

Repressive Politics and Satire in E. T. A. Hoffmann's Fairy-tales, "Little Zaches Acclaimed as Zinnober" and "Master Flea"

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Abstract

This article sets two of Hoffmann's satiric fairy-tales, "Little Zaches acclaimed as Zinnober" (1819) and "Master Flea" (1822), in their socio-political context of post-Napoleonic Europe. It identifies them as political allegories through which Hoffmann comments on the instability of western European politics in the early nineteenth century. We demonstrate how Hoffmann's position as a Prussian state judge informed his propensity for satirical observation couched in the genre of fairy-tale and variations thereof. We explore his scrutiny of hypocrisy, pride and nepotism, together with his particular focus on received ideas, such as Enlightenment rationalist principles. Concomitantly, we examine how he reworks familiar fairy-tale motifs in order to expose the effects of political repression. We compare the lampoon of his contemporary, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (founder of the Open Air Gymnasium Movement) in "Little Zaches", with his satirization of Privy Councillor von Kamptz (Director of Prussian Military Police) as Councillor Knarrpanti in "Master Flea", the first fairy-tale causing wry amusement, but the second leading to a high profile libel case. We align with Zipes's argument that Hoffmann's fairy-tales demonstrate connections between history, politics and the fairy-tale, and we show how Hoffmann's revisioning of fairy-tale motifs mediates political satire. We extend Zipes by emphasizing Hoffmann's use of the increasingly popular Oriental, and especially Arabian, tale. This article concludes that Hoffmann contributed significantly to the critical acclaim of the satiric fairy-tale, and that his loss of literary judgement in "Master Flea" accounts for the legal consequences which he suffered.

Keywords: satire, politics, fairy-tale, motif, Oriental, Jahn, Kamptz, Knarrpanti

1. Introduction

1.1 Hoffmann in Prussia 1809

In August 1809, while struggling to establish his musical career in Bamberg, southern Prussia (Germany), Hoffmann wrote to a music publishing company: "This odious [Napoleonic] war has once more destroyed all my prospects and hopes" (Sahlin, 1977: 157). He was referring to the precarious state of the theatres in Bamberg, Dresden and Leipzig, where he worked variously as a conductor, composer and theatre factotum. Constant troop movements caused genteel families to leave the city for their own safety, thus depriving him of supplementary income as a singing and piano teacher, principally for their marriageable daughters. By borrowing money from friends and writing musical reviews for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, he saved himself and his wife from starvation.

1.2 Prussia 1806-16

Upheaval in Europe had caused widespread displacement, suffering and death to civilians and soldiers alike. In November 1806, when Hoffmann was a civil servant and lawyer in Warsaw, the occupying French régime dissolved the Prussian Government. In 1807 all Germans remaining in Warsaw were required to take an oath of allegiance to the French, which Hoffmann refused to do, and consequently lost his position. Despite petitioning the Lord High Chancellor in Berlin and the Prussian King Friedrich III, he did not receive back pay due to him (126). Destitution, together with the illness of his wife and death of his two-year-old daughter, rendered his personal situation truly desperate. In May 1808 he remarked in a letter sent from Berlin to his boyhood friend, Hippel, that "Bread, currently priced beyond the means of the poor and often not to be had at all, was the cause of disorderly

uprisings here for a few days” (136). His livelihood between 1813 and 1814, when he worked in the theatres in Dresden and Leipzig, was haphazard as French and German theatre-goers braved the perilous streets. The citizens of Dresden endured the collateral damage of explosions from advancing and retreating forces throughout August 1813. Graphic descriptions in his letters from Dresden at that time give an indication of how vividly he could write. Hoffmann to Kunz, his publisher, on 8 September describes the consequences of living with stray grenades: “... right now a funeral cortège is leaving the house opposite. Only yesterday a young man died there; his leg had been torn off in his own room by a piece of shrapnel on the 26 August” (206). Hoffmann witnessed the defeat of the French forces in the Battle of Dresden from the roof of a city church. Having barely scraped an existence through music and writing during the previous six years, Hoffmann took up an ill-paid position as a lawyer on his return to Berlin in 1814. By 1816 he had risen to the position of judge in the Supreme Court of Justice. His famous review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, his own opera *Undine* (1816) and the publication of numerous tales, short fiction and two novels testify to a prodigious work rate, all executed alongside his professional commitments. Extraordinarily during this period, coterminous with the Wars of Liberation (*Befreiungskriege*, 1813-15), Hoffmann’s literary career began to flourish.

1.3 Prussia 1815-22

The aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the restoration of Prussian rule promised less political stress, but this proved not to be the case. The cultural imperative to maintain a sense of national identity during foreign occupation, which entailed the celebration of Germanic history and legend, territory and soil, folklore, art, music and language (Noyes, 2012: 20), became strongly punitive in the decade that followed French capitulation and The Congress of Vienna (1815). The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 were symptomatic of this trend by censoring the press, installing inspectors in the universities, banning all student fraternities, and setting up King Friedrich III’s commission to stamp out all reforming zeal and any so-called anti-Prussian activities. In 1818 Hoffmann, as a high-ranking judge, was appointed to the King’s reactionary commission. While some investigations were justified, others resulted in the patently totalitarian arrest of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn who founded the Open Air Gymnasium Movement (*Turnverein*). Even though in his fiction Hoffmann lampooned Jahn and students who followed his ideas, he was enraged by the injustice of this arrest. Meticulously fair-minded, he defended Jahn against prosecution, and, in 1821, asked to be withdrawn from what he perceived to be a repressive commission. In his literary fairy-tale “Master Flea”, he also overtly lampooned Privy Councillor Karl Albert von Kamptz, judge and director of the Prussian Ministry of Police in charge of pursuing apparently unpatriotic activities. The entire script of “Master Flea” was confiscated from the printers and Hoffmann was sued for libel. The outcome of the libel case would almost certainly have been Hoffmann’s dismissal from his post, but his painful death through spinal paralysis in June 1822 brought an end to these proceedings (Sahlin, 1977: 17-19). Thus, Hoffmann’s professional and creative life was enmeshed in the war and postwar politics of his historical moment. This article will explore how his fairy-tales, “Little Zaches acclaimed as Zinnober” (1819) and “Master Flea” (1822) mediated and indirectly commented upon the social and political landscape of western Europe in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a period commonly associated with receding Enlightenment and burgeoning Romantic ways of thinking.

2. Method

2.1 Methodological Approach

Zipes, whose groundbreaking criticism in the 1980s contributed to a re-evaluation of the political significance of fairy-tales, offers a starting point for our comparison of “Little Zaches” and “Master Flea”. We will explore Hoffmann’s creative reworking of conventional fairy-tale motifs and their satiric effect from a Zipean socio-historical angle, but also combine this with a formal literary approach, such as Lüthi uses to explicate the morphology of the fairy-tale (1967: 5). Lüthi’s approach involves a formal and literary analysis of recurring motifs and generic plot elements, and the differentiation of these from themes. Zipes describes Hoffmann’s handling of the literary fairy-tale as “highly innovative, sophisticated, and provocative[ly] countercultural”, and places him with Ludwig Tieck, Adalbert Chamisso, Charles Dickens, Hans Christian Andersen, George Macdonald, Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde (2012: xii; 2002: 75-103). One of Zipes’s criteria for radical fairy-tales is that:

[t]he aesthetic arrangement and structure of the [fairy] tales were derived from the way the narrator or narrators perceived the possibility for resolution of social conflicts and contradictions or felt change was necessary. (2012: 7)

Given their historical context, it is probable that “Little Zaches” and “Master Flea” mediated the political upheavals of their time as well as entertaining their readers. It is also clear that some social “change was necessary” (7) after Napoleon’s defeat. If Zipes’s argument holds true, then Hoffmann’s lively use of fairy-tale motifs had the

capacity to make a political point, whereas any falling-off of this genre's conventions would weaken their effect. The main focus of our critical analysis is to show that political satire is more consistent in "Little Zaches" than in "Master Flea".

2.2 Relevant Scholarship

Peters' analysis of Hoffmann's satire and humour in relation to contemporary political, social and artistic issues covers a wide range of fiction, though not specifically his fairy-tales. Comparing early with late, she maintains that the satire of his early work gives way to the conciliatory humour of his later work (1974: 61 and 65). Peters argues judiciously that satire permeates his fiction, conceding that "the fairy-tale form does not preclude content appropriate to satire" (69). Our stance is that fairy-tales are especially suited to satire. In one of Zipes's seminal works on German fairy-tales, he justly praises Hoffmann's consummate skill at "disguis[ing] his sharp barbs against the Prussian state with humor". We align with his reading of "Little Zaches" as an explicit political allegory against "police repression" and "the absurdity of a social reality that . . . was busy repressing the forces of the imagination" (2002: 96-7), but we give weight in this tale to Hoffmann's reworking of motifs from the Arabian *One thousand and one nights*, not mentioned in Zipes. Dickson's study explores the complexity of the perspectives of narrators and characters, and the shifting individualistic perceptions of the reader in German Romantic prose works (1994: 49-57). She relates this to the Romantic emphasis on individual experience and affirms that "the Romantics demonstrate in the narrative form their awareness that every event or idea gains its meaning from its immediate context" (57). This narratological approach interprets Romantic prose works as displaying relative truths (55), such as the different versions of the Gameheh story in "Master Flea" (52) (3.3.3). Kremer takes this a stage further by deconstructing the irony and "polyphonic" (multi-voiced) discourses of Hoffmann's fiction (1999: 12). He comments on the use of the grotesque in "Little Zaches" and "Master Flea" (104-19), but maintains that all the genres Hoffmann uses, including fairy-tales, sustain indeterminate meanings and contradictions (12). By contrast, we commit ourselves to interpretation, however qualified, of Hoffmann's literary motifs as satiric devices in their historical context. Vitt-Maucher's book on Hoffmann's seven fairy-tales adds to their critical acclaim and applauds the influence of the tales on later writers. She draws attention to his sinuous use of literary devices and their defamiliarizing effect of humour and satire, arguing that his blending of fantasy and realism and use of multiple narratives undermine preconceived ideas, whether social or literary (1989: 13 and 16-17). Her scholarly affirmation of the quality of Hoffmann's fairy-tales, when judged as breaking new ground rather than following conservative discursive practices, aligns with our own belief that "Little Zaches" and "Master Flea" are important. We have emphasized Oriental influences rather more than she. Our argument below will also engage with other critics who have commented on these two tales.

3. Data and Results

3.1 Tomcat Murr

Hoffmann satirized German student activities and Jahn's self-importance in both his novel, *Tomcat Murr* (1820-22), and the fairy-tale "Little Zaches" (1819) without attracting opprobrium. In the novel, his jibe against pomposity is veiled in comedy and couched in an animal fable. The animal narrator, Tomcat Murr, is anthropomorphized and interiorized. His feline autobiography is interwoven with the story of Johannes Kreisler, a protégé of the cat's owner, Master Abraham. Master Abraham, an equivalent to Doctor Prosper Alpanus in "Little Zaches", is a magus, scholar and maker of fireworks and illusions resident at a petty German royal court. Tomcat Murr is derided by his fellow cat, Muzius, for his cosy life and decline into "base Philistinism" (Hoffmann, Vol. 5, 264, hereafter only volume and/or page number given). Even Master Abraham comments that he is not the cat he once was, now solely concerned with eating fishy morsels and sleeping under the stove. After bidding farewell to Muzius, a leader of a student fraternity, with "an honest German paw-shake in the good old style" (264), Tomcat Murr witnesses the huge leap that Muzius takes out of the window onto the roof next door. This leads Murr to reflect that all cats are innate gymnasts who need no vaulting or climbing pole. The allusion here to Jahn's gymnastic movement begins to emerge. Murr's new-found desire to belong to the tomcat student club is initially shown as energizing and positive, but characteristically Hoffmann mocks all movements and counter-movements even-handedly. For example, Muzius, despite his praise of the high ideals of fraternity, eats all the tasty supper Master Abraham has put down for Murr. Narrator Murr naively describes his initiation into the tomcat student club, assuring his readers that these ceremonies bear no resemblance to those of secret societies, which were widespread at that time and always considered politically subversive by the Prussian government. However, the rituals are ridiculous. Authentic German drinking songs are listed and several verses given in full. Murr describes his own magnificent extemporizing as he contributes to the drunken singing, and ventures to wonder why, by the end of the evening, he feels the need to use his tail "as a balancing pole" and has to be helped home (268). The vivacity of Hoffmann's writing, his use of fabular allegory, and the liberal spread of satire render the mockery of

Jahn and his clubs humorous rather than cutting. There is a joy in the writing, which is replicated in a spoof student drinking song that Hoffmann composed for the tomcat club, in which vocalists are required to meow, screech and caterwaul (Allroggen, 1970: 84-5).

3.2 “Little Zaches”

Jahn, anyone with status or political power, and their acolytes are all lampooned in “Little Zaches” to amusing, but light-hearted, effect. Jahn inaugurated the first open-air gymnasium in Berlin in 1811, and pioneered gymnastics in the service of Germanic nation-building during French occupation between 1806-1813. His ideas and practices were adopted by student groups (*Burschenschaften*), many of whom, like Jahn, had fought against invading French forces. In post-Napoleonic Prussia, mere suspicion of anti-state activities was enough to trigger Jahn’s arrest and imprisonment in 1819. “Little Zaches” was written and published just before this event, and presents many caricatures of students, their academic professors, physicians, ministers, princes, and petty officials in high office. The most likely candidate for a lampoon of Jahn is the Professor of Natural History at the University of Kerepes, Mosch Terpin. He enjoys a huge student following because his apparently empirical physics experiments provide them with answers that a child might understand to all the grand questions of the universe, for example: that darkness stems from lack of light. After his lectures, these same students head for the fencing-ground, thereby gaining enlightenment of mind and invigoration of body in one reductive operation (552). The ridiculed Terpin is forced to question his self-importance by the end of the fairy-tale. He capitulates to a different world order in which witches, sorcerers, fairies and magic mirrors are as important as science, and he acquires a sense of wonder when he sees the library and the experiments with strange plants and animals of his counterpart figure, the magus Prospero Alpanus (646). The name Prospero is almost certainly an allusion to Shakespeare’s Prospero from *The tempest*. A variation of Prospero’s staff which he breaks when he “abdure(s) all magic” (Act V. i. 54) is Prospero Alpanus’s magic cane. It has a shiny knob that creates magical illusions and changes of perception. Perhaps this motif has metamorphosed into the rather saccharin fairy wand in the modern marketing of fairy-tales.

The supplementary title to “Little Zaches acclaimed as Zinnober” is “A fairy-tale”. Not only does it use generic plot elements, such as a test for the hero to win the heroine, an epic battle between opposing forces, and a wedding at the end, it is also a panoply of fairy-tale motifs to which Hoffmann gives a satiric twist. Sources for these variant fairy-tale motifs cannot always be pinned down to a specific text because they have migrated through oral delivery, hand-written texts, print and translation. However, repeated patterns in “Little Zaches” similar to Arabian, Persian, Egyptian, Indian, Moorish, Greek, and west European legends and folk-tales invite cross-connections. With regard to contemporary Oriental influences, Hoffmann’s “Little Zaches” has a similar imagined geography, though comic difference of tone, to Goethe’s cycle of exotic lyrical poems entitled *West-eastern Divan* (*West-österlicher Divan*), also published in 1819 and shaped by the 1815 German translation of the Persian poet Hafiz by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (Warner 2012: 309). A little earlier the Sanskrit scholar, philologist and Romantic philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel, published *About the language and wisdom of the Indian* (*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*) which contains translations from the Bhagavad-Gita and other Indian mythologies (1808) (Willson 1964: 219). Knowledge of the Arabian *One thousand and one nights*, specifically referred to in “Little Zaches”, could also have percolated down to Hoffmann via Antoine Galland’s translation into French (1704-6) (Warner, 2012: 12), which was transmitted through J. H. Voss’s translation of Galland into German (1781-5), and then Christoph Martin Wieland’s reworking of these tales in his *Jinnistan, or selected fairy and ghost stories* (*Dschinnistan, oder auserlesene Feen- und Geistermärchen*, 1786-7 and 1789) (Buch, 1992: 37). (Maximilian Habicht’s fifteen volume translation into German of *One thousand and one nights* (1825) was not available to Hoffmann, but is indicative of contemporary cultural interests). Alternatively, Hoffmann was intimately familiar with Mozart’s *The magic flute*, which uses an Oriental fairy-tale from Wieland’s *Dschinnistan* collection for the plot, as do many fairy-tale operas of this period (Buch, 2004: 206-8).

Furthermore, academics in Europe, including the German scholar Jörgen Zoega, were sent copies by the British Museum of the three scripts - Egyptian hieroglyphs, Coptic script and ancient Greek - incized on the Rosetta Stone originally found by a Napoleonic soldier in Egypt in 1799. Although the Greek text was translated by 1803, philological work on the other two scripts continued throughout Hoffmann’s lifetime (MacGregor 2012: 180-1). In this context, his extensive reading, polymathic knowledge and linguistic versatility opened up a huge range of textual sources to him. The publication of German translations of foreign texts was gathering pace at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, owing partially to a burgeoning national interest in the roots of language. His writing was also enriched by conversations with fellow artists about western and Oriental culture. Hoffmann remained eclectic throughout his oeuvre, unlike the Grimm brothers, especially Wilhelm who in later editions of their collected fairy-tales Germanized their style and content (and expurgated overt sexual references) (Zipes, 2007: xxxix). “Little Zaches” displays an exuberance of inventive and transformational fairy-tale motifs.

Examples can be found from 3.2.4-3.2.11, while paragraphs 3.3.1-3.3.9 focus on “Master Flea”. Section 4 considers how these fairy-tales may be read as socially and politically engaged.

“Little Zaches” begins with the frame story of a peasant, Liese, who carries her deformed, inarticulate and nasty son, Zaches, in a basket. In conventional fairy-tale fashion, the fairy Rosenschön, alias Rosengrünschön and Rosenbelverde, weaves a well-intentioned spell to raise mother and son from their afflictions. Zaches is known as Zinnober while he rises to the position of First Minister of State and personal aide to Prince Barsanuph, but “Little Zaches” is no rags-to-riches archetypal folk-tale. At the end, after Rosenbelverde’s spell is dispelled by the magus Prosper Alpanus, she uses her magic to get Liese promoted to onion-seller by royal appointment to the court. This retelling of the common theme of elevation of the rural poor to royalty (a consolatory element of many oral folk-tales and literary fairy-tales) allows Hoffmann to satirize hypocrisy and ritual. The Prince and his chamberlains sob briefly into their handkerchiefs to mourn the passing of the “great” leader Zinnober, no doubt aided by the onions, and the Prince professes to see a vision of Zinnober bidding him to “Buy – eat these onions my Prince – the good of the state demands it!” (Vol. 3, 643). There follows a magnificent state funeral at which all attendees are blind to the foppery.

The beginning and end of Liese and Zaches-Zinnober’s story provide a frame for many inner stories which branch round each other. The initial springboard for the development of one inner story is that the new Prince Paphnutius, unlike his father who tolerated the presence of magic, wishes to banish all fairies and jinn to the land of Jinnistan (the European and Arabian terms are used interchangeably). He plans to introduce the principles of Enlightenment rationality and science to his people. The ironic outcome is that the kingdom becomes stultified and corrupt; nor can magic be entirely eradicated. Rosenbelverde lives in hiding in a convent. She is a remnant of a once happy “jinn-like” kingdom resembling *A thousand and one nights*, in which fairies and magic were part of everyday life and where she grew roses and talked to the forest. Even now as a nun, she is suspected of flying a witch’s broomstick and runs the risk of being ducked in the pond by local peasants. The fusion of Arabian and European fairy-tale motifs continues throughout. For example, Zaches/Zinnober, with his bulbous body, short legs and grating voice, is frequently likened to a mandrake. According to witchcraft and ancient lore, if the mandrake is pulled out of the ground, its piercing squeal kills whoever holds it. The narrator also calls him “Hop-o-my-thumb”, which refers to a French literary fairy-tale by Perrault (1697) reused by the Grimms in “Thumbling” (1812), a story in which a tiny boy achieves great things (Zipes, 2007: 174-80). Furthermore, in “Little Zaches”, Balthasar, the young poet-hero in love with Mosch Terpin’s daughter Candida, is associated with a thoroughly Germanic motif. At a point of extreme melancholy, when Candida is betrothed to Zaches/Zinnober whom she appears to love, he senses the water sprites in the forest stream looking at him and “extending their snow-white arms out of the waves to drag him down into the chilly depths” (575). The capacity to change shape and size is a recurring fairy-tale motif which itself takes many forms, for example shapeshifters, metamorphosed victims of enchantment, or a jinn in a bottle. Hoffmann’s variations are quirky. For example, Balthasar’s student friend Fabian, who prefers Terpin’s lectures to Prosper Alpanus’s spells, is a stock figure - the callow, accident-prone youth - from Oriental fairy-tales. As a punishment Prosper brings a new understanding of enchantment to Fabian by clothing him in a magic coat which keeps growing and shortening its sleeves and tails (596-7). The coat renders him a laughing-stock and anticipates the thematic preoccupation with clothing and tailoring explored in 3.2.9. Prosper Alpanus himself fuses attributes from legends of holy men, magi, and magicians of white magic from many countries, west and east.

Prosper Alpanus enters the story in a magic flying vehicle whose wheels make musical crystal sounds as they turn. It is drawn by snow-white unicorns, driven by a silver pheasant and held aloft by the wings of a rose-beetle (583). He can also fly on dragonflies and rose beetles. The motif of flying and aerial transport gradually spread from the east, transforming European fairy-tales over centuries (Warner, 2012: 330-34). Flying is in stark contrast to the Enlightenment project of Prince Phanutius whose Ministers propose that, in order to prevent illegal flying, all remaining fairies in the land must surrender their gold-harnessed doves and swans to the State, and be taught to knit socks for soldiers. The birds should be roasted for their meat and the fairies’ flying horses de-winged and made into useful beasts of burden (Vol. 3, 545). Prosper’s house is an amalgam of Germanic and Oriental elements. The two huge frogs in his garden transform themselves into gardeners, which is a banal, domestic variation of the Grimms’ “Frog Prince” (Zipes, 2007: 2), while Prosper himself greets his visitors wearing Brahmin-like Indian clothes. His marble table, which bears Oriental manuscript-books, rests on Egyptian stone sphinxes, and the veined marble of the floor is, on closer inspection, a mass of hieroglyphs. Opening a book causes the hieroglyphs to spring from the pages and dance like little imps until Prosper captures and forces them back between the covers. (J. K. Rowling has recently re-used this motif in her *Harry Potter* series of novels). Prosper also makes use of a magic mirror and lens which he employs in the battle against the oppressor, Zaches/Zinnober.

Our contention is that, thematically, this range of fairy-tale motifs celebrates multifarious opposition to narrow Enlightenment rationalism allied to political repression.

One of many possible allegorical readings of “Little Zaches”, which can be threaded out of its branching narrative patterns and repeated motifs, is as a parody of the operations of a police state. Bruning’s critical emphasis differs from this. He interprets the antagonism in “Little Zaches” against “Enlightenment Police” (Vol. 3, 609) and Philistinism in general as resulting from Hoffmann’s personal aesthetic antipathy to lumpen bourgeois values which prevent music, art and writing from flourishing (1955: 121). Bruning argues that, despite “[t]he late romantic tendency toward criticism of society becom[ing] apparent . . . Hoffmann’s interest in the topics of the day should not be over-estimated” (119). In our view, in line with Zipes (2007: 135-42), Hoffmann’s fairy-tales are politicized throughout, as well as bearing on his personal situation. In Prince Barsanuph’s kingdom, nepotism is rife. A loyal minister usurped by Zaches/Zinnober attempts suicide; warrants for arrest are issued without proof, as in the case of Balthazar; undesirable fairies are expelled or forced to conform; and any activities using the imagination are considered to spread a subversive “secret poison” (Vol. 3, 545). Rosenbelverde inadvertently facilitates the rise of a corrupt government by casting a spell on Zaches/Zinnober so that his bad deeds are blamed on others, and the good deeds of others are accredited to him. This magical enchantment is renewed every nine days when she uses her magic comb in his flowing hair to maintain three red-gold hairs across the parting. Her motive as a good fairy had been to disarm the gift of the bad step-mother, Nature, who afflicted him as a boy. In a conventional tale, his good fortune would have continued, but Zaches/Zinnober abuses his fairy godmother’s gift, rather than seeking self-improvement. Prosper Alpanus’s array of magical resources solves the riddle of where Zaches/Zinnober’s power over all those in his immediate vicinity comes from. There is probably an allusion here to an ancient (biblical) idea that strength lies in one’s hair, or perhaps a reworking of a motif from the Grimms’ tale, “The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs” in which the hero cannot marry the princess until he has acquired the three hairs (Zipes, 2007: 135-42). Having redirected Rosabelverde’s magical powers, Prosper Alpanus provides Balthazar with a magic lens by means of which he can pluck out Zaches/Zinnober’s three magic hairs and burn them. This reworked fairy-tale test enables Balthazar to win and marry his beloved Candida. “Little Zaches” ends in the genre of a festive comedy, with allusions to Shakespeare’s *The tempest* and *A midsummer-night’s dream*. However, the sentimental convention of a fairy-tale wedding is subverted when Rosabelverde recognizes that a “happy-ever-after” outcome would not be possible without her gift of a magic necklace for the bride. These fairy-tale motifs signify much more than Hoffmann’s personal struggle, as Bruning argues, to become a successful professional artist. They expose the current state of social and political turmoil. The ignominious death of the tyrant, Zaches/Zinnober, jammed in a pot with his little legs pointing upwards, is symptomatic in allegorical terms of a broad social yearning for freedom from extreme political repression.

Vitt-Maucher (1989: 86) usefully reminds us that Baudelaire was the first to praise Hoffmann’s supreme execution of “absolute comedy” which combines incongruities that prompt instant laughter from the reader, with “significant comedy” which lends itself to reflection, analysis and satire (Baudelaire, 2006: 152-3). Extending Vitt-Maucher’s observation, it is clear that the mock-heroic description of Zaches/Zinnober fulfils Baudelaire’s criteria of comedy both in the immediate effect of a comic figure with grotesque speech and locomotion, and in a slowly developing satire against repression. The convulsion of change in the fictional city of Kerepes, brought about by the toppling of Zaches/Zinnober and the elevation of poet-hero Balthazar, is symptomatic of contemporary political, ideological and social upheaval. However, “Little Zaches” cannot be read as a simple, polarized allegory of Enlightenment and Romantic thinking. The extremes of both positions are mocked in a Baudelairian manner, in that Balthazar’s Romantic quest and his dreamy disposition are ironized through “significant comedy”, in even balance with Hoffmann’s persistent ridicule, in “absolute” and “significant” terms, of distorted Enlightenment principles represented by Zaches/Zinnober. Although Balthazar’s striving might promise the re-establishment of vibrant, honest and creative government, the subversive fairy-tale ending shows that utopias are impossible.

The fairy-tale motif which carries Hoffmann’s political satire most strongly is clothing, especially insignias of office. Prosper Alpanus’s punishment of Fabian’s disbelief in the power of magic and the imagination causes his coats to grow and shrink at the sleeves and tails. No matter how many tailors he employs to make him yet another suit, the result is the same. Consequently, he is suspected of belonging to the Sects of the Sleevians or the Tailsians. He is thought by Ministers of State to be an agitator in a secret society. Prosper saves him from this misjudgement by sending him a small tortoise-shell tin from which “billowed forth a marvellously-made black tail coat of the finest fabric” (Vol. 3, 623), which fits his body perfectly. The motif fuses a Swiftian style of satire, such as occurs in *Gulliver’s travels* (Swift, 1963: 43-5), and the Arabian motif of a large jinn in a small bottle. One theme suggested by the motif is the role of the onlooker and the difference between seeing and interpreting what is seen.

The various princes at the court in Kerepes are vain and their surrounding sycophantic ministers are on the alert for scapegoats in order to protect their own favoured positions. Therefore, wilful narrow vision is a self-serving strategy. This theme is reinforced by the motif of Prospero's magic mirror, the penetrating ray from the knob of his cane, and the lens he gives to Balthasar to see Zaches/Zinnober's three red hairs, all of which allow the truth to be seen. Hoffmann revisits the theme of perception and the motif of the lens in "Master Flea".

The theme of truth, illusion and disguise is archetypal, but Hoffman's rendering thereof in "Little Zaches" may have its roots in the medieval Spanish-Moorish fairy-tale, "The King and the Three Imposters", from a collection of fifty-one moral fables entitled *El Conde Lucanor*, by Don Juan Manuel, Prince of Villena. Hoffmann probably knew of these through the plays of Pedro Calderón de la Barca who reused Manuel's stories (Manuel, 1335: 52-8). Calderón, along with Shakespeare, was highly acclaimed by the German Romantics, their plays being translated into German by Friedrich Schlegel. Hoffmann was closely involved in the production of at least one of Calderón's plays, praising them highly while he worked in the theatre at Bamberg (Sahlin, 1977: 170). In 1807, he wrote his own libretto, *Liebe und Eifersucht*, based on Calderón's play, *The scarf and the flower* (*La banda y la flor*) translated by Schlegel. In one of Manuel's stories, three charlatans offer to make the King a magnificent coat threaded with gold and silver whose rich cloth cannot be seen by illegitimate sons. Since primogeniture was the law in Moorish culture, the King believes this would be worth the great expense. Fearing the loss of their wealth and position if they do otherwise, many nobles claim to be able to see the coat. Even the King himself adjusts his perception, saying he can see what is not there. Finally a negro slave whose paternity is irrelevant points out their faulty vision, while the imposters meanwhile have escaped with the silver and gold. (A French version of this fairy-tale, entitled "The robe of sincerity", was embedded in Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier's novel, *The dark tower* (1705); Hans Christian Andersen later wrote a Danish version, "The emperor's new clothes" (1837)).

In Hoffmann's retelling of Manuel's story or its derivatives, royalty and its entourage are obsessed with maintaining status. When Prince Barsanuph, one of several like-minded Princes, takes Zaches/Zinnober as his personal minister, he awards him the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger. Since the ribbon of the Order will not stay on his bulbous body, the Prince orders all the great thinkers in the land to convene for a week to find a solution. Finally the problem is solved by the appointment of a theatrical costumier who affixes twenty diamond buttons to Zaches/Zinnober's chest and back and then attaches the ribbon to the buttons. Everyone agrees that Zaches/Zinnober looks magnificent and all aspire to gaining different levels of buttonage themselves. The row of buttons down the chest may allude to the ridiculous row of buttons on *zanni* (clowns) in *commedia dell'arte* illustrations, and to pot-bellied *gobbi* (dwarfs) by French engraver Jacques Callot, whose work Hoffmann knew well (Kahane, 1976: figs. 5-20; Zerner, 1970: figs. 23a-23d). Both allusions ridicule officialdom. Manuel's negro slave finds his equivalent in Balthasar, the poet, lover, outsider and wanderer in the forest. By breaking into the formal celebration of Candida's betrothal to Zaches/Zinnober and ripping out his magic hairs, he undoes the spell of false perception. Unable to see before, one by one the guests, ministers and Candida herself now see that Zaches/Zinnober is nothing more than a vindictive, misshapen dwarf. The Prince, however, maintains the charade, and his servants are too afraid to believe in what they see.

3.3 "Master Flea"

Hoffmann's satiric lashes are broad. No character in "Little Zaches" escapes without some kind of mockery, whether gentle or cutting. On the whole, the phantasmagoria of fairy-tale motifs in "Little Zaches" mollifies the effects of satire. Hoffmann's allusions to fencing and student clubs, for which Jahn was well known in real life (1.3), render Mosch Terpin a likely lampoon. Von Kamptz, the police commissioner who had Jahn arrested, and instigated the libel case against Hoffmann, is not individually identifiable in the many caricatures in "Little Zaches". Even if Hoffmann mentally associated his opponent with Zaches/Zinnober, there is no transparency. Rather, the dwarf's rise to power and cataclysmic fall constitute a generalized satire couched in a radical fairy-tale against political drift towards totalitarianism. In comparison, von Kamptz is easily recognizable in particular passages in "Master Flea". From his death-bed, Hoffmann was obliged to write a defence of the satiric effects of fairy-tales and fables, claiming that he had not targeted anyone personally in "Master Flea". (Sahlin, 1977: 324-7). The defence calls on the authority of a German man-of-letters, Karl Flögel, who wrote a *History of grotesque comedy* (*Geschichte des Groteskekomischen*) (1788). Flögel's underlying theory is that people need comic relief and that "comic caricature is as old as the hills" (Barasch, 1968: 50-1). Hoffmann argues, using multiple examples, that all satirists are to a certain degree vilified for being offensive, whatever genre or medium they use. His explanation of why he wrote to his publishers, Wilmans of Frankfurt, asking them to remove particular passages, is plausible but untrue (Peters, 1974: 69-72). He maintained that while lying ill, he began worrying that it might be possible to read into the text what was not intended, but which could be considered generally offensive (Sahlin, 1977: 326). He pointed out that his request for redaction had been interpreted as proof of his guilt, whereas it

pre-dated rather than resulted from the accusation of libel. However, this was not the first time he had made a political faux pas. In 1802, in his early career as a lawyer, he had drawn and distributed at a carnival ball grotesque cartoons of recognizable military commanders, thus incurring a professional setback. In the von Kamptz libel case, his written defence was not tested in the dock because of his painful death in June 1822.

“Master Flea” is an assemblage, or what Lüthi calls a “constellation” (1967: 3), of variant fairy-tale motifs; its themes concern self-development, hypocrisy, civil liberties, the importance of the imagination and the power of love. Unlike Hoffmann’s “Little Zaches” and another fairy-tale, “The king’s bride”, “Master Flea” is not set entirely within a realm of fantasy. Instead, in Hoffmann’s customary manner, it smoothly integrates a realist world with a fairy-tale world. As in his novel, *Tomcat Murr*, and most of his fairy-tales, namely “The golden pot”, “A new year’s eve adventure”, “The nutcracker and the mouse-king”, “The strange child”, and “Princess Brambilla”, elements and characters of a fairy-tale world have a material presence in a fictionalized city, with its everyday activities and domestic settings. McClain argues convincingly that “Master Flea” is an excellent example of psychological realism, employing a “fairy-tale dream-vision” to synthesize the protagonist’s self-understanding (1955: 77), but we would argue that it is more groundbreaking than this. Its realism-fantasy mode anticipates twentieth-century magic realism (Note 1). “Master Flea” employs involuted narrative strands which embed dreams and tales-within-tales. The existence of characters’ avatars permits them to move uninterruptedly between empirical Frankfurt and the fantastic location of Famagusta. Peregrinus Tyss, the main human character, gradually comes to understand that he is both Tyss of Frankfurt and King Sekakis of a co-existent mythical kingdom. A full analysis of “Master Flea” is beyond the scope of this article, but an indication of its innovative and more prosaic features follows from 3.3.3 onwards. (For a useful chronological summary of the ravelled plots and an interpretation of the motif of optical lenses, see Holbeche’s extended account (1975: 189-215)). Our aims are to explore the allegorical implications of “Master Flea” as a fairy-tale that scrutinizes political, social or psychological factors which cripple self-development, and to show the unevenness of presentation in passages which attracted the wrath of von Kamptz.

Peregrinus Tyss is a thirty-three year old man, child-like and reclusive, but generous-hearted. His adventures constitute a journey towards self-understanding and betrothal to Rosie Lämmerhirt, a skilful apprentice bookbinder. The adventures begin when the fairy-world bursts into his life with full force in the human form of a shape-shifter. She is both Dörtje Elwerdink from Frankfurt and Princess Gameheh from exotic Famagusta. Hoffmann gives Persian names to most of the characters from this magic realm. Appearing on Christmas Eve as a scintillating, erotic and beautiful woman, she plays the part of a helpless female. Peregrinus helps her by taking her home, but he is subsequently arrested for abduction, a crime of which he is entirely innocent. His many adventures do not improve his gaucheness and clumsiness, but do encourage him into company. He is the equivalent of Anselmus in “The golden pot”, Giglio in “Princess Brambilla” and Balthasar in “Little Zaches” – all of whom mature through some encounter with a magic realm. For Peregrinus, the operative fairy-tale motif which encapsulates his maturation is a talismanic stone, or *Karfunkel* which, in a horoscope and a dream, he sees within his body (Vol. 6, 425 and 461). The warming of this heart-shaped stone symbolizes his growing ability to love a woman and share in everyday relationships with her family. The recognition that he is simultaneously King Sekakis of mythical Turkish Famagusta, husband of the Flower Queen and father of Princess Gamaheh, is an equally important part of his self-understanding. The use of magical stones recurs in a myriad of fairy-tales, legends, and German Romantic literature (Thompson, 1955-8, Section G303 – G303.14.2.). Some examples of contemporary German fairy-tales read by Hoffmann, and therefore ripe for creative reworking, are the embedded story of a princess’s lost ruby which conjures her marriage to a poet in Novalis’s novel, *Henry von Ofterdingen* (Novalis, 1990: 41-2), and Tieck’s fairy-tale “The Runenberg” in which a deluded poet believes his bag of stones to be magical *Karfunkelsteine* (Tieck, Vol. 6, 208). A popular version of the fairy-tale motif of the power of precious stones also occurs in the Grimm collection and has been transmuted into the modern “Snow-white and the seven dwarfs” (Zipes, 2007: 237-46).

Teeming fantastical characters, as zany and absurd as those in “Little Zaches”, play their part in “Master Flea”, but concomitantly with their “human” doubles. For example, the reductive nature of some kinds of scientific research and invention is held up for ridicule in the historical figures of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) and Jan Swammerdam (1637-80). Leeuwenhoek in real life improved the microscope and confirmed that micro-organisms are animals; Swammerdam was a biologist known for his study of insects. Leeuwenhoek (sic), in Hoffmann’s fictional transformation of history, makes his living by a flea circus, a magic lantern show, and the public exhibition of the wondrous, unworldly Dörtje Elwerdink. Hoffmann’s fictional Swammerdam (sic) is his rival. The two scientists from history reappear in Hoffmann’s “Master Flea” as astrologers and microscopists, mocked for their non-co-operation and violent jealousy. A description of a duel between them, in which telescopes replace

fencing swords, superbly exemplifies Hoffmann's use of farce and surrealistic presentation for the purpose of satire (Vol. 6, 385-6). They perform fencing manoeuvres and ballet steps by lengthening and shortening their telescopes and parrying each other with furious looks. The spectacle is sensational but also causes spectators to deduce they are both mad. Ruprecht writes a psychological analysis of this hilarious duel, placing it in the context of other dance-fights in "Princess Brambilla", and relating it to Jaques Callot's *commedia dell'arte* clowns (2006: 90). The scientists fight to gain Peregrinus's talismanic precious stone and a microscopic lens, currently in the possession of Master Flea. With bizarre antics they also compete for Dörtje Elwerdink/Princess Gamaheh, as do several other marvellous suitors. George Pepusch, alias a magical thistle called Zeherit, eventually marries her.

Such inventiveness of narrative makes Hoffmann a true story-teller in the Arabian tradition of Shahrazad (Scheherazade) who keeps the Sultan listening for a thousand and one nights to her marvellous, but unfinished, tales. None of Hoffmann's proliferating narratives comes complete with cause, effect and ending at the first telling. Instead they arrive in fragments, told through the focalization of different characters from their limited points of view. However, the hostile political world of post-Napoleonic Prussia lies like a palimpsest behind Hoffmann's mayhem of stories. Why, otherwise, would he describe Leuwenhoek's flea-circus as an arena of soldiers who bear weapons and wear neat uniforms, spurs and riding breeches (Vol. 6, 329)? After Master Flea, their commanding officer, frees them, Leuwenhoek's microscope reveals abandoned harnesses, uniforms and coaches stuffed with black peppercorns and fruit pips (331). This plot development is reminiscent of another scene in Hoffmann's fairy-tale, "The nutcracker". Here the main character, the little girl Marie Stahlbaum, dreams she sees her brother's toy soldiers fight off mice that overrun the land. Using authentic military vocabulary, Hoffmann describes how her beloved Nutcracker soldier leads toys into battle and routs the enemy (Vol. 4, 258-62). As early as 1855, Baudelaire drew attention to Hoffmann's mockery of military invasion and Prussia's loss of sovereignty in another fairy-tale, "The king's bride". He describes how Hoffman presents the army and its leader as carrot-like grotesques with all their pomp and circumstance "transformed into an evil-smelling bog" (2006: 158-9). All these military analogies suggest a political allegory of how Prussia fought against French invasion and thereafter imposed invasive restrictions on its populace. This allegorical reading is supported on a literal level in "Master Flea", in that Hoffmann's rendering of the city of Frankfurt features postwar poverty, which causes Rosie Lämmerhirt's father's business to struggle and his family to suffer. As another mediation of contemporary history, arrests and imprisonment solely on suspicion are inflicted on both Peregrinus and his friend, Pepusch.

Master Flea, a steadfast, philosophical and kindly teacher to Peregrinus, and a diminutive leader who releases "a free and innocent small nation [of fleas] from the fetters of everlasting slavery" (Vol. 6, 412), is the crowning creation of Hoffmann's animal fable. Master Flea's bite frequently gives momentum to plot development, and his wise words in Peregrinus's ear help him make his way in a challenging, often repressive, society. It is a witty conceit that so much wisdom should be expressed by a flea. This is congruent with Hoffmann's wry sense of humour and equal to his entertaining tomtomcat in *Tomcat Murr*. Literary antecedents to the motif of a philosophical flea lie in many anthropomorphized animals from the time of Aesop's fables onwards. The motif of size might have been partially influenced by Perrault and the Grimms' versions of "Hop-o-my-thumb" and "Thumbling". In both fairy-tales the moral is that the smallest often has the most power. In the Grimms' version, Thumbling can sit unnoticed inside a horse's ear and other small places to use the performative power of his voice (Zipes, 2007: 175-6). This motif is recognizable in "Master Flea". A variant in Hoffmann's own animal fable is Master Flea's possession of a microscopic lens which, when placed in Peregrinus's eye, magically allows him to see any discrepancy between what a person says and what he or she thinks. This elaborates a motif used in "Little Zaches" when Prosper Alpanus gives Balthasar a lens which enables him to see that Zaches/Zinnober is a dwarf. Master Flea's microscopic lens placed in the eye, rather like a modern contact lens, would have been a new concept in the early nineteenth century, whereas a lorgnette, which Balthasar's lens resembles, was a familiar object. These revisioned fairy-tale motifs show Hoffmann's creativity and illustrate how his protagonist, Peregrinus, gradually matures from a solitary eccentric to a socially awkward, but self-confident man.

As the narrative strands spiral forward, it gradually becomes clear that Dörtje Elwerdink/Princess Gamaheh is kept alive by the occasional bite from Master Flea, which keeps her human blood flowing. Therefore, she selfishly focuses all her seductive powers on the embarrassed Peregrinus, since she knows Master Flea sits on his neckerchief. By the end of the story, she fails to persuade Peregrinus to surrender his friend and mentor. Finally, as Princess Gamaheh, she marries Pepusch, alias the thistle Zeherit, a *Cactus grandiflorus*, although their love-match flowers and dies within one night like the botanical specimen (Vol. 6, 465). After the microscopic lens has nurtured his judgement about other people's sincerity or lack of it, the mature Peregrinus dispenses with it. Unlike Anselmus in "The golden pot" and Balthasar in "Little Zaches", the success of Peregrinus's marriage to Rosie Lämmerhirt does not rely on magic. In "Master Flea" the protagonist chooses an intelligent and relatively

independent young woman. In comparison to her equivalent in “The golden pot”, Archivist Lindhorst’s daughter, Serpentina, who takes Anselmus to live in the magical world of Atlantis, Rosie has both feet on the ground. Rosie does not need, unlike Candida in “Little Zaches”, to wear a fairy necklace to keep her marriage sweet. Her father is proud of her talent in bookbinding, while her subtlety in applying beautiful gold-leaf lettering to expensive morocco leather surpasses the abilities of any boy apprentice he has trained (Vol. 6, 448). Hoffmann has used the motif of calligraphy and manuscripts in several fairy-tales. For example, Anselmus gains insight into the exotic world of Archivist Lindhorst through copying his Oriental manuscripts (for an elegant reading of Anselmus’s apprenticeship in lettering, see Nygaard, 1983: 84-5). Likewise, Prosper Alpanus walks on the hieroglyphs that make up his “marble” floor, and controls the impish hieroglyphs that jump out of his magic books (3.2.6). Given the contemporary historical importance of philology and translation (3.2.2), together with Hoffmann’s focus on the aesthetics and mysticism of hand-written scripts, there is some slippage in Rosie’s attributes from literal to figurative. Her artistry with books and lettering strongly signifies a fullness and depth of understanding beyond her years.

The incriminating passage in “Master Flea” which caused Hoffmann so many problems lacks fluency in comparison with its many effervescent fairy-tale motifs and many-sided transitions from one plot to another described above (3.3.1-3.3.7). The censored version of “Master Flea” was published in 1822 with the first third of the Fifth Adventure removed, together with the first sentence of the chapter-heading of the Fifth Adventure, which ironically refers to Privy Aulic Counsellor Knarrpanti as “wise and judicious” (Vol. 6, 391-8). The unexpurgated text was published in 1906. Analysis of the restored third of a chapter reveals a blatant lampoon of von Kamptz (1.3 & 3.3.1) as Knarrpanti, aide to a petty prince interested in secret state inquisition (Vol. 6, 374). The name incorporates letters from the real judge’s name and also the word “Narr”, which means fool. Unlike many characters in “Master Flea”, Knarrpanti does not have an avatar in the fairy-realm. The description of his motives and actions is longwinded. While it might be argued that Knarrpanti’s use of language would be pedantic, focalization of this character trait shifts into literal passages that are longer than necessary for effective characterization. As a result of Knarrpanti’s enquiries, Peregrinus’s papers are confiscated and he is detained and then released for lack of evidence. Knarrpanti applies himself to combing through Peregrinus’s diaries and letters to find proof that he has been involved in abducting young women. The evidence is risible since he decontextualizes supposedly suspicious words from the plots and titles of operas and novels. However, as if Hoffmann were anxious lest the already obvious point might be missed, his narrator addresses “the gentle reader” twice in two pages, giving assurance that Knarrpanti’s “sublime cunning will soon be exposed” (Vol. 6, 391-3). The tone is untypically laboured as the narrator spells out legal principles using judicial terminology. Knarrpanti garners enough nonsense to interrogate Peregrinus in the dock - the least integrated passage of all. The interrogation focalized through Peregrinus slips out of the character and vocabulary of a gauche, kind, inarticulate man and into a mouth-piece for Hoffmann’s scathing wit. For example, the phrase “he (Peregrinus) was curious to read the thoughts of the hair-splitting inquisitor (Knarrpanti)” is most unlike Peregrinus’s register (396). There follows a turgid account of Knarrpanti’s true motives focalized through him, and at the same time observed by Peregrinus through his microscopic lens. Here Hoffmann’s personal invective against von Kamptz is thinly veiled. Finally, with an increase of momentum, Peregrinus is found not guilty, Knarrpanti becomes a laughing-stock, and people turn up their noses at him. Hoffmann tried but failed to get the description of Knarrpanti’s evidence-gathering and the turning up of noses redacted before the manuscript was confiscated from the printers (Sahlin, 1977: 316). The Knarrpanti episode is uneven in texture and lacks the subtlety of the political satire in *Tomcat Murr* and “Little Zaches”.

Pavlyshyn argues that “‘Master Flea’ was a vote of protest by its author”, a deliberate “political act” through which the oppressive operations of the police commission would be exposed. Hoffmann did indeed boast about his intentions and tried to publish in Frankfurt, a sovereign state outside the jurisdiction of Prussia (1981: 201-4). Consequently, Pavlyshyn views the publication of the censored “Master Flea” in 1822 as a successful political manifesto because of the controversy it had caused. Nevertheless, we have shown in *Tomcat Murr* and “Little Zaches” that Hoffmann could write satirical passages which were successful through literary merit, not through speculation about which words had been cut. Hoffmann’s failure to sustain his distinctive mix of fairy-tale motifs and realism in the Knarrpanti episode – what Vitt-Maucher (1989: 169-71) cogently identifies as his surrealistic method of estranging what is familiar in “Master Flea” – has been described as resulting from naivety. For example, Harich refers to his boasting as foolhardy (see Pavlyshyn, 1981: 199), while Sahlin describes Hoffmann as “possessed” by “the spirit of mischief” that had set him back professionally in his youth (Sahlin, 1977: 18) (3.3.1). Given his accumulated professional and political experience, moral integrity, and broad knowledge of publishing, we think this explanation is unlikely. His failure to sustain the generic qualities of fairy-tale motifs throughout “Master Flea” was probably due to the increasing severity of his spinal paralysis, rather than naivety or

lack of wit. We align with Pavlyshyn's argument that the Fifth Adventure of "Master Flea" was consciously satiric, but disagree with his point that the lack of literary quality in the censored passage is irrelevant (1981: 204). "Master Flea" is a satiric fairy-tale, not a political manifesto. Therefore, matters of literary genres and their political effects are relevant. Whatever explanations are offered for Hoffmann's misjudgement, the textual evidence of *Tomcat Murr*, "Little Zaches" and "Master Flea" supports the deduction that fairy-tale motifs when subtly used have the capacity to be agents for political change without incurring legal or literary consequences.

4. Concluding Discussion

In the fairy-tales "Little Zaches" and "Master Flea", using the power of the imagination so valued by the Romantics, Hoffmann's satire not only entertains his readers, but mediates and indirectly comments upon the far-reaching socio-political changes which characterized western European history in the early nineteenth century. We agree with Zipes that amongst the German Romantics Hoffmann was the "most original and ingenious in exploring the aesthetic and political possibilities of the fairy-tale" (2002: 43) (2.1). However, we diverge from Zipes's argument that, by dint of conveying Romantic discourses to a wide reading public through familiar fairy-tale plots, characters and motifs such as are found in popular *commedia dell'arte* forms, Hoffmann was "the great conventionalizer of the romantic movement" (99). Even though Zipes sees Hoffmann's democratization of Romanticism as a positive attribute, we veer towards Vitt-Maucher's argument that his treatment of fairy-tales was experimental and multi-faceted. We have also shown that, unlike the Grimm Brothers who certainly did smooth out and traditionalize the German fairy-tale, his re-telling of literary fairy-tales and folk-tales is especially creative and unpredictable with regard to Oriental sources. Hoffmann's work is an excellent example of Lüthi's premise that the dominant aesthetic quality of the fairy-tale is its elasticity in expressing "manifold functions of one and the same motif" (1967: 9) (2.1).

In "Little Zaches", which is set consistently in the fairy-tale realm, Hoffmann not only directs his satire at any characters with political power, but, using motifs of perception, also targets the blinkered, hypocritical bourgeoisie. In presenting the city of Kerepes, Hoffmann both critiques a perverted institutionalization of European Enlightenment rationalism, and pragmatically highlights the limitations of early Romantic ideas about the individual artist. In addition to "Little Zaches" being an obvious satirical allegory against totalitarianism, its focus on the theme of perception widens its implications beyond the immediate socio-political situation. It is underpinned by quirky humour and a sense of enjoyment in reworking fairy-tale motifs, particularly those of Arabian origin. Hoffmann incorporates just as many fairy-tale motifs in "Master Flea", some of which similarly exhibit strong Persian influences. In contrast to "Little Zaches", this tale moves between and combines the everyday world of Frankfurt and a fairy-tale realm in a way which anticipates the twentieth-century genre of magic realism (3.3.2; Note 1). The focus is again socio-political. The social aspiration to be free from the oppressions of the post-Napoleonic Prussian régime, typified by the Carlsbad Decrees (1.3), is suggested in Master Flea's liberation of his flea nation. "Master Flea" proves by negative example the power of the fairy-tale to make a political point. As soon as Hoffmann shifts from the synthesizing, transformative mode of fairy-tale fused with realism, into a recognizable reflection of events and people (with only slight exaggeration and a change of von Kamptz's surname), then he lapses into personal invective. His failure to use revisioned fairy-tale motifs consistently in "Master Flea" brought about censorship and criminal proceedings.

Our evidence confirms that Hoffmann, as a late German Romantic, extended the generic potential of contemporarily popular literary fairy-tales, thus anticipating the mixed literary genres of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Not only do "Little Zaches" and "Master Flea" testify to the reciprocal relationship between history and fairy-tales, but they also show that Hoffmann's use of fairy-tale motifs and his realism-fantasy mode of writing are individualistic. His transformation of antecedent motifs from Oriental tales and many others demonstrates his creativity and breadth of literary knowledge. Although it is an anachronistic description, his fairy-tales border on the Brechtian. Well ahead of his time, Hoffmann "alienated" his readers in the Brechtian sense of the word (Note 2). By mixing genres, discourses and voices, he initiated laughter at the human condition, but then challenged his readers to think about the relevance of his fairy-tales to contemporary circumstances.

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Notes

Note 1. Magic realism is a genre of prose fiction developing from the 1950s onwards which “interweave(s), in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched *realism* in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy-tales” (Abrams 1993: 135). A relevant example is Günter Grass’s 1959 novel *The tin drum (Die Blechtrommel)*, a political allegory set during World War II and postwar Europe of the 1950s. It is narrated by a drum-playing, picaresque dwarf, Oskar Matzerath, born in Danzig (Gdansk, Poland) and endowed with extraordinary non-realist powers of observation.

Note 2. The function of the alienation effects of German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht, is “to make familiar aspects of reality seem strange ... His aim was to effect and sustain a critical attitude on the part of the audience in order to arouse them to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the social reality represented ...” (Abrams 1993: 47).

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