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## **Charting the Visual Universes of E.T.A. Hoffmann Illustrators**

Since 2019, I have collected illustrated editions of works by E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), a German Romantic author, caricaturist, and composer. Hoffmann's fame comes from many fairy tales that delight as stories of enchantment and from stories of horror that probe the depths of the uncanny. As hallmarks of the German literary tradition, works like *The Golden Pot* (1813), *The Sandman* (1816) or *Nutcracker and Mice King* (1819) have never gone out of print, and new editions of his works, many embellished with illustrations and other accompaniments, appear every year. While my collection, at about 60 books, represents only a fraction of the results of this continuing popularity, it is part of my ongoing effort to connect with other Hoffmann scholars and bibliophiles as well as artists, antiquarian booksellers, and librarians, as I seek out especially limited-edition Hoffmann illustrations.

My scholarly interest in Hoffmann has been going on for much longer. His reception in Weimar Cinema was the subject of my first article publication in 2018, and *The Golden Pot* is subject of my third dissertation chapter. Despite this ongoing commitment, I did not become a collector until 2019, when I received a beautifully illustrated edition of Hoffmann's *The Golden Pot* after joining the E.T.A.-Hoffmann-Society. The pleasure of reading and enjoying this wonderfully illustrated edition, as part of a community of Hoffmann aficionados, inspired me to expand my own strictly scholarly Hoffmann collection with a new sense of rigor and ambition to include more such visually enjoyable works.

My collection primarily contains illustrated editions of Hoffmann from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I'm interested in illustrations for the manner in which they capture both the marvelous and monstrous aspect of Hoffmann's unique writing style, but even more so for the chance to contemplate an artist's engagement and reflect on the choices that they made. On a material level, the collection allows me to connect with the individual perspective of another person who reads and appreciates Hoffmann. Every illustration adds a remarkable interpretation to a rich tapestry, as it accounts for the subversion of everyday reality that so fascinates me when I read (or now rather re-read) Hoffmann's unique tales.

At the moment, I search for new books in two ways: First, whenever I am in Germany, I visit antiquarian booksellers who can always point me to an unexpected find, especially with regards to limited, numbered editions. Second, I often scour the holdings of local and research libraries for their Hoffmann illustrations and then undertake targeted searches with online booksellers like *abebooks* or *bookfinder*. In the future, I hope to expand my collection with illustrations from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with graphic novels (even more potent visual interventions!), and with translations. In the long run, I hope that this collection will one day become part of an exhibition of Hoffmann's visual reception and, in the far future, be given to a research library that could avail itself of my proclivity for an elaborate picture of Hoffmann's fruitful reception.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Hoffmann, Ernst Theodor Amadeus. 1913. *Nachtstücke* [*Night Pieces*]. Illustrated by Alfred Kubin. Munich: G. Müller.

Alfred Kubin's 1913 illustrated edition of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Night Pieces*, which contains his prized and celebrated tale *The Sandman*, is the pride and joy of my collection of Hoffmann illustrations. I first stumbled upon Kubin's copy in Princeton's Special Collections when I was researching Hoffmann illustrations to argue for the acquisition of contemporary artbooks (for more information, see the final two books). Austrian graphic artist Alfred Kubin was a member of the prolific group of artists *The Blue Rider* and associated with German Expressionism; Kubin's letters laud Hoffmann's works for his uncanny versatility and offered a surge of inspiration for this artist in his own novel (*The Other Side*, 1908), written in a Hoffmannian vein. A reprint of the *Night Pieces* that contains all of Kubin's drawings from 1980 is also in my possession and serves as my working copy when I study these materials. Once I have completed my Ph.D., it is my goal to edit a new accessible edition of Kubin's illustrated masterpiece with a critical edition, or even a translation, that elucidates the impact of the Romantic Hoffmann on this Expressionist graphic artist and the visual arts more generally.

--. 1961. *Dresdner Erzählungen* [*Tales from Dresden*]. Illustrated and with an afterword by Hanns Georgi. Berlin: Union Verlag.

Published in the German Democratic Republic, this collection contains all the stories and texts that E.T.A. Hoffmann wrote when he was living in Dresden, illustrated by the Dresden-based illustrator, painter, bookmaker, and educator Hanns Georgi. In his afterword, Georgi charts the traces of E.T.A. Hoffmann's erstwhile home in Dresden. His illustrations themselves, while being minute in their execution, give off a haphazard feel with great immediacy. This edition is of particular importance for me. In 2018, I worked with Georgi's afterword as a researcher at the University of Dresden and composed a brief essay on resonances of my then-hometown in Hoffmann's work. Back then, I had been unable to find my own copy, yet I did eventually have a chance to procure my own copy of the *Tales from Dresden*, which is currently at my parent's home, in The Strand shortly after I had moved to New York City in 2022. How this copy, ostensibly from the GDR, made its way to the Big Apple I do not know; other than my Ex Libris, there are no other indicators of ownership.

--. 1964. *Das öde Haus*. [*The Dreary House*] Illustrated with Woodcuts by Lieselotte Schwarz. Hamburg: Maximilian Gesellschaft.

This is one of the more recent additions to my collection; I discovered it last fall in a bookseller's store window in Leipzig and bought it immediately. Lieselotte Schwarz's woodcuts might appear to lack a certain attention to detail, but her emphasis on dark silhouettes and her brutal formalism appropriately conveys the uncanny register of *The Dreary House*. More importantly, this copy alerted me of the range of E.T.A. Hoffmann illustrations produced by Hamburg's Maximilian Society in the 1960s and put me on track to search for their limited editions.

--. 1990. *Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober: Ein Märchen*. [*Little Zaches called Zinnober: A Fairytale*]. Illustrated by Ernst Kößlinger with an essay by Franz Fühmann. Munich: C.H. Beck.

It is sometimes easy to forget that Hoffmann did not solely write dreary stories of horror; this copy of his *Little Zaches*, which appeared in a major German publishing house, wishes to attract children as readers of Hoffmann's fairytales with playful drawings that highlight the story's nonsensical and humorous qualities. I bought this particular copy in a used bookstore in Vienna in 2021.

--. 1997. *Die Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern* [*The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr together with a fragmentary Biography of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler on Random Sheets of Waste Paper*]. Illustrated by Michael Mathias Prechtel. Frankfurt: Büchergilde Gutenberg.

Prechtel's illustrations of major German literary works would be worth their own collection, as would be the illustrations of this major work of E.T.A. Hoffmann, the fictional autobiography of his cat: *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*. This illustrated edition, a hardcover at a length of about 12.5in, relies on a host of cartoonish images of cats in realist poses, adding to the surreal quality of the novel's anthropomorphic experimentations. I bought this copy along with the *Klein Zaches* mentioned above in Vienna.

--. 2019. *Der goldne Topf. Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit* [*The Golden Pot: A Fairy Tale from the New Age*]. Illustrated by Hans Günter Ludwig. Bamberg: E.T.A. Hoffmann Gesellschaft/Fränkische Bibliophilengesellschaft.

This is the one that started it all: Upon joining the E.T.A.-Hoffmann-Society in 2019, I received one of these gifts of a newly illustrated edition, which came out of a joint venture between the Society and the Association of Bibliophiles in Franconia. Ludwig's playful and colorful illustrations capture the phantasmagoric splendor of E.T.A. Hoffmann's fairytale, while the main characters, tinted in dark silhouettes, highlight the plots careening into vivid depictions of madness. This handsome copy of *The Golden Pot*, a story which is my favorite by Hoffmann, inspired me to seek out the other illustrations of his work that are in my collection.

--. 2020. *Dans la nuit d'E.T.A. Hoffmann* [*In The Night of E.T.A. Hoffmann*]. Translated by Philippe Forget, illustrated by Tristan Bonnemain, with an afterword by Élisabeth Lemirre and Jacques Cotin. Marseille: Les éditions du Typhon.

This French illustrated edition convenes various tales by E.T.A. Hoffmann that, somber in tone, often deal with the night-sides of Romantic existence. One of the premier French translators of Hoffmann, Forget took the opportunity to both revise his older translations and add previously

untranslated text by Hoffmann. Particularly memorable is a key scene from *The Sandman*, where Hoffmann's protagonist Nathanael falls down a tower at midday. Bonnemain's aslant illustration of this scene sets the falling man against a darkened sky, so that the sun at its peak appears like a brightly shining full moon. In this juxtaposition of written and illustrated word, Bonnemain's intervention taps into the choices of an individual translator and highlights the ability of the illustrator as a Hoffmann interpreter of equal rank.

--. 2022. *Zeichnungen und Karikaturen [Drawings and Caricatures]*. Edited by Claudia Liebrand. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Claudia Liebrand's edition of E.T.A. Hoffmann's own drawings and caricatures, a complete edition of his artistic oeuvre, appeared in the surge of publications during the bicentennial of his death in 2022, issued with the German publisher Reclam, who is known for its affordable low-price edition and its signature yellow paperbacks. Given that I (currently!) possess no first editions of Hoffmann, the facsimiles in Liebrand's book accompany my own study of Hoffmann's illustrators by allowing me, briefly as it were, access to the drawings that he himself produced, with noteworthy insights into the illustration's provenance. In this sense, the copy connects my private interest as a collector of Hoffmann illustrations with my scholarly work as a researcher of manuscript culture and book history in Germany around 1800.

--. 2023. *Die Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern [The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr together with a fragmentary Biography of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler on Random Sheets of Waste Paper]*. Illustrated by Steffen Faust.

--. 2023. *Der Goldene Topf. Ein Märchen aus der neuen Zeit [The Golden Pot: A Fairy Tale from the New Age]*. Illustrated by Steffen Faust.

In 2023, I procured two art books by the Berlin-based artist, bookmaker and graphic designer Steffen Faust, which are the latest additions to my collection and, for the moment, the ones I revere and cherish the most (they got their own custom-made folder!). These two artbooks contain significantly shortened text and are produced only on-demand. Laser-printed and hand-bound, they feature an original cover design, about a dozen illustrations, and are accompanied by a printed, full version of the text and by two original pen and ink drawings. The high realism of Faust's style, indebted to his career as a medical graphic artist, meshes well with a literary form that continuously crosses the lines between the fantastic, the uncanny, and the real. Similar to the Kubin edition, this version also has a Princeton tale: When I met Steffen Faust at a Bamberg Hoffmann conference in 2022, I approached Graphic Arts Librarian Molly Dotson to procure *The Golden Pot* and *The Sandman* for our own Special Collection. Upon inspecting these copies, I decided that my collection needed to have two as well, which is how I ended up with these wonderful renditions of my two favorite tales, *The Golden Pot* and *The Life and Views of Tomcat Murr*.

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## Optional Materials

*Given that I have acquired some new materials that move into the new direction of my collection since my original submission, I wanted to provide them for your consideration as well.*

--. 2020. *Der Sandmann [The Sandman]*. Written by Michael Mikolajczak and illustrated by Jacek Piotrowski. Leipzig: Kult Comics.

You can never have enough *Sandman*! This graphic novel adaptation, hopefully one of many more to come, offers a unique narrative and aesthetic take on a story that has been retold many times over. Mikolajczak's story loosely adapts Hoffmann's story and sets it in the modern age, whereas Piotrowski enriches the cartoonish visual syntax of his graphic novel with citations from art and film history (from F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* to Gustave Courpet's *L'Origine du monde* and Sandro Botticelli's *La nascita di Venere*). The combination of these two unique takes, with a visceral visual landscape and a rather liberal adaptation of the original tale, pushes the envelope of Hoffmann's quirky aesthetics perhaps even a bit too far, but provides an aesthetic spectacle second to none.

--. 2023. *The Wounded Storyteller: The Traumatic Tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann*. Illustrated by Natalie Frank and translated by Jack Zipes, with a foreword by Karen Russell. New Haven: Yale University Press.

This is the newest addition to my collection: beautifully translated by Jack Zipes, a premier authority on the study of fairytales in North America,<sup>1</sup> and just as beautifully illustrated by Natalie Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller* contains stories like *The Golden Pot* and *The Sandman* to *The Mystifying Child* and *The Mines of Falun*. Measuring 8.81 x 12.00in, this hardcover book has no aspirations to be a vademecum and rather warrants careful study and engagement at home. A distinct bordure contours the page of every tale and changes, slightly, over the progression of a narrative to let in more and more color; a centerpiece often bridges the fold between pages. Frank's illustrations of scenes within the story usually take over a full page, but oftentimes leap into the body of the text, as if trying to usurp it, and clamor in their colorful intensity for the reader's well-deserved attention. Like the bordure, the illustrations instantiate evocative interactions of the hues of the color spectrum. As Karen Russel writes in her foreword: "By mixing materials in unexpected ways, layering gouache and chalk on paper instead of canvas, Frank's drawings develop a paradoxical mix of density and lightness." (x) This "paradoxical mix", which permeates the book from cover to cover, lies at the spring and center

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<sup>1</sup> The Princeton University Library Special Collection has, in fact, recently acquired Jack Zipes's collection of fairy tale postcards. As they await further processing, see his catalogue *Tales of Wonder: Retelling Fairy Tales Through Picture Postcards* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

of Hoffmann's oeuvre; it's this exact paradox through which his texts, and their illustrations, cleave and suture art and life, madness and dream, as well as fantasy and reality.