Translations from *Undine* are adapted from Fouqué (1897).