

AFTERLIVES OF THE SANDMAN: RE-FIGURING THE FANTASTIC-SUBLIME

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This comparative project investigates different representations of the sandman between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My discussion focuses on Romantic texts, in particular E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 literary tale "Der Sandmann." While the traditional scholarship on Hoffmann uses both psychoanalytical and feminist approaches, I show how Friedrich Schlegel's concept of chaos and Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime help us to understand Hoffmann's complex narrative structure. I argue that in Hoffmann's tale there is no unified sandman figure. However, different storytellers in the tale shape the sandman's various depictions. In a way, the sandman figure becomes a fluid character whose enigma the narrative's structure sustains. Paul Berry's 1991 stop-motion animation "The Sandman" visualizes Hoffmann's narrative. However, the film also reintroduces a unified sandman figure that is characterized by uncanny strangeness. My analyses both of Hoffmann's literary and Berry's cinematographic narrative show that their complex structures allow for ceaseless interpretations. This leads me to conclude that fantastic narratives lend themselves to insightful and critical ponderings.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. General Introduction

The literary critic of Romanticism Friedrich Schlegel in *Schriften und Fragmente; ein Gesamtbild seines Geistes*<sup>1</sup> asserted that: “The fairy tale’s<sup>2</sup> structure is absolute chaos and infinite relationship and meaning” (133, 1803).<sup>3</sup> Schlegel does not define the fairy tale here but he proceeds to consider its narratological structure. Schlegel avoids presenting a clear definition of the fairy tale (*Märchen*), although he views this particular narrative as an example of high writing.<sup>4</sup> His emphasis on the literary fairy tale’s structure shows his interest in literary tales. In fact, his philosophical fragments between 1803-12 include brief statements about Ludwig Tieck, Novalis and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.<sup>5</sup> Focusing on the structure of the literary fairy tale— regardless of its plot – Schlegel suggests that “chaos” (133) is characteristic of literary fairy tales, and he also considered them to be worth philosophical contemplation. In his view, chaos links to the absolute, and therefore it also indicates a connection to the infinite. Literary tales – or

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<sup>1</sup> In *Schriften und Fragmente; ein Gesamtbild seines Geistes. Aus den Werken und dem handschriftlichen Nachlass zusammengestellt und eingeleitet von Ernst Behler* (1956) the German philosopher and Schlegel scholar Behler collects several of Schlegel’s critical works, including a collection of aphorisms “Zur Poetik und Aesthetik, Fragmente” (1802-12), in one volume. The following quotation by Schlegel appears as a single aphorism or fragment. It was written in 1803.

<sup>2</sup> Schlegel here does not specify the type of fairy tale he is discussing. In his fragments, however, he discusses Ludwig Tieck and Novalis (fragment #). Thus, one can assume he is referring to the literary tales – though Tieck and Novalis’ works are quite different from each other.

<sup>3</sup> This is my translation. The German text reads: “Die Form des Märchens ist absolutes Chaos und unendliche Beziehung und Bedeutung” (133, 1803).

<sup>4</sup> The poetic fairy tale distinguishes itself from other forms of writings because of its polished and well-structured style. Schlegel’s reflection on the poetic fairy tale’s structure suggests that he valued this form of writing and deemed it relevant for literary, philosophical, and academic studies. Therefore, I am using the term “high writing.”

<sup>5</sup> Goethe, Tieck and Novalis were important German writers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

poetic tales as he refers to them in the *Athenäum*-Fragment 429 in 1800 – embrace a kind of textual ambiguity because their structure is also defined by absolute chaos. The phrase “infinite relationship and meaning” (unendliche Beziehung und Bedeutung, 133) replaces concepts of fixed meaning that can be described and formalized. Infinity points to the chaos as not graspable.<sup>6</sup> Although it cannot be analyzed, there are limitless possibilities in understanding and interpreting the chaos. The double object “chaos...relationship and meaning” further complicates this and also suggests a link between chaos and textual analysis. This seems to be a paradox because textual analyses that can be gained through suggesting relationships among textual elements and meanings are infinite. It invites the question of how analysis can describe infinite meaning, if there is such a thing at all.

The American fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes suggests that not all fairy tales are alike. In *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2000) Zipes points to the fairy tale’s challenging definition: “There is no such thing as *the* (his emphasis) fairy tale; however, there are hundreds of thousands of fairy tales. And these fairy tales have been defined in so many different ways that it boggles the mind to think that they can be categorized as a genre” (XV). The dilemma to explain “*the* fairy tale” is well stated in Zipes’ opening sentence to his *Companion* because it observes the sheer unmanageable amount of available texts that may be classified as fairy tales. In the attempt to organize their different and various interpretations, these tales become part of “a genre” (XV) that causes dispute among folklorists and literary scholars.<sup>7</sup> The possibility of a poetic fairy tale’s different meanings leads me to consider Schlegel’s view on chaos that underlies a

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<sup>6</sup> The German adjective “unendlich” could be translated as infinite, endless, or indefinite in English.

<sup>7</sup> Zipes admits that there is a general existing confusion to distinguish between oral folk tales and literary tales among literary scholars.

literary fairy tale's structure. I think, that a textual analysis of literary fairy tales, which reflects on chaos and shows how the narrative structure embodies it, helps us to better understand complex narratives, including E.T.A. Hoffmann's literary tale "Der Sandmann" (1816). I argue that this particular narrative and other fantastic tales in Hoffmann's style require greater attention to unravel their narrative structures and also to discover concealed meanings on their deeper theoretical levels.

Schlegel's view on the fairy tale's structure allows us to detect underlying meta-fictional<sup>8</sup> layers that confuse – or obstruct – one possible interpretation of a (literary) tale. I attempt in this dissertation to use the analyses of complex narrative structures of E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale "Der Sandmann" (1816)<sup>9</sup> and Paul Berry's cinematographic variant<sup>10</sup> *The Sandman* (1991) as profound examples of Schlegel's theory. His description of the poetic fairy tale distinguishes Hoffmann's tales from one-dimensional tales including Charles Perrault's 1796 *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé* and Brüder Grimm's 1812/15 *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Perrault's tales explicitly end with a moral that discusses and warns of the dangers children may face every day.

Schlegel relates the poetic fairy tale's structure to an open philosophical system that contributes to critical and philosophical thinking. Meaning is constantly shifting because elements can be infinitely rearranged resulting in a ceaseless pool of possible

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<sup>8</sup> Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* states: "Robert Scholes has popularized "Metafiction" as an overall term for the growing class of novels which depart from realism and foreground the roles of the author in inventing the fiction and of the reader in receiving the fiction" (232).

<sup>9</sup> The tale "Der Sandmann" is published in Hoffmann's collection "Die Nachtstücke" in 1816.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Thomas Berry (1961-2001) was a stop-motion animator who worked for well-known directors such as Tim Burton and Henry Selick. In 1992 his short film *The Sandman* was awarded the Craft Prize for Best Animation at the Ottawa International Animation Festival. This film also received an Oscar nomination in 1991. In Chapter four I discuss how Berry's film recycles part of Hoffmann's tale and how it also introduces Berry's own portrayal of the sandman figure. *The Sandman*, therefore, becomes a form of interart mediating between Hoffmann's tale and Berry's view of the sandman.

textual analyses. Based on such rearrangements of meaning and relation, bizarre constellations, or interpretations, can occur that challenge the distinction between fictional and non-fictional realities.<sup>11</sup> This connects the poetic fairy tale's structure to its "chaos." For the early 18<sup>th</sup> century this was very provocative since traditionally the genre of literary fairy tales has not been read in the context of chaos. Fairy tale and folklore studies distinguish between literary, philosophical and folkloric tales. In his 1910 *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (updated in 1928 and 1961), the Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne organizes folktales according to their types and distinguishes between animal tales, fairy tales, religious tales, and realistic tales. The American folklorist Sith Thompson contributes to Aarne's 1928 and 1961 editions, and further categorized folktales in his *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955-1958), identifying among various motifs including mythological ones, animals, and taboos et al. The Swiss literary critic and fairy tale scholar Max Lüthi and Russian formalist Vladimir Propp understand the fairy tale as a more fixed and closed narrative structure. Lüthi points out the abstract style<sup>12</sup> of the folktale while Propp identified 31 functions<sup>13</sup> (or other elements)<sup>14</sup> that may be altered and modified among them. However, he claims these functions cannot be arranged

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<sup>11</sup> While I discuss Tzvetan Todorov's concept of the fantastic in the following, at this point I propose a link between the fantastic and the "odd constellations," Schlegel refers to in his *Athenäum*-Fragment 429.

<sup>12</sup> In his *Es war einmal. Vom Wesen des Volksmärchens*. (1962) Lüthi discusses tales including "Dornröschen," "Aschenputtel" and "Hansel und Gretel" (and others) and analyzes their structure in terms of the tale type and motif indexes.

<sup>13</sup> In his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), Propp argues: "Both constants and variables are present in the preceding instances. The names of the dramatis personae change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither their actions nor functions change. From this we can draw the inference that a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale *according to the functions of its dramatis personae*" (20).

<sup>14</sup> Propp points out that "functions do not always follow one another in direct succession" (71). Then, other elements such as notifications, treblings, and motivations may be included in the narrative's structure (71-5).



randomly (22) and must produce a specific structure. For example, an action must always be followed by a second specific action, e.g. the hero leaves his home and receives a “magical agent” (44). While Propp insisted on the particular pairing of the elements, he stresses that not all of the 31 functions need to be present at once in order to identify a narrative as a fairy tale.

Fairy tales – in particular literary tales – have changed throughout history in form and, in their political, and social connotations. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (2006), Zipes states that the fairy tale as a form of writing shapes society:

My concern is largely with the fairy-tale discourse as a dynamic part of the historical civilization process, with each symbolic act viewed as an intervention in socialization in the public sphere. To have a fairy tale published is like a symbolic public announcement...It is a historical statement. (10)<sup>15</sup>

He argues that fairy tales as “historical statements” proclaim and state facts and that the changes within a tale’s variants speak to the shifts in society. Zipes mostly refers to the folktale tradition while Schlegel addressed another tradition, namely the literary and philosophical tale. My analysis looks at the narrative structure of Hoffmann’s tale not to identify fixed “statements” but to investigate how the tale’s structure relates to the chaos that Schlegel points to. Almost 200 years later Berry’s film mediates this chaos and transforms it into a peculiar portrayal of the sandman figure. This particular view on the

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<sup>15</sup> In his 2012 work *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Zipes develops this introductory thought linking fairy tales to historical processes.

sandman figure presents Berry's auteuristic approach to visualize Hoffmann's literary tale and the sandman figure.

Schlegel's concept of the poetic fairy tale is different from traditional approaches because its philosophical agenda, which the underlining chaos outlines, calls for the tale to reflect on its own structure. Schlegel applauds the bizarre structure of the literary tale – he calls it “poetic fairy tale” (236) – because it nurtures one's mind:

Just as the novella has to be new and striking at every point of its substance and development, so perhaps the poetical tale...has to be infinitely bizarre. For (it) tries not only to interest the imagination, but also to enchant the mind and stimulate the feelings; and the essence of the bizarre seems to consist precisely in certain arbitrary and strange connections and confusions of the process of thinking, poetizing, and acting. (*Athenäum*-Fragment 429, 236)<sup>16</sup>

Although Schlegel does not employ the term “chaos” (133) in this fragment, written around 1800, his writing does point towards the “infinite bizarre” (236) that is embedded in poetic fairy tales. In contrast to the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,<sup>17</sup> Schlegel relates the poetic fairy tale and the novella to chaos. Both have to create something new out of chaos. In the novella and poetic fairy tale chaos remains present in

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<sup>16</sup> I am using Ernst Behler's translation of Schlegel unless noted otherwise. In Behler's *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, the original *Athenaeum*-Fragment 429 in German states. “Wie die Novelle in jedem Punkt ihres Seins und ihres Werdens neu und frappant sein muß, so sollte vielleicht das poetische Märchen...unendlich bizarr sein; denn sie will nicht bloß die Phantasie interessieren, sondern auch den Geist bezaubern und das Gemüt reizen; und das Wesen des Bizarren scheint eben in gewissen willkürlichen und seltsamen Verknüpfungen und Verwechslungen des Denkens, Dichtens und Handelns zu bestehen” (*Athenäum*-Fragment 429, 105).

<sup>17</sup> Goethe classified the genre of the novella as an outrageous incident (“sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit”). In fact, in two of his works, “Märchen” (1795) and *Novelle* (1826-28) Goethe addressed the difference between the fairy tale and the novella.

each step of being and creation. The poetic fairy tale then is in a constant process of becoming (ihres Werdens, 105): “The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected...It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free” (Schlegel 175).<sup>18</sup> Possibly, endless changes characterize the poetic fairy tale as “infinite bizarre.” On the one hand, the poetic fairy tale is and remains entertaining (nicht bloß die Phantasie interessieren, 105). On the other hand, reading and also reflection on such tales call upon one’s intellectual faculties and prompt philosophical thinking. While the English word constellation, I used to translate the German term “Verknüpfung” (105), indicates a construction of patterns and also suggests a grouping of elements, it is more complicated in the German. There it is more than just merely connecting different elements. The term evokes a mental image of “weaving,” in which elements are woven together – connected, intertwined, and sealed – like a basket. In this process of making connections, confusions in thinking (Verwechslungen des Denkens, 105) occur that demonstrate the arbitrariness in poetic creation (Dichtens, 105) and physical action (Handelns, 105). This bewitches (bezaubern, 105) and stirs (reizen, 105) one’s disposition.

In his *Athenäum*-Fragment 116 (1797) Schlegel identifies this process with his concept of a “progressive universal poetry” (Universalpoesie, 182):

Romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry. Its mission is not merely to reunite all separate genres of poetry and to put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetorics (sic). It will, and should, now mingle and now amalgamate poetry and prose, genius and criticism, the poetry of art

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<sup>18</sup> Behler’s *Kritische Schlegel-Ausgabe* includes fragment 116: “Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann...Sie allein ist unendlich, wie sie allein frei ist” (183).

and the poetry of nature, render poetry living and social, and life and society poetic, poeticize wit, fill and saturate the forms of art with solid cultural material of every kind, and inspire them with vibrations of humor. (140)<sup>19</sup>

Schlegel views poetry as a cross-genre, a “Universalpoesie” (182), which characterizes more than a finite structure. Poetry (Poesie, 182) here is not linked to poetry in the terms of rhyme, scheme or meter. In this context poetry relates to chaos and the act of creative writing. Chaos unites (vereinigt, 182) diverse literary genres (alle getrennten Gattungen der Poesie, 182) such as philosophy and rhetoric. Schlegel does not view this unification as a closure but as a production of a system of differences.<sup>20</sup> This kind of poetry remains progressive and also bizarre in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. As a cross-disciplinary illustration, Hoffmann’s tale “Der Sandmann” does not merge these genres but connects them into a narrative – or narratological moves – that are based in difference and contrast.

Elsewhere in his early fragments, “Philosophische Lehrjahre, 1796-1806”

Schlegel used the term “irony” to further discuss the puzzling link between chaos, unity, and difference.<sup>21</sup> Fragment 69 in “Ideen” (1800) irony is characterized by connecting chaos to awareness: “Irony is a clear consciousness of an eternal agility, of the infinitely

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<sup>19</sup> The original *Athenaeum*-Fragment 116 in German states: “Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie. Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloß, alle getrennten Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen, und die Poesie mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung zu setzen. Sie will, und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig, und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen, den Witz poetisieren, und die Formen der Kunst mir gediegnem Bildungsstoff jeder Art anfüllen und stättigen, und durch die Schwingungen des Humors bestehen” (182).

<sup>20</sup> Although I am using the term “system” here, I want to stress that this is not a closed system. It is a term Schlegel also employs in his discussion of a universal poetry.

<sup>21</sup> In *Die Romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (1960) Ingrid Strohn Schneider-Kohrs points out that “the term ‘irony’ has been appearing in Schlegel’s theoretical works since 1797” (14).

abundant chaos” (155).<sup>22</sup> Chaos, according to Schlegel, always is understood as an underlining concept to full consciousness and irony. He employs a double genitive object to describe irony and also links irony to chaos. Interestingly, in the German quote, the usage of the comma between the two double genitive objects obstructs a clear understanding of Schlegel’s concept of irony. On the one hand, irony is associated with one’s full awareness.<sup>23</sup> However, on the other hand it is connected to agility and chaos. Agility and chaos are “eternal” and “infinite.”

While irony in “Ideen” – perhaps paradoxically – describes a system of differences, in *Lyceum*-fragment 48 (1797) the term is identified as a form of the paradox: “Irony is a form of paradox. Paradox is what is good and great at the same time” (126).<sup>24</sup> How can the paradox be good and big? It is situational and speaks to the process of (pre) judging. The “good” and “big” have been pre-assessed. Any deviations from such considerations produce a paradox – and address the chaos through the bizarre.

In my studies of Hoffmann’s “Der Sandmann” and Berry’s film, I address the concept of arbitrary chaos in reading a cluster of images and ideas that the tale and the film associate with the sandman figure. An extensive body of scholarship is readily

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<sup>22</sup> This is Behler’s translation of Schlegel’s aphorism-collection “Ideen” in *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*. In German text states: “Ironie ist klares Bewußtsein der ewigen Agilität, des unendlichen vollen Chaos” (263). The meaning of this sentence is quite complicated because it problematizes the definition of the term “irony.” Schlegel linked the concept of “irony” to infinite rearrangement of meaning and relation, which he here identified as “eternal agility.” However, irony is also linked to an infinite chaos resulting from possible interpretations and the awareness of its existence in the first place.

<sup>23</sup> In the German text the phrase “full awareness” is “klares Bewußtsein.” This phrase complicates any possible English translation. The adjective “klar,” I translated as “full” to maintain the context, also means to clear, transparent, and fully aware. The noun “Bewußtsein” which I translated, here, as “awareness” to refer to the entire phrase “klares Bewußtsein” could translate to consciousness, a conscious mind and perhaps conscience. Choosing “awareness,” I stress that this term does not relate to psychoanalysis in this instance but it expresses a state of self-awareness and self-reflection.

<sup>24</sup> In Behler’s *Kritische Schlegel Ausgabe* the fragment in German is: “Ironie ist die Form des Paradoxen. Das Paradox ist alles, was zugleich gut und groß ist” (153).

available defining and analyzing 1) Romantic irony in fantastic texts such as E.T.A. Hoffmann's 19<sup>th</sup> century tales (Maria Tatar, Diane Stone Peters, etc.) and 2) Kant's modern sublime in prose and poetry (Samuel Monk, Paul Fry, Neil Hertz, etc.). However, I argue that textual analyses of fantastic narratives benefit from taking into consideration Romantic irony and Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime. As Barbara Claire Freeman in *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (1995) points out, in his 1991 *Leçons sur l'analytique du sublime*<sup>25</sup> the French philosopher and literary critic Lyotard builds on Immanuel Kant's notion of the sublime<sup>26</sup> and understands the postmodern sublime as "a site of resistance" (11). While I am tempted to conflate Romantic irony and the postmodern sublime, I am not losing sight of the very different contexts for these theoretical reflections. Schlegel is absolutely dedicated to 18<sup>th</sup> century thought, linking literary history to its larger theoretical and philosophical implications, especially to a system of differences and chaos; and Lyotard focuses on 20<sup>th</sup> century issues. In this project, I show that E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale lends itself to a study that employs Schlegel's philosophical approach and also link my reading of the literary tale to postmodern theories, in particular the discourse of the sublime, to unravel the chaotic form of the poetic fairy tale and discuss Schlegel's concept of the bizarre.

I focus on analyzing the meta-fictional language of Romantic, pre-Romantic, and post-modern narratives. "Afterlives of the Sandman: Re-figuring the Fantastic-

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<sup>25</sup> I am relying on Elizabeth Rottenberg's translation *Lesson on the Analytic of the Sublime* published in 1994 through UP Stanford because Freeman also uses this translation. I am using her translation in this dissertation unless otherwise noted.

<sup>26</sup> I address the differences between Lyotard's concept of the post-modern sublime and Kant's concept of the modern sublime in the following section.

Sublime” seeks to explain how the shifting portrayals of the sandman figure help to crystalize certain ideas about Romantic irony, the fantastic, and the postmodern sublime and asks how exactly these ideas are further explored by Hoffmann and Berry in the various narrative-levels of their texts. Examining materials that range from lullabies, English theater songs, and literary tales to contemporary cinema, I explore the vicissitudes of this particular European folklore figure, the sandman, as a means to understanding the aesthetic transformation of a performative act.<sup>27</sup> The chaotic tensions between the various narrative levels challenge an active mindset and call forth an active performative act: critical thinking. Hoffmann’s narrative structure presents some kind of performative act because the tale’s structure obscures an understanding of the sandman figure. I introduce Berry’s film as an illustration of the “confusions” (Verwirrungen, 182) that result from the seemingly arbitrary constellations (willkürliche Verknüpfungen, 182). The film becomes evidence of new creation but it remains bizarre. In my analysis I both draw on Julia Kristeva’s concept of uncanny strangeness and address how Berry’s film illustrates intertextuality

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2. 1. Deviating from Sigmund Freud’s Uncanny and the Psycho-analytical Approach

Traditionally, Hoffmann’s literary tale “Der Sandmann” is read employing Sigmund Freud’s concept of the uncanny. However, Freud himself used another psychologist’s reflection on the uncanny. Ernst Jentsch’s 1906 essay “Zur Psychology des Unheimlichen” (The Psychology of the Uncanny) outlines the conditions for uncanny

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<sup>27</sup> I introduce the term performative to describe how in Hoffmann’s tale the diverse tales about the sandman figure shape our understanding. Each tale portrays a different sandman. However, none of the tales is dominating the sandman’s portrayal. In a way, they all contribute to the sandman’s enigma. In a way, they veil the sandman’s identity.

effects, such as an individual's intellectual uncertainty (*intellektuelle Unsicherheit*, 195) as a basis for his definition. Jentsch clarified the level of the expressed uncanny as dependent on two aspects: an extremely noticeable level of uncertainty and a strongly abnormal fluctuation in subjective perception of the world (196). Children, according to Jentsch, often exhibit such characteristics because of their limited amount of experiences: "The child has only limited experiences; thus, simple things appear unexplainable, and less complicated situations are perceived as dark secrets" (196).<sup>28</sup> In his 1919 essay, "Das Unheimliche," Freud further develops Jentsch's psychology on the uncanny and links the uncanny to the recognition of what was once familiar but is now perceived as unfamiliar and strange.

Freud introduces a psychoanalytical reading of the uncanny concept, which inevitably tries to point out and explain underlying psychological issues that result from an individual's abnormal fluctuation in the perception of reality. For example, in his reflections on Hoffmann's tale "Der Sandmann," Freud identifies Nathanael's childhood trauma, the father's death, as the fundamental source behind the protagonist's obsession with the sandman figure during his adult-years. Traditional readings of Hoffmann's tale rely on Freud's reflections on the tale and his concept of the uncanny. However, this approach is less relevant for my reading as I discuss in Chapter two. In my reading of "Der Sandman" especially, I revisit Tzvetan Todorov's concept of the fantastic and show how the fantastic relates to Friedrich Schlegel's Romantic irony and Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime.

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<sup>28</sup> "Das Kind hat so wenig Erfahrung, dass ihm einfache Dinge unerklärlich, nur wenig complizierte (sic) Situationen bereits dunkle Geheimnisse sein können" (196). There is no complete and official English translation of Jentsch's essay; therefore, I am providing my own.



## 2.2. Tzvetan Todorov's Fantastic, Schlegel's Chaos and "The Sandman"

The concept of chaos is connected to the fantastic because the problem of chaos implies that we cannot interpret one narrative event alone, we have to view it in the context of other narrative events. As a reader, this puts us into the process of hesitation or careful thinking. This is what the Franco Bulgarian literary critic Tzvetan Todorov proposes in his pioneering book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1971) as a characteristic of the fantastic. Todorov explores literary works by Edgar Allen Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann. In his reflections on their tales, Todorov shows how the tale's narratological structures give rise to the concept of the fantastic. The fantastic is a reader's or fictional character's hesitation to account for a seemingly unexplainable event. Todorov views fictional characters as a type of reader because these characters have to evaluate the strange events they witness. In this way, all characters turn into readers. In Hoffmann or Poe's tales the distinctions between fictional characters, fictional narrators, and fictional and real readers are further problematized and add to the tale's chaos. "The very heart of the fantastic," according to Todorov, lies, "in a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires" (25). The fantastic is rooted in a rational world that is governed by the laws of nature.<sup>29</sup> In this reality there are no magical agents. "A world which is indeed our world" (25), he argues, demonstrates how fictional and non-fictional realities reconcile. I propose that such reconciliation illustrates Schlegel's unity of difference. This view is in stark contrast to other approaches that insist upon incorporating magical agents. In such a world, "there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar

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<sup>29</sup> Nature is not associated with a motif but rather laws of nature – as a description of the fantastic – refers to time (duration) and relation.

world” (25). Todorov explains that in such cases the reader and the protagonist in these literary tales have to decide if this unexplainable event belongs to the fantastic marvelous or the fantastic uncanny, although he does not identify them as such:

The person who experiences the event must opt for one of the possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are (fantastic marvelous); or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us (fantastic uncanny). Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being (or the fantastic marvelous); or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings (fantastic uncanny). (25)

The first represents an illusionary event, e.g. talking animals, and also illustrates the supernatural. While the fantastic marvelous characterizes the world of fairy tales, as described by Propp, Lüthi, Aarne and Thompson, the fantastic uncanny operates in a world that follows the laws of nature but presents an occurrence that cannot be explained though it is identified as real. A male character, who falls in love with a sylphides, a dead woman that only appears alive to him, exemplifies the fantastic uncanny. This female zombie is alive in the character’s world of perception, although others perceive the woman as dead.

Compared to Freud, Todorov defines the uncanny differently. Uncertainty – or hesitation – characterizes Todorov’s view on the fantastic and situates the concept between the fantastic marvelous and the fantastic uncanny:

The fantastic occupies the duration of ... uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person (character in the story or the reader) who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. The concept of the fantastic is therefore to be defined in relation to those of the real and the imaginary. (25)

A discussion of the sandman figure in E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale has to deal with this fantastic concept, because the tale does not present simply one coherent sandman figure. I argue that the tale confronts Hoffmann's readers as well as the tale's protagonist Nathanael with unexplainable occurrences, different representation of the sandman. I suggest that it is the tale's complex multi-layered narrative structure – and the different meta-fictional realities that it constructs – that stops Hoffmann's readers and Nathanael from identifying the sandman as only uncanny or marvelous.

### 2.3. Hoffmann's Ironic and Fantastic Sandman Figure

Hoffmann scholar Maria Tatar employs Schlegel's concept of irony and Todorov's concept of the fantastic in her reading of "Der Sandmann." In her essay "'Der Sandmann: Reflection and Romantic Irony'" (1980), Tatar shows how the relationship between the fictional narrator and the protagonist Nathanael, the narrator's direct address of a fictional reader, and other textual interruptions are forms of Romantic irony that are necessary to understand the tale. I also take her approach further by exploring the tale's narrative structure in complicating the sandman's solid characterization that psychoanalytical readings such as for example Freud and Samuel Weber proposed.

Tatar points to the German Romantics' fascination with an artificially ordered chaos, an appealing symmetry of contradictions, a wonderful eternal exchange between enthusiasm and irony in their writings (585). Hoffmann, in particular, excels in the creation of Romantic irony. The German poet and essayist Heinrich Heine confirms in a letter in 1822: "(Hoffmann) asserted his right to exercise the power to confuse, though perhaps not always to his advantage. A person whose mind (didn't) grow dizzy reading "Prinzessin Brambilla" simply doesn't have a mind" (585). Heine demonstrates his uneasiness to read Hoffmann, on the one hand. On the other hand, he contributes to the appeal, thus admiring Hoffmann's style and usage of irony. "Most critics, (Tatar continues), draw a crucial distinction between two types of Romantic irony. A writer may use Romantic irony by destroying the fictional illusion through occasional authorial intrusion, or he may engage in what Friedrich Schlegel called a 'permanente Parabase,' a perpetual destruction of illusion" (586). The paradox, as Schlegel characterizes Romantic irony, is here in the different responses of the narrator and the main character Nathanael to one or the other sandman figure. In a way, this paradox is an expression of the underlying chaos in Hoffmann's tale. And while other Hoffmann scholars such as Michiel Scharpé in his 2003 essay "Trail of Disorientation"<sup>30</sup> continue to reflect on Tatar's reading of "Der Sandmann" and discuss the tale's confusing structure through an analysis of the narrator's function, I shift the focus onto the many facets of the sandman figure themselves. I raise the question: Does one need to talk about several figures or several aspects of the one figure? In my view one has to speak of multiple sandman

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<sup>30</sup> Scharpé's essay "A Trail of Disorientation: Blurred Boundaries in 'Der Sandmann'" was published in *Image and Narrative: Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative* in 2003.

figures. I argue that Romantic irony is represented through the fluctuating portrayals of the figure within the story.

In his 1827 essay “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition; and particularly on the works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann,” Sir Walter Scott<sup>31</sup> links Hoffmann’s artistic and observational skills: “Hoffmann seems to have been a man of excellent disposition, a close observer of nature, and one who, if this sickly and disturbed train of thought had not led him to confound the supernatural with the absurd, would have distinguished himself as a painter of human nature, of which in its realities he was an observer and an admirer” (82). Scott criticizes here and elsewhere in the essay Hoffmann’s tendency to link the supernatural and terror. Reflecting on “Der Sandmann,” Scott asserts that the tale belongs to a class of “half horror and half whim, / Like fields I glee, ridiculously grim” (94) and any attempt to “trace (Nathanael’s) ravings any farther” leads us into madness as well (96). What Scott here condemns as surprising oddity (97); I view as a literary example of Lyotard’s concept of the postmodern sublime. Hoffmann’s tale – even if it is a product of a raving lunatic or opium user as Scott suggested – shows multiple sites of resistance to clearly identify the sandman figure(s). I argue that such sites allow Hoffmann’s tale to be classified as a post-modern phenomenon. The tale’s chaotic narrative structure remains in place because the narrative’s end does not indicate the sandman’s true identity if there is any to the readers and fictional characters. Hoffmann’s tale resists solving the unrepresentable – there is no coherent shape of the sandman. Analyzing the relationship between narrator and Nathanael is irrelevant in discussing the different sites of resistance that focus on the sandman figure. However,

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<sup>31</sup> For further information on Hoffmann’s reception in England see Erwin G. Gudde’s article “E.Th.A. (sic) Hoffmann’s Reception in England” published in *PMLA* (1924).

textual interruptions as they reflect on diverse stories about the sandman speak to Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime.

#### 2.4. Crystallizations of New Ideas on Reading Hoffman: The Post-Modern Sublime

Traditionally, the discourse on the sublime in Romanticism refers to Immanuel Kant's reflections on the beautiful and the sublime as he outlines in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790). Kant understands the sublime as an aesthetic experience, in which the individual (re)gains his/her agency after confronting a terrifying and striking (awestruck) situation. The individual separates him/herself from Nature by placing reason over imagination; and thus, this individual regains his/her individuality. The third *Critique* describes an individual's feeling watching an approaching powerful storm. It – Nature – appears terrifying but it is also mesmerizing.<sup>32</sup> Eventually, one's reason (rationality) solves this conflict and views the moment as sublime. English and German Romanticism draws on Kant's notion of the sublime. Romantic writings, such as in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems, elevate Nature and its roughness and calls for Nature's appreciation that – according to Romantics such as Wordsworth– only a peasant's lifestyle can replicate.<sup>33</sup> In the foreword to the 1837 edition of their tale collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the brothers Grimm also link this lifestyle to storytelling and poesy, in general (12-13). They describe the house tale (*Hausmärchen*) to be seemingly genteel despites its low cost. It inspires a poetic community (13) that marvels at the poesy within the tales. In the context of philosophy, the sublime, here,

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<sup>32</sup> This concept of nature differs from Todorov's understanding. I will distinguish between the two by capitalizing Nature when I refer to Kant's concept.

<sup>33</sup> Wordsworth poem "Composed a few miles above Tintern abbey, on revisiting the banks of the wye during a tour. July 13, 1798." illustrates a pastoral landscape. In the German context, I point to Tieck's *Naturmärchen*.

emerges as the modern sublime and differs from its previous rhetorical perception – as a grand style of writing – as Longinus outlines in his 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD treatise “On the Sublime” (Περὶ ὕψους, Peri hýpsous). Neil Hertz and Paul Fry explore Kant’s notion on the sublime in their reading of Hoffmann’s literary tale, in particular in their interpretations of Nathanael’s poetic outbursts. These moments address, according to Hertz and Fry, the modern sublime.<sup>34</sup>

Hertz (1983) and Fry (1987) read Hoffmann’s narrative as a reflection on Kant’s concept of the sublime. The modern sublime (as ascribed to Immanuel Kant) is an aesthetic experience. In “Der Sandmann” Nathanael, according to Fry and Hertz, exemplifies Kant’s concept during the creation of a poem: “Als er jedoch nun endlich fertig worden, und das Gedicht für sich laut las, da faßte ihn Grausen und wildes Entsetzen und er schrie auf: ‘Wessen grauenvolle Stimme ist das?’” (Latifi 48-51).<sup>35</sup> This moment in the narrative has been ascribed to a traditional reading of Romanticism. Nathanael’s composure while writing his poem sojourns and transmutes into deep agitation. The poem’s voice appears separate from his own, causing him to feel terror. My reading moves away from reflections on the modern sublime as expressed in the creation of Nathanael’s poem instead I focus on the sandman figure(s). I suggest that the different – competing – portrayals of the sandman produce a kind of aesthetic experience that calls to mind Lyotard’s concept of the postmodern sublime. Freemann views Lyotard’s sublime notion as the “representation of the unrepresentable” (9); this is illustrated in Hoffmann’s sandman figure.

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<sup>34</sup> Another term for “modern sublime” is Kant’s sublime.

<sup>35</sup> When he finally finished the poem, he read it out loud for himself; suddenly he was overcome by terror and wild horror and exclaimed: ‘Whose horrific voice is this?’ (my translation).

The concept of the postmodern sublime helps to unravel Hoffmann's tale and leads to a better understanding of the complex representation of the sandman figure. In *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Lyotard proposed that the postmodern sublime is unfinished reasoning that also points towards representations, which are unrepresentable. Unlike Kant's closed system on sublime aesthetic experiences, he underlined the fleeting moment it attempts to describe:

The Analytic of the Sublime is a hint of...spasm. The significance of this 'appendage' thus significantly exceeds the exploration of an aesthetic feeling. It exposes the 'state' of critical thought when it reaches its extreme limit – a spasmodic state. (56)

"The aesthetic feeling" (56) uncovers the "state of critical thought when it reaches its limits" (56) but it cannot clearly capture this state because it is sporadic and instable. Lyotard identified this irregularity with "double defiance" (55) which speaks to the "desire for limitless that (reason) feels in the sublime 'state': happiness and unhappiness" (55). I view this "double defiance" as a paradox that Romantic irony describes in terms of narratology (Schlegel) and in complex narratological structures (Hoffmann). In my reading of Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann" and in my discussions of the sandman figures themselves, I suggest that Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime contributes to characterize the sandman figures as they resist all attempts of characterization because Hoffmann's complex narrative structure complicates the single idea of a sandman figure. The narrative's constant textual interruptions, through the fictional narrator and the diverse stories about the sandman, as I demonstrate, produce a representation of the



unrepresentable.<sup>36</sup> The text “Der Sandmann” remains a polished, completed narrative. It has a beginning, middle, and an end. However, the tale also appears incomplete and does not resolve the issue in identifying the sandman figure. I suggest that employing Lyotard’s concept of the sublime helps us to unravel and understand Hoffmann’s early 19<sup>th</sup> century text as a post-modern phenomenon. Hoffmann’s tale does not construct one coherent depiction of the sandman; instead the different storytellers in the tale shape multiple portrayals of this figure. Traditional scholarship on Hoffmann characterizes this shaping as the fantastic as defined by Todorov – because reader and protagonist need to decide about the plausibility of each portrayal. I argue that Hoffmann’s narrative in terms of the sandman figure becomes fragmented while it is complete in its textual form. This is a paradox I view characteristic of post-modernism. It is also, in a way, ironic.

For a long time I thought based on materials I gathered that the sandman could function as re-occurring motif in the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. But looking at the definition of the term “motif” in Abrams *Literary Terms and Definition* (2005/9), this issue is more complex. Abrams states:

A motif is a conspicuous element, such as a type of event, device, reference, or formula, which occurs frequently in works of literature...An older term for recurrent poetic concepts or formulas is the topos...The term “motif,” or else the German leitmotif (a guiding motif), is also applied for the frequent repetition, within a single work, of a significant verbal or musical phrase, or set description, or complex images. (205)

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<sup>36</sup> In her reflection on Lyotard’s concept of the postmodern sublime, Freeman employs this phrase. In a way, it is a paradox. The question arises of how can something represent the unrepresentable?

According to Abrams, a motif demonstrates reoccurring elements in variations and modifications of different texts across different time periods and national literatures. While the sandman figure can be seen as a “Leitmotif” (Abrams 205) in Hoffmann’s 1816 narrative and a motif in texts that follow Hoffmann’s 19<sup>th</sup> century tale, the sandman figure does not occur as an established motif prior to 1816. In the following section, I present a cluster of ideas and images on the sandman that cannot necessarily be read as a precursor to the 19<sup>th</sup> century full-fledged sandman motif. Nevertheless, these ideas may inform our understanding of the figure after 1800.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Cluster of Ideas and Images of the Sandman in Literature, Cinema and Musical Compositions

The more we get to know about the sandman figure, the more obscure his identity becomes. Who or what is the sandman? Twenty-first century vernacular culture associates the sandman figure with sleep and dreams. Especially in Germany the sandman is a well-known character that not only has his own TV show but also has its own theme park in Potsdam, a town just outside of Berlin. Juxtaposing this cheerful depiction, the sandman is also portrayed as a horrific character that lives in a nest on the moon. At least since E.T.A. Hoffmann’s tale “Der Sandmann” (1816), the sandman figure has been stealing children’s eyes to feed his own offspring. A German lullaby “Der Sandmann/Die Blümlein schlafen” (1840) addresses this particular motif. In this lullaby the sandman gazes through the child’s window and sprinkles sand into his/her eyes if necessary – which is also the beginning of the nurse’s sandman tale in Hoffmann’s story.

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<sup>37</sup> Archival research is further needed to explore the link between the different ideas and images.

In the German context, the sandman motif after 1800 is therefore philosophically and literarily charged.

Like the German tale(s) and songs, a couple of burlesque English stage/theater songs<sup>38</sup> include a very low-ranking laborer who is selling sand on the streets to women. In these songs an ordinary man pulls a wagon filled with white and red sand, noisily advertises his product in London's Cheapside, and laments on his marital status: his "cart well fill'd with sand, both red and white, / Bags, shovels, measures, 'twas a glorious sight" ("The Sandman's Wedding," 1772, anonymous, 3-4). In this text, the figure is a buffoon, a target of ridicule portrayed in the interests of satire and comedy. The song further suggests that this man follows a regular working schedule: "When 'thro Cheapside, he takes his morning rounds; / Maids, wives and widows, buys (sic) his white sand." In their discussion on strange professions from "earlier periods" in *Von Kaffeerichern, Abtrittanbieterern und Fischbeinreißeren: Berufe aus vergangenen Zeiten* (2009), Vieser and Schautz claim that the sandmen's shouting in Germany's streets could be heard until 1920. They alternated between two advertisements<sup>39</sup> to praise the versatility of sand and screamed:

Sahnd, Sahnd, Sahnd / Sand, sand, sand

Scheuer weißer stummer Sahnd. / Clean with white and silent sand.

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<sup>38</sup> These songs include the anonymous 1772 song "The Sandman's Wedding, A Cantata," "The Sandman, a Cantata. Written by Mr. Hawkins" (1775), "The Sandman: A Cantana (sic). Written at 14 years old. Set to the music by Mr. Thomas Smart" (1776), and Robert Rusted's "The Sandman as sung at the Masquerade at Soho" (1770/75).

<sup>39</sup> The second call suggests that children are aware of a sandman figure: "Der Sandmann ist da! / Er hat schönen weißen Sand, / ist allen Kindern wohlbekannt" (174). The sandman is here! / He has beautiful white sand, / and every child knows him well. (My translation.)

Hann de Kinder in den Stubbn geschissn / If your children shit in the  
living rooms

wert ne handvoll druff geschmissn. / throw a handful of this sand on it.

Sahnd, Sahnd, Sahnd! / sand, sand, sand!<sup>40</sup> (174)

While this is a rather drastic and vulgar method to call for cleanliness and order, the sand here appears as a useful commodity that is used in every home. The English stage/theater songs do not speak to such a usage of sand, although the man especially addresses “maids, wives and widows” to purchase his product. While these songs indicate the sandman’s varied presence in literary imagination, further research and textual analyses are needed to explore the significance of them during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup>

Their existence, nevertheless, remains a happenstance because between 1740 and 1920 sand is a common cleaning product. In fact, sandmen, sand women and even sand children refined sand and stored it in their homes before directly carting it to their buyers, middle class families: “Up until one hundred years ago, people cleaned their living room floors every Saturday; they poured sand on their wooden floors, walked on it for the rest of day in order to sweep the sand and the remaining dirt off the floors in the evening or shortly before Sunday” (169-70).<sup>42</sup> Sand, as Vieser and Schautz show, was also a useful product in the kitchen to clean pots. People used it as soap and to clean up ink spots.

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<sup>40</sup> I provided literal translations and opted to include them in the text next to the German text because it is an advertisement. Since Vieser and Schautz book has yet to be made available in English, I provide translations from their text unless I note otherwise.

<sup>41</sup> There is not doubt that the English stage/theater songs need to be discussed in the context of irony, they are interesting to me because they center on this marginalized buffoon character.

<sup>42</sup> “Bis vor nicht mal hundert Jahren wischte man samstags die gute Stube sauber, schüttete den feinen Sand auf die Diehlen, lief den Rest des Tages darauf herum, um am Abend, kurz vor dem Sonntag, den Sand samt Dreck auszukehren” (169-70).

While sand was considered a necessary household product, the -men, -women and sandchildren belonged to the poorest of the poor (171) and were often too embarrassed to share their profession with others. Their work consisted of hard labor in mines. Sand was their constant companion. The refining of the sand caused abrasive wounds on the laborers' skins. Sand got into their eyes and accumulated there resulting in eye infections and general redness. Eventually sand entered the laborers' internal systems and accumulated in their lungs (171). These workers therefore led a miserable life and often shared such a life with their entire family. This physical attribute translated as a sandman's motif in 19<sup>th</sup> century literary tales, as in E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale. Psychoanalytical interpretations further discuss the motif of the eye and the fear of losing one's eyes in Hoffmann's tale. Nevertheless, the origin of the sandman figure as it is known today remains puzzling. This mystery situates the sandman figure into the realm of the fantastic (Todorov) and calls forth further explorations of its appearance in literary and vernacular culture.

For example, the character is merely describing a man made out of sand? On a 1967 cover of *Pow!* (Figure 1), a former British comic published between 1967-8 by Odhams Press, a sturdy male figure dressed in blue pants and green shirt is able to alternate his physique because his body appears to be made out of sand. The man uses the sand's shifting qualities in order to enhance his bodily strength. Sand and its properties identify this man as the sandman, a villain that fights the comic's hero Spiderman. Compared to this single identification in the *Pow!* cover, Neil Gaiman's graphic novel series *The Sandman* (1989-96, DC Comics) introduces a sandman character that consists of several personas. Instead of the sand's transformability, Gaiman's sandman indicates

this figure's conflicting representations in the seven siblings Dream, Death, Destiny, Destruction, Despair, Desire and Delirium (Figure 2). The subtitle “Endless Nights” suggests that all of them are associated with sleep.

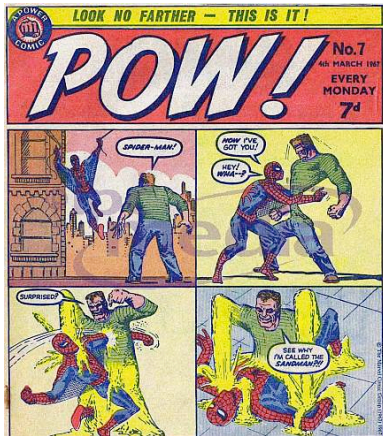


Figure 1: Pow!

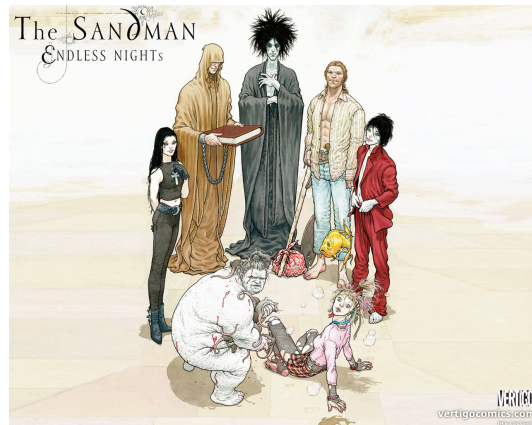


Figure 2: Gaiman's Endless Nights

Vernacular culture generally identifies the sandman as the bearer of sleep and dreams. Nevertheless, the origin of this popular European folkloric character remains puzzling. Fruitless searches in the Aarne-Thompson index contribute to the sandman's mystery, although competing reflections on the sandman (re)appear in numerous literary, musical, and cinematographic narratives between 1816 and 2014. In the Netherlands stories about Klaas Vaak have been known among the population before 1800. This character depicts the sandman and the name itself refers to the prolonged process of sleeping: Klaas meaning “often” and Vaak “having to sleep.” In Dutch folklore Klaas Vaak uses a magic book, in which he sprinkles his sand to create dreams.<sup>43</sup> This instance alludes to a circulation of the sandman image prior to 1816 that remains largely ignored to this day.

The sandman embraces the various facets of a fantastic figure that unvaryingly defends its uniqueness. While Hoffmann commentator and scholar Hartmut Steinecke

<sup>43</sup> This character is a well anchored in vernacular Dutch culture, especially after a 2009 TV-production that animated this sandman variant. In these animations the sandman is portrayed as a nice yet magical being.

categorizes the sandman figure in Hoffmann's 1816 tale as a "Kinderschreck" (bug-bear) and vernacular culture identifies the sandman as the bearer of sleep and dreams, I suggest to alter these limited accounts of the sandman. They are often set at night or in the early morning and focus on a marginalized figure. The association between these different texts can be identified as the relation of this figure to aspects of the night, to darkness, the unknown, the unfamiliar, and pre- or post-consciousness (according to a more post-modern view). For example, in one of the English stage/theater songs sand functions as a cleaning agent. This links the sandman figure to the routine of the everyday and night. As a marginalized figure this sandman participates in society while it is also excluded. This is an interesting paradox that we find also in a modified way in later texts. In one of the German lullabies the sandman is a marginal and secularized figure at night that consoles and frightens in the tradition of the warning tale. The divine is replaced by this fantastic figure. It is an allegory/figuration of the sand that presents sleep in the earlier texts. The motif of the eyes links the aspects of the profession and the sleeping. As I stated earlier, the professional sandmen have frightening red eyes and infections, after their working days (Vieser and Schautz, 2009). Curiously, the name of one of Hoffmann's sandmen, Coppola, Freud identifies in his reflection on the tale in his essay "On the Uncanny" (1919), has etymological references to eyes in Italian, and he looks for Nathanael's eyes.<sup>44</sup>

In 1816 E.T.A. Hoffmann<sup>45</sup> introduces – as I further discuss in the following two chapters – this enigmatic sandman figure in one of the literary tales included in the

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<sup>44</sup> I further address Freud's reference in the following chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Hoffmann not only was a writer but also acted as a jurist, composer, musician, draftsman and caricaturist. In *E.T.A. Hoffmann in Aufzeichnungen seiner Freude und Bekannten* (1974) Friedrich Schnapp uses Carl

collection *Nachstücke*.<sup>46</sup> Hoffmann's tale "Der Sandmann" presents conflicting accounts of the sandman's identity. These stories in the tale and the reflections upon them eventually drive one of these characters, Nathanael, traditionally identified as the narrative's protagonist, into madness.<sup>47</sup> The existing Hoffmann scholarship is vast, although present interpretations of this complex tale often focus their textual analyses on the characters of Nathanael, the narrator and the two women (Clara and the automaton Olympia). Research on the title character's history appears largely in an embryonic condition.<sup>48</sup>

In their different critical editions of Hoffmann's tale, Carl Georg van Maassen (1923), later Ulrich Hohoff (1988), and Hartmut Steinecke (1960), briefly address possible inspirations for the tale and suggest a few source texts, none of which are officially verified or established. However, there are at least two possible references for the plot. In his 1923 annotations of "Der Sandmann" van Maassen referred to a scientific text that appeared in the 1792 article "Antihydrochondriakus oder etwas zur Erschütterung des Zwergfells und zur Beförderung der Verdauung"<sup>49</sup> as an inspiration for the tale. The article discusses an anecdote about a puppet master that controls a doll with

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Georg van Maassen's (aka Wilhelm Heinrich Schollerheber) anecdotes to present an overview of Hoffmann's personal and work life.

<sup>46</sup> Hoffmann's *Nachstücke* complement his previous 1814 tale-collection *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* and present literary tales that are fantastic as well as horrific. For more information on these titles, I refer to Chapter two.

<sup>47</sup> He also commits suicide and jumps from a tower, after he believes he saw his father's murderer within a crowd while looking at it from atop of a tower.

<sup>48</sup> According to Christian Hogrefe, from "Abteilung 02, Alte Drucke" at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, no known source texts discussing the sandman motif exist. (I contacted him in February 2014).

<sup>49</sup> The title translates to "Antihydrochondriacus or something to agitate the diaphragm and support digestion."



a waxen face. Van Maassen suggested that Hoffmann's narrative developed the 1792 motif of the automaton in his creation of the character Olympia, daughter of Professor Spalanzani and Nathanael's object of desire. While this proves to be enough evidence for the origin of Hoffmann's tale according to van Maassen, Ulrich Hohoff in *E.T.A. Hoffmann 'Der Sandmann' Textkritik, Edition, Kommentar* (1988) builds on this claim and proposes Hoffmann's tale appears to be a response to technological and scientific developments at the end of the eighteenth century. Hohoff argues that the tale's discussion of automatons<sup>50</sup> alludes to the distinction between organic and artificial life as well as philosophical issues of subjectivity and the individual's separation from Nature (or Religion). There is no doubt that Hoffmann's 1816 literary narrative speaks to secularization through the celebration of technological innovations. However, it also cautions its readers to be aware of such innovations and their effects/impacts on individuals, as demonstrated in Nathanael's mad ravings toward the automaton Olympia.<sup>51</sup>

In 1960 Steinecke proposes yet another source that supposedly inspired Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann." Based on surviving letters by Hoffmann and several diary entries, Steinecke calls attention to an actual conversation between "La Motte Fouqué and some friends, at which Hoffmann was present. (Apparently) some of the party found fault with the cold, mechanical deportment of a young lady of their acquaintance, while La Motte Fouqué zealously defended her. (Legend has it that) Hoffmann caught the

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<sup>50</sup> For a detailed history on the automaton in literature, I refer to Gaby Wood's *Living Dolls: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life* (2002).

<sup>51</sup> Traditional Hoffmann scholarship (Jane Marie Todd, 1986; Jutta Fortin, 2004) interpreted the character and suggested feminist readings exploring the automaton Olympia as well as Clara. Fortin argues that Olympia asserts control over her creators.

notion of the automaton Olympia, and the arguments used by Nathanael are those that were really employed by La Motte Fouqué's defense.<sup>52</sup> While Steinecke supports his claims by referring to Hoffmann's letters, he and the previously suggested sources ignore the title character itself.<sup>53</sup>

The question arises if Hoffmann's tale contributed to a popularization of this European folkloric character that even captured Sigmund Freud in his 1919 essay "On the Uncanny"? In vernacular culture the sandman figure appears dichotic, exemplifying good or evil. Hoffmann's 1816 literary tale portrays a folkloric figure that becomes horrifying through the stealing of children's eyes. Paul Berry's 1991 cinematographic stop-frame animation "The Sandman" visualizes Hoffmann's sandman. The sandman's half moon-like profile is prominent in Berry's film (Figure 3).<sup>54</sup> Juxtaposed to this sinister character, Hans Christian Andersen's sandman variant radiates goodness. In his 1841 tale "Ole Lukøje"<sup>55</sup> ("Eye Shutter"), Andersen introduces a sandman figure that is approachable and just. Vilhelm Pedersen's 1905<sup>56</sup> illustration (Figure 4) shows Andersen's sandman wearing socks and holding two umbrellas.

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<sup>52</sup> While Steinecke mentions this anecdote in his annotation of "Der Sandmann," it also repeated in the introduction of *Tales from the German Comprising Specimens from most Celebrated Authors* (2010) by various authors and translated by John Oxenford.

<sup>53</sup> Hoffmann's manuscript does not display the title but begins in media res opening with the three letters. The title page, however, stated under the title of the collection "Nachtstücke" "Geschrieben 1 Uhr nachts am 16. November." Steinecke points out that this statement was crossed out and replaced with the title "Der Sandmann" before the first installment (Volume I) was published in 1816 by Realschul-Buchhandlung.

<sup>54</sup> In Chapter four "Kristeva and Berry: The Sandman's "Uncanny Strangeness" I further discuss the link between Berry's animation and Hoffmann's literary tale.

<sup>55</sup> Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Sandman." (1841) *The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories*. (1974) Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1983.

<sup>56</sup> *Eventyr og historier for børn*, 1905.



Figure 3: Paul Berry's 1991 Sandman



Figure 4: Pederson's 1905 Sandman

This sandman tiptoes into children's rooms at night and uses his two umbrellas to produce dreams for the sleeping children. He is just because he rewards well-behaved children with good dreams and scolds naughty children with no dreams or bad dreams. Dreams emerge here as punishment and reward instead of demonstrating cautionary didactics, as in the example of Perrault's tales. This dichotic depiction continues in poetry and musical composition.

The German lullabies (Figure 5) dating from the middle of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, present a cluster of images and ideas of the sandman that are also, although in different ways, reminiscent of the figure's 21<sup>st</sup> century vernacular persona as the bearer of sleep and dreams. In the song "Der Mond ist aufgegangen,"<sup>57</sup> the poetic I admits in the first stanza that a blossoming imagination is humanity's downfall moving individuals away from their initial goals: "Wir spinnen Luftgespinste (We are spinning lofty fantasies) / Und suchen viele Künste (And search for many artful ways) / Und kommen weiter vom dem Ziel (And move away from the initial goal)." The poetic I (or chorus) hints at how individuals fabricate fantasies and therefore

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<sup>57</sup> While Matthias Claudius (1740-1815) provides the text, Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747-1800) writes the music.

lose their path to righteousness. Therefore, the poetic I pleads with God in the next stanza to give his salvation and guidance.

**Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh**

Luise Hensel Gerhard Trubel

1. Mü - de bin ich, geh zur Ruh, schlie - ße bei - de Äug - lein zu:  
 2. Hab ich un - recht heut ge - tan, sieh es, lie - ber Gott, nicht an.  
 3. Al - le, die mir sind ver - wandt, Gott, laß ruhn in dei - ner Hand;  
 4. Kran - ken Her - zen sen - de Ruh, nas - se Au - gen schlie - ße zu.

\* M M

1. Va - ter, laß die Au - gen dein  
 2. Dei - ne Gnad und Je - su Blut  
 3. al - le Men - schen, groß und klein,  
 4. Laß den Mond am Him - mel stehn

\* Summen für Baß ist ad libitum

Figure 5: Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh

The German poet Luise Hensel (1789-1876) wrote the text for the lullaby “Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh.” In this song the poetic I humbly announces his/her tiredness and declares it is time to rest closing both eyes:

Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh, / I am sleepy; I will rest  
 schließe beide Äuglein zu. / Close both eyes  
 Vater, lass die Augen dein / Father, rest Your eyes  
 über meinem Bette sein. / Above my bed.

Calling to mind a line in the Metallica song “Enter Sandman” to “sleep with one eye open” here the narrator evokes the omnipotence and protection of God. The night or darkness – that is enhanced by the poetic I’s closing eyes – indirectly harbors danger thus requiring the presence of a protector: the father in the first stanza and the moon in the second stanza. While the song does not mention the sandman, the later motif of losing

one's eye in Hoffmann's tale is anticipated through the imperative form of closing one's eyes. In the last stanza, the moon becomes a witness to the restful world beneath.

Kranken Herzen sende Ruh, / Restless hearts calm them down  
nasse Augen schließe zu. / Wet eyes close them  
Lass den Mond am Himmel stehn / Let the moon stand above on the sky  
und die stille Welt besehn. / and have him look down onto a peaceful  
world.

While Nature is romanticized, Hensel's lyrics maintain God's power over Nature. Using the imperative form "lass den Mond am Himmel stehn" suggests an invisible agent who is also responsible to calm restless hearts. Later lullabies, such as "Sandmann oder die Blümlein, sie schlafen," secularize this moment and introduce the sandman as this invisible agent and the moon as his home. Only at the beginning of the nineteenth century does the term "sandman" appear in the songs' titles, such as in "Sandmann oder die Blümlein, sie schlafen."<sup>58</sup>

Anton Wilhelm von Zuccalmaglio's lullaby demonstrates Nature's secularization and romanticizes it through its personification. Flowers in the first and birds in the second stanza appear human-like while resting their "heads." The first stanza states:

Die Blümelein, sie schlafen / The flowers, they have been sleeping  
Schon längst im Mondenschein, / for a long time within the moon light  
Sie nicken mit den Köpfchen / they nod their heads  
Auf ihren Stengelein. / On their little stems.  
Es rüttelt sich der Blütenbaum, / The blooming tree is shaking

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<sup>58</sup> Anton Wilhelm von Zuccalmaglio (1803-1869) writes the text to this song. Music is set to the popular religious christmas song "Zu Bethlehem Geboren."

Er säuselt wie im Traum; / He whispers like in a dream

Schlafe, schlafe, du mein Kindlein. / Sleep, sleep, my little child.

Describing the peaceful state of nature, the poetic I promises the little child also to safely rest. The pastoral-like description of the sleeping flowers indicates a peaceful environment that allows the little child (Kindlein) to be at peace and to listen to nature's pleasant sound. The blossoming tree whispers like a dream. This image is poetic as well as romantic. Interestingly, one of the lullaby's titles speaks to this Romantic notion by pointing to the flowers that are sleeping. The second title "Sandmann" links nature and the supernatural. Sleep – and dreaming – is associated with a figure that approaches in the next stanza.

The introduction of the sandman figure in this pastoral scene and the appropriation of a well-known Christian Christmas song show the secularization that characterizes one aspect of Romanticism. The lullaby continues:

Sandmännchen kommt geschlichen / the sandman tiptoes

Und guckt durchs Fensterlein, / and gazes through the window

Ob irgend noch ein Liebchen / to see if any little one

Nicht mag zu Bette sein; / does not want to go to bed

Und wo er noch ein Kindchen fand, / and when he finds such a little one

Streut er ins Aug' ihm Sand: / he sprinkles sands into the eyes

Schlafe, schlafe, du mein Kindlein. / sleep, sleep my little child

Sandmännchen aus dem Zimmer, / the sandman leaves the room

Es schläft mein Herzchen fein, / my darling is fast asleep

Es ist gar fest verschlossen / his eyes are closed shut completely  
Schon sein Guckäugelein.

Es leuchtet morgen mir Willkomm / They will shine bright again  
tomorrow

Das Äugelein so fromm! / morning and look so piously

Schlafe, schlafe, du mein Kindlein. /sleep, sleep my little child.

This last stanza links nature and the sandman figure. While flowers and trees sleep peacefully, the sandman sneaks toward the windows. The German double infinitive “kommt geschlichen” in past tense indicates the sandman approaches and also suggests a criminal activity. It also refers to the night’s silence and mysteriousness. The sandman’s quiet steps imply that the figure does not want to be identified or to be noticed. He gazes through the windows to detect any child that is still awake. “Und wo er noch ein Kindchen fand, / Streut er ins Aug’ ihm Sand” shows the sandman uses his sand to sprinkle it in children’s eyes. The song does not indicate here if the sandman’s action should be considered a positive one; instead the poetic I in the song promises if the child goes to sleep the sandman will leave his/her room. “Mein Herzchen fein” will then be safe and sound. This song also demonstrates the secularization process – as illustrated in appropriating the melody of the religious Christmas hymn “Born in Bethlehem” - in the territories of today’s Germany and also shows a philosophical change of the individual and his/her relation to nature. In the next section I present an overview of the following chapters that discuss the full-fledged sandman motif after 1900.

Reminiscent of the sandman’s vernacular classification, in 1954 *The Cordettes*, popular American female singing quartet between 1946-1961, utilize the belief that the

sandman reigns over the dream world and release the iconic song “Mr. Sandman.” In the song, the female quartet appeals to a cupid-like man to “bring [them] a dream [of a sweetheart that] makes him<sup>59</sup> the cutest [they] have ever seen.” The sandman’s portrayal here, addresses widespread, popular beliefs about the figure. However, the sandman’s depiction in music, as the magical godmother, changes almost forty years later. In their 1991 song “Enter Sandman,” the rock band *Metallica* introduces a terrifying sandman and cautions “the son” to “sleep with one eye open / Gripping [his] pillow tight.” The dichotomy of this fantastic figure also emerges in diverse cinematographic representations.

Although early pictures, such as Richard Oswald’s 1916 adaptation of Jacque Offenbach,<sup>60</sup> are yet reworking eighteenth-century operas for the screen, later variants shift the focus from the source texts onto the sandman figure. Turi Meyer’s 1995 *Sleepstalker* casts the sandman as a notorious serial killer and departs from Oswald’s interpretation. Reminiscent of *Metallica*’s song, Meyer’s film discusses the sandman’s terrifying characteristics and also contributes to its legend as tormenter. Besides this dark side, the sandman figure arises as the master of (sweet) dreams. DreamWorks Animation’s 2012 *Rise of the Guardians* depicts a jolly, fairy-like sandman who amuses the audience with his rather lethargic persona. Various depictions of the figure in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries demonstrate a fascination with this character, for which there is not a single identifiable origin. This ambiguity lends itself to the recycling of different aspects of this figure. The sandman remains mysterious.

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<sup>59</sup> “Him” here refers to a desired man, the three female singers dream of.

<sup>60</sup> Offenbach was born in Germany but he lived and worked in France. He wrote numerous operettas including the unfinished opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*. It was performed in 1881 with the Parisian company Opéra-Comique.



#### 4. Overview of Chapters

Chapter II “Fragmented Multiplicity of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1816 ‘Der Sandmann’” discusses the sandman figure as a fragmented and shattered subject that calls all harmonizing concepts of subjectivity and identity into question generally. First, I reflect on Hoffmann’s scholarship but then my argument moves away from traditional interpretations of Hoffmann’s literary tale “Der Sandmann.” The chapter introduces the sandman as a multi-dimensional character that defies traditional character development. The different stories on the sandman construct multiple meta-fictional realities, between which the sandman figure moves and eventually transcends. I argue that there is no harmonious sandman figure in the tale. In fact, the enigma of the title figure cannot be (re)solved in forcing one representation from the diverse stories onto the others. Friedrich Schlegel’s concept of the chaos informs my reading of the tale, in which I explore the different portrayals of the sandman figure.

Chapter III “Fractured Narratologies and the Post-Modern Sublime in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s ‘Der Sandmann’ and Hoffmann’s Illustration” shifts the focus from an exploration of the title figure onto the tale’s narratology and shows how the tale’s structure shapes the sandman’s enigma. I present an overview of the traditional approach to Hoffmann’s narrative and discuss Romantic irony as defined by Friedrich Schlegel. However, in my analysis of the tale’s structure I move away from exploring the relationship between the fictional narrator and Nathanael and suggest a reading that is also informed by Jean-François Lyotard’s notion of the postmodern sublime as outlined in his 1991 *Lesson on the Analytical Sublime*. I investigate how textual interruptions in

Hoffmann's tale address the postmodern sublime, as "the representation of the fact that the unrepresentable exists" (Freeman, 1995, 11).

Chapter IV "Kristeva and Berry: The Sandman's "Uncanny Strangeness" explores a 20<sup>th</sup> century cinematographic representation of the sandman figure. Employing Julia Kristeva's concept of "uncanny strangeness," I read Berry's film as a variant and a recycling of Hoffmann's 1816 tale. The film situates the figure and its story into an expressionistic context and uses winding staircases and screwed angles to stress the horror and terror the sandman figure represents in the post-modern context.

The "Conclusion" provides a brief summary of the overall argument and suggests additional avenues for this project that speak to the continuous hype of the sandman figure in vernacular and literary culture, as illustrated with the film *The Rise of the Guardians*, 2012 and Neil Gaiman's graphic novel series *The Sandman* (1989-1996). The sandman figure also was recently featured in the TV-Series "Grimm" and the Cordette song appeared in the horror show "Bate's Motel."

## CHAPTER II

### THE FRAGMENTED MULTIPLICITY OF E.T.A. HOFFMANN'S "DER SANDMANN"

Since its first publication in 1816,<sup>61</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale "Der Sandmann" has drawn attention. Many interpretations, from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic diagnosis of the protagonist Nathanael (1919) to a recent scientific exploration by Val Scullian (2009)<sup>62</sup> have explored Hoffmann's complex narrative and proposed that its characters' – other than the sandman – contribute to creating the fantastic.<sup>63</sup> It is surprising that, in comparison to the vast amount of existing commentaries on the supporting characters of this literary tale, the actual title character remains mostly untouched by analyses. This chapter focuses on and illuminates the different representations of the sandman as an important figure in the construction of complex fantasy through a discussion of Friedrich Schlegel's reflections on the (poetic) fairy tale's structure. As outlined in the previous chapter, Schlegel focuses on the chaos that underlies the poetic (also the literary) fairy tale and creates an infinite pool of possible meanings. Building on this view, I explore

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<sup>61</sup> The tale is included in Hoffmann's *Nachtstücke*, the second part to *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* that was published in 1814. Although a first edition was not available for this dissertation, any following quotation from the tale are from Kaltërina Latifi's *Der Sandmann: Textkritische Edition* (2011). Latifi juxtaposes the narrative's facsimile of Hoffmann's handwritten manuscript "Der Sandmann" and a typed version. Latifi's edition has the manuscript on one side and a typed transcription on the opposite side. This transcription includes Hoffmann's in-textual comments and revisions. I also draw upon Ulrich Hohoff's 1988 critical edition that includes Carl Georg von Maassen's detailed commentary in the edition's section "Stellenkommentar."

<sup>62</sup> Scullion explores kinaesthesia, spasticity, kinetic energy and paralysis, and Romantic irony in Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann." This article centers on the literary and scientific aspects within Hoffmann's narrative. Although focusing on a detailed characterization of Nathanael, Coppelius, Olympia in terms of movement, the figure of the sandman itself remains largely ignored.

<sup>63</sup> In his 1971 *The Fantastic: A Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov discusses the concept of the fantastic and describes it as form of hesitation and uncertainty (25). Refer to Chapter I.

Hoffmann's sandman figure<sup>64</sup> as different, overlapping representations within the diverse stories. Traditionally, this has been read in the context of the fantastic, in particular as Todorov defines it: a moment of hesitation and uncertainty (25). However, I view the sandman figure not as a unified character as defined in *Beiträge zur Poetik des Dramas*<sup>65</sup> and argue that in the narrative's Romantic context it is more complicated. In my reading of Hoffmann's tale, I show how the sandman figure defies traditional character development and introduce the term fluid multiplicity to describe the figure's various depictions. Each story about the sandman in Hoffmann's tale presents one particular portrayal of the figure. However, I argue that there is not one dominating story that defines the sandman figure. Therefore, the figure's various representations repeatedly shape our understanding of the sandman's identity. This leads me to propose that Hoffmann's sandman figure consists of more than one character. I further assert that a discussion of Hoffmann's sandman figure(s) benefits from a reflection on Schlegel's system of difference and his view on the poetic fairy tale as a work, which is in a constant process of becoming.

Various aspects have been addressed in psychoanalytic, literary and philosophical commentaries on Hoffmann's text. In this chapter, I take the traditional interpretation of the tale into consideration and build on them. However, my analysis focuses on moments in the narrative that address the title figure. The diverse portrayals of the sandman lead to endless confusion and also question traditional interpretations of the figure like Freud's identification of Coppélius/Coppola as the sandman. The diverse stories about him contribute to the intricate narrative structure of the tale. In a way, the structure's

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<sup>64</sup> I use the term "figure" here as a depiction of an unusual character.

<sup>65</sup> W. Keller 1976 W. Keller (Hg.): *Beiträge zur Poetik des Dramas*. Darmstadt 1976.

underlying chaos obstructs one dominating interpretation. These moments are fantastic and also bizarre because one interpretation leads to another one. This multiplicity creates fluidity between the diverse representations of the sandman. Fluid multiplicity links to what Schlegel identified as the intertwining of relation in order to create the bizarre. The tensions between taking, losing and passing on control mark Hoffmann's sandman figure and the problems within its identity. After a brief overview of the existing scholarship on Hoffmann's tale, I analyze the title character and approach its conflicting representations as animations. It is first introduced as a terrifying character, a nurturing father and discipliner, and later is shown to be a chalk drawing. I argue that the narrative elevates the sandman figure into a postmodern aesthetic phenomenon by discussing the multiplicity of its representations and affects.

### 1. Psychoanalytical Approach

Traditionally, "Der Sandmann" has been, and continues to be, discussed as an example of the uncanny; a term popularized by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. In his renowned essay "Das Unheimliche" (1919)<sup>66</sup> Freud observes that the discipline of aesthetic literature oddly neglects the particular concept of the uncanny (46). Instead he refers to the field of medical-psychological literature, pointing to Ernst Jentsch's 1906 short though remarkable work, "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen"<sup>67</sup> (46), as a major

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<sup>66</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "Das Unheimliche." (1919) *Das Unheimliche: Aufsätze zur Literatur*. Hamburg-Wandsbek: Fischer doppelpunkt, 1963.

<sup>67</sup> Already in 1906 the German psychiatrist Jentsch speculates about psychological affects of rhetoric in different languages. The German term "unheimlich," in particular, according to Jentsch, exemplifies this mental distress. A lack of orientation in terms of an object or an event characterizes this distress (195). In fact, Freud borrows heavily from Jentsch's 1906 essay "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen." As Freud acknowledges in his first footnote, this essay was indeed published in two parts (1906, Aug 25<sup>th</sup>, Vol 22, 195-8 and 1906, Sept 1<sup>st</sup>, Vol 23, 203-5) in the journal of *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* (Halle an der Saale: Verlag von Carl Marhold). Digital copies are available for online reading from The

inspiration for his own explorations on the uncanny, particularly within Hoffmann's tale. Whereas Jentsch introduces the uncanny as an affect, or emotional condition situated within doubt, Freud elaborates on Jentsch's observations and viewed the uncanny as a finite occurrence in the instance of the sandman figure. According to Freud, it represents a fixed notion that is linked to the protagonist's childhood trauma.

Nathanael's emotional suffering after his father's death manifests itself within his neurotic search for the sandman's identity among his father's and his own acquaintances. The castration complex is the root for Nathanael's pathological pursuit of the sandman. From Nathanael's perspective the advocate Coppelius, alchemist and friend of Nathanael's father, and Guiseppe Coppola, trader of barometers and technical collaborator of Professor Spalanzani, become the sandman. Freud concludes that the uncanny arises from this particular reality. However, I suggest that this is just one of the narrative's planes of realities. There are two different characters in the narrative, Coppelius and Coppola. Freud's reflections on the tale indicate that the etymological root of their names links these two characters.<sup>68</sup> These names embed a reference to eyes and/or eye sockets.<sup>69</sup> The sandman figure in Freud's analysis emerges as a finite occurrence that stresses the motif of the eyes, in particular the dread of losing them.

By identifying the sandman figure as Coppelius/Coppola and positioning this association into the realm of the uncanny, Freud removed the fantastical aspect from the

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University of Michigan collection (<http://www.bookprep.com/book/mdp.39015080192050>). To my knowledge there is no complete English translation of this article. Therefore, I provide my own translation when it is appropriate.

<sup>68</sup> In his distress even Professor Spalanzani confuses Coppola and Coppelius when he witnesses the mutilation of his automaton daughter (Latifi 70-1).

<sup>69</sup> In the essay "Das Unheimliche" Freud provides an insightful account of this etymology supporting a union of these two characters within the sandman figure (56-57 and footnote 1 on page 57).

figure and converts any uncertainty in the understanding of the sandman figure's character into certainty. Emphasizing the poet's role in diminishing any form of uncertainty within the narrative process, Freud addresses the uncanny without mentioning the term itself:

Der Dichter erzeugt zwar in uns anfänglich eine Art von Unsicherheit, indem er uns, gewiß nicht ohne Absicht, zunächst nicht erraten läßt, ob er uns in die reale Welt oder in eine ihm beliebige phantastische Welt einführen wird...Aber im Laufe der *Hoffmannschen* Erzählung schwindet dieser Zweifel, wir merken, daß der Dichter uns selbst durch die Brille oder das Perspektiv des dämonischen Optikers schauen lassen will, ja daß er vielleicht in höchsteigener Person durch solch ein Instrument geguckt hat. (58)<sup>70</sup>

Doubt disappears and is substituted thereafter with gained certainty. In his sequential reading of the narrative, with a beginning, middle and end as indicated with the adverbs “anfänglich” (58) and “im Laufe” (58), Freud describes the logic of the narrative resulting in the creation of certainty. In the case of this interpretation of the “hoffmannesque” narration any doubt diminishes, and “we” realize that the poet is only too willing to let us see through glasses he himself used before. The phrase “schauen lassen will” (58) indicates Freud's perception of the poet's eagerness to share his perspective. What the poet just saw is now available for “us.” Although the term

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<sup>70</sup> In David McLintock's 2003 translation the romantic notion disappears and the general poet is substituted for Hoffmann as the author himself: “It is true that the author initially creates a kind of uncertainty preventing us – certainly not unintentionally – from guessing whether he is going to take us into the real world or into some fantastic world of his own choosing...But in the course of Hoffmann's tale this uncertainty disappears; it becomes clear that the author wants us too to look through the spectacles or the spyglass of the demonic optician, and even perhaps, that he has looked through such an instrument himself” (139).

“Dichter” (58) seems to refer to Hoffmann himself, I want to suggest that it refers to a poet in general.<sup>71</sup> The questions arise if it is the poet’s intention that alters his perception after using the optometrist’s tools? Or does a sublime force take possession of the poet while looking through the glasses/perspective?<sup>72</sup> Freud does not raise these questions or speculate on their answers. Instead, he stresses the change within perception leading to the obliteration of uncertainty and doubt. The demonic optometrist’s glasses that the poet uses for his textual perception, alters perception in making the invisible visible – in other words, the unfamiliar becomes first familiar. This refutes Schlegel’s perception on chaos and turns any paradox into a fixed notion that the poet can describe. However, the poet’s changing perspectives present the chaos itself and the possibilities for constantly creating new meanings and relations. My analysis of the different sandman stories in Hoffmann’s tale shows how – to use Freud’s terminology – such changes of perspective point to the fairy tale’s absolute chaotic structure. And therefore, the tale’s interpretation indicates the infinite.

However, in Freud’s view, the picture – or plane of reality – that these glasses/perspectives offer appears clearer. Uncertain imagery or any doubt disappears. What was once part of our own subjective choosing becomes defined. “Die Brille” (58) or “das Perspektiv” (58) do offer a clear perception and in that way a better, more detailed understanding. Unauthoritative reality turns into an authoritative version of reality. The familiarization of this new definition then, is also an illustration of the

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<sup>71</sup> English translations of Freud’s “On the Uncanny,” such as McIntock’s version, substitute the term “author” for “poet.” Based on the German text, I wonder if Nathanael can be cast as the poet who is overcome by the modern sublime? In my discussion of Hoffmann’s narrative I answer this question.

<sup>72</sup> Freud’s explanation on how the poet eradicates doubt is at times poetic and addresses, in my opinion, the sublime. A force that the optometrist’s tools capture overcomes the poet.



unfamiliar because of the loss of subjectivity. Uncertainty, in Freud's reading of Hoffmann's narrative, is replaced with the uncanny.

Although Freud fixes the sandman figure as finite within the uncanny, this breaks down in his subsequent discussion of the sandman as a motif, a figure (as in character) and other associations. It is the motif of the sandman that emerges as a clear image from: "Im Mittelpunkt der Erzählung steht vielmehr ein anderes Moment, nach dem sie auch den Namen trägt, und das an entscheidenden Stellen immer wieder hervorgehoben wird: das Motif des *Sandmannes* (sic), der den Kindern die Augen ausreißt" (54).<sup>73</sup> Freud identifies the motif of the sandman (figure) that tears out children's eyes as the defining "moment" of Hoffmann's narrative. The link between "moment" and "motif" breaks the closure/finiteness of the sandman figure. The term "moment" indicates a fleeting instance that repeatedly claims its significance within the narrative's spatial representation. Through these assertions, the moment – or rather moments – becomes a motif. M.H. Abrams defines motif as "a conspicuous reoccurring element, such as a type of incident, a device, a reference, or verbal formula, which appears frequently in works of literature" (177-8).<sup>74</sup> This leads me to ask, if the motif appears in only one work of literature regarding a particular character does it remain a motif? If yes, the sandman figure in Hoffmann's tale indeed emerges as a motif – or in Freud's words "ein Moment...das an den entscheidenden Stellen immer wieder hervorgekehrt wird" (54)<sup>75</sup> – this motif is

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<sup>73</sup> There is a different moment that turns into the focal point in the narrative, that not only gives rise to the title but also is re-introduced at critical moments within the narration: the motif of the sandman who tears out children's eyes. (My own translation.)

<sup>74</sup> Abrams, M.H. & Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005. Print.

<sup>75</sup> A moment... which is re-introduced at critical moments within the narrative. (My translation.)

further characterized by an associated action. The action “tearing out children’s eyes” defines the motif. But does the motif define the sandman figure, or the character of the sandman?

Attempting to reinstate a notion of the finite figure, Freud transforms the sandman motif into a figure. There is a direct link between the uncanny and the sandman figure: “Das Gefühl des Unheimlichen (haftet) direkt an der Gestalt des Sandmannes, also an der Vorstellung der Augen beraubt zu werden” (58).<sup>76</sup> The feeling, or notion of the uncanny, sticks like an adhesive on the sandman. Moving away from a motif, Freud unswervingly identifies the sandman as a figure, “die Gestalt des Sandmannes.” In the context of Gestalt psychology the term “Gestalt” indicates a characterization of the sandman in its full existence without considering its parts.<sup>77</sup> Taking into account that the sandman figure’s characteristics cannot entirely be understood, Freud prioritizes one particular kind of perception in his construct of the sandman figure. The sandman is identified through his behavior: the robbing of eyes. The direct and indirect objects – “der Vorstellung der Augen” (58) marks the characterization of the sandman. The notion of the uncanny is directly associated with the sandman. However, the dread of losing one’s eyes links the sandman’s immediate existence and the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes. This idea turns into an anticipation of the sandman’s dreaded appearance. Although considering this violent future-act – the fear of the sandman’s action is familiar – but the exact time of its violation remains unfamiliar. The looming dread, the very idea of

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<sup>76</sup> The notion of the uncanny is directly linked to the sandman character that is onto the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes. (My translation.)

<sup>77</sup> In the *Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jakob und Wilhelm Grimm* – accessible through Universität Trier – the term “Gestalt” is defined as “f. ratio, forma, figura” (Bd. 5, Column 4178-91). The explanation further points to the German term “Beschaffenheit” which refers to texture and consistency while it also addresses complexion and character.

robbery, creates the uncanny. Although Freud's description of the sandman addresses different literary concepts – such as perception, motif, association and character – his discussion reinstates the character as a finite notion that is defined by a particular perception.<sup>78</sup> Freud's interpretation designates the origin of Nathanael's trauma within the sandman figure, or rather within one of the figure's horrific associations, his robbing of children's eyes.

“The Sandman” then converts into an example for Freud's castration complex as outlined in Hoffmann's literary text. The sandman figure at first is characterized as an intruder, in particular a destroyer of love, before he entirely transforms into the father figure:

Warum tritt der Sandmann jedesmal als Störer der Liebe auf?...Diese sowie viele andere Züge der Erzählung erscheinen willkürlich und bedeutungslos, wenn man die Beziehung der Augenangst zur Kastration ablehnt, und werden sinnreich, sowie man für den Sandmann den gefürchteten Vater einsetzt, von dem man die Kastration erwartet. (60)<sup>79</sup>

Contrary to the sandman figure's previous association with the motif of robbing children's eyes (58), the sandman gains agency in order to participate as an antagonist within the narrative. He becomes the destroyer of love (60). The former dread the sandman figure displayed in the “robbing eye” motif is continued in the figure of the

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<sup>78</sup> Earlier in his essay “Das Unheimliche” Freud refers to the sandman character as “eine Schreckgestalt (der) Kinderjahre” (56). Emotional affects such as fear and shock define the character (“Gestalt”) that is associated with one's childhood. The sandman in Freud's discussion is described as a finite character in terms of emotional affects and a particular perception “idea of being robbed of one's eyes.”

<sup>79</sup> Why does the Sand-Man always appear as a disruptor of love?...These and many other features of the tale appear arbitrary and meaningless if one rejects the relation between fear for the eyes and fear of castration, but they become meaningful as soon as the Sand-Man is replaced by the dreaded father, at whose hands castration is expected. (McClintock 140)

destroyer. Transcending a bugbear, the sandman figure emerges as a determined intruder who means harm for everyone, including adults: “jedesmal (tritt er) als Störer der Liebe auf” (60).<sup>80</sup> This independent and adult-like character differs from its former thief-like counterpart. The distinction demonstrates a blind spot in Freud’s discussion of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s tale. How does the sandman transform from the horrific being that steals children’s eyes to a destroyer of love? The sandman figure is omnipotent and efficient in destroying any kind of love. But does this characteristic of the sandman figure really emerge in Hoffmann’s tale? Freud’s interpretation seems arbitrary and unsupported. While he comments on this arbitrary and hollow feature, he uses the change in the sandman’s portrayal to address the motif of fear of losing one’s eyes – the castration complex.

Freud proposes that this arbitrariness diminishes when the sandman is substituted with a dreadful father figure. This translation of the sandman into the father figure is abrupt and only serves Freud to further verify a psychoanalytical reading of Nathanael. Nathanael’s father materializes as Freud’s interpretation disperses the horrific figure. After the sandman’s replacement with the father, Freud adds that the father not only emerges as a fearsome character but also as a character of which one expects castration: “[die Beziehungen] werden sinnreich, sowie man für den Sandmann den gefürchteten Vater einsetzt, von dem man die Kastration erwartet” (60).<sup>81</sup> It is ambiguous if the father himself emerges as the castrator, the destroyer of love, or if he is the object of castration. Whatever the role of the father is, the sandman figure here completely disappears from

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<sup>80</sup> Always appears as a disruptor of love. (McIntock 140)

<sup>81</sup> (The relations) become meaningful as soon as the Sand-Man is replaced by the dreaded father, at whose hands castration is expected. (McIntock 140)

Freud's discussion. Whereas Freud initially discusses the sandman as a motif and figure, he now solely emphasizes the castration complex, a notion formerly associated with the sandman. Before I continue my discussion of the sandman figure, I contextualize it and provide a brief overview of psychoanalytical, literary and philosophical commentaries on Freud's "The Uncanny," in particular his analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale.

## 2. After Freud

Although Freud's essay on the uncanny provides a fascinating reading of Hoffmann's tale, many scholars, including Hélène Cixous, Samuel Weber, Raymund Belgardt, Maria Tatar and Neil Hertz – to name just a few – have noted the limitations and blind spots in Freud's argument. Moving beyond a discussion of the castration complex and its manifold implications for the individual psyche, these scholars elaborate on Freud's observations of identifying the sandman figure as Coppélius while also acknowledging the intricacy of "Der Sandmann's" narrative structure. Proposing additional provocative interpretations of the tale, Cixous and others present textual analyses that situate the tale within post-Freudian, philosophical, literary, gender and cultural contexts.

In her now classic essay "Fiction and its Phantoms" (1976), French feminist and literary critic Hélène Cixous points out some of the liberties Freud took in interpreting Hoffmann's literary tale. Questioning Freud's attempt to distinguish between reality and what she identifies as "fiction in rhetoric" (533), she refers to the fictional nature of Hoffmann's tale and argues that it is problematical because of issues of authenticity, e.g. the role of an authoritative narrator. While Freud's discussion authenticates Nathanael's

perspective, Cixous in a meticulous reading of Freud's essay<sup>82</sup> remarks: "The two versions of the Sand-Man (Freud's and Hoffmann's) have to be read in order to notice what has been slipped into one version from the other" (533).<sup>83</sup> This lack of directive allows Freud to create a linear and logical account of Nathanael. But as Cixous readily asserts "rhetoric does not create the real. To perceive identities is reassuring, but perceiving 'incomplete' identities is another matter" (537). Literary, or rather psychoanalytical – phantoms emerge in Freud's narrative resulting in arbitrary associations between fictional characters and pathological concepts. Freud eventually becomes a storyteller himself "incited [by Hoffmann] to tell fiction" (540) in order to write the story of "Das Unheimliche." Cixous claims that Freud wrote a fiction himself without realizing it and she identifies Freud's theorizing discussion of Hoffmann's tale, in particular his diagnosis of Nathanael as also fiction.

Compared to Cixous' scrutinizing reading, Samuel Weber in *The Legend of Freud* (1982)<sup>84</sup> recognizes the merits of Freud's observations but he also includes his own textual analysis of Hoffmann's narrative. Weber's awareness of the challenging narrative structure informs his discussion of Freud's analysis and Hoffmann's tale: "The story as a whole revolves...around a series of encounters and memories and memories of encounters" (7-8). Acknowledging "The Sandman's" problematic, and at times puzzling, narrative structure, Weber immediately points out that the tale is constructed "around a series of encounters and memories" (8) and the reflections of those, thereafter. This

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<sup>82</sup> It should be noted however, that Cixous does not provide an analytical reading of Hoffmann's tale.

<sup>83</sup> John Fletcher (2002) also directly acknowledges Freud's blind spots and points out that Freud scotomizes his argumentations and thus taints his interpretation of Hoffmann's narrative (128).

<sup>84</sup> Weber, Samuel. *The Legend of Freud*. (1982) Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. Print.

refreshing literary approach – because of Weber’s employment of actual critical textual analysis, however, slowly diminishes. Weber loses sight of the promise to trace a series of textual observations and his analysis begins to support a psychoanalytical, in particular a Freudian, reading.

Centering on Nathanael’s perspective, Weber addresses the question of the sandman figure’s identity. He justifies the Freudian approach to describe Nathanael’s pathology: “To determine the identity of the Sandman is to know what ‘he looks like,’ *wie er aussieht* [Weber’s emphasis]. But the name of the story of the Sandman already anticipates this effort and incorporates it, as it were, into the threat” (8). Pointing to the title, Weber proposes a curious premise that underlies Hoffmann’s narrative. The title, according to him, “anticipates [Nathanael’s] effort” (8) to visualize the sandman figure and “incorporates [Nathanael’s] threat” (8) of this figure thereafter. His determination to identify clearly the sandman figure repeats similar, if not the same, blind spots Freud created in his 1919 interpretation. I argue the title, however, does not suggest viewing the tale from Nathanael’s perspective alone as Weber and Freud insisted. There is no indication that the title merely refers to one of the figure’s representations as the horrific character that robs children’s eyes. The question remains: who is the sandman and how is this figure represented within the following narrative?

Discarding the narrative’s epistolary opening, Weber, like Freud, focuses on the stories about the sandman that Nathanael’s mother and nurse share (9). According to Weber, the tale addresses “a series of encounters...and memories of encounters” (8). The mother’s statement “*der Sandmann kommt*” (9) presents both forms – an encounter and its memory thereof. It serves as a warning for the young Nathanael who is about to

encounter the sandman figure while it also describes a memory someone recounts.<sup>85</sup> It is ambiguous if this someone is Nathanael, the fictional narrator or even the mother.

Regardless of the speaker's ambiguity, Weber hints at a curious problem occurring in the mother's statement. He refers to the untranslatable characteristic of the statement's syntax and semantic. He observes: "The Sandman does not 'come' ...the Sandman *is* [Weber's emphasis], insofar as he is *coming* [Weber's emphasis]; Nathanael's problem is related precisely to the ubiquitous possibility of this coming" (9). The sandman, according to Weber, is already present in terms of the figure's permanence. The sandman exists as a notion within the other characters' minds. However, the sandman is also approaching, "he is coming." As Weber shows, the sandman figure loses its agency when turning the active form of "come" (kommt) into the present participle, "is coming" (9). This change reduces or entirely takes away the synchronicity of the figure.<sup>86</sup>

Weber's literary analysis of Hoffmann's tale adds legitimacy to the Freudian premises, but there is not enough evidence to support Freud's conclusion to locate the sandman figure within Coppelius. Centering on Nathanael's motivation to look at the

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<sup>85</sup> This someone illustrates the problematic of an authentic narrator.

<sup>86</sup> Although Weber's discourse on the shortcomings of English translation of the tale offer a new perspective on the question why the sandman figure has been ignored for so long as a separate entity, his observations on the changes from German into English become arbitrary elsewhere. For example, Weber tries to read an erotic connotation into the translation of "auf den Schlag neun Uhr". The phrase merely indicates that "the clock strikes nine" and the sandman figure approaches. However, Weber refers to another meaning of the German term "Schlag" as violent blow in order to juxtapose this action with the more sensual English term "stroke" he derives from the verb "to strike" (10). Transforming the present tense of this verb into the past tense, "stroke," Weber suggests a relationship between verb and noun. "Stroke" in English indeed has a double meaning – which is lost in German: 1) to hit someone or something and 2) the act of moving one's hand over someone's face and applying gentle pressure. This second meaning that cannot be associated in the German word "Schlag" is prioritized in Weber's discussion. He claims that the striking of the clock insinuates a pleasurable, sensible act that will turn violent. The anticipation of the sandman then hints at eroticism and becomes a violent but pleasurable act. Although he emphasizes that this association will become apparent in his following discussion, to my knowledge, he does not elaborate on this any further. Thus, although his earlier observation on issues concerning the translation of Hoffmann's tale are insightful, here Weber commits a mistake that is a case in point for blind spots emerging in Freud's analysis of "The Sandman."



sandman figure, Weber discusses the critical moment of Coppélius' appearance (11). The wordplay between the German verb-forms "is" and "eat" – "phonetic doubles" (11) – links the sandman figure and the advocate Coppélius: "Der Sandmann ist der alte Advokat Coppélius, der manchmal bei uns zu Mittag ißt" (11).<sup>87</sup> Establishing this oddity as a feature in the determination of the sandman figure as the advocate, Weber neglects to give credit to Carl Georg von Maassen who has commented on this semantic peculiarity in 1927<sup>88</sup> and avoids further elaborations. His discussion thereafter refers to the sandman when describing Coppélius. There is no doubt that overall Weber's approach to Hoffmann's text differs from Freud's. His literary reading demonstrates an understanding of the narrative's structural intricacies. However, the moments that Weber prioritizes in his discussion inform his own interpretation of the tale while confirming, and thus supporting, Freud's previously arbitrary observations that link the sandman and Coppélius.

Other scholars have also begun to put a twist on Freud's reading. For example, in his "Trail of Disorientation" (2003)<sup>89</sup> Michiel Scharpé shows his disapproval of Freud's one-sided concentration on Nathanael, which he juxtaposes with his argument that Hoffmann's narrative is based on multiple perspectives. These different perspectives refer to different modes of authenticity, how and from what point of view the story is narrated and what form – as in letters or stories - the narration takes on. Integrating Sarah

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<sup>87</sup> The Sandman is the old advocate Coppélius who sometimes eats lunch with us. (My translation.)

<sup>88</sup> For further information see Hohoff's edition page 236 Stellenkommentar, Note 3 "Mittags um 12 Uhr."

<sup>89</sup> Scharpé's essay "A Trail of Disorientation: Blurred Boundaries in *Der Sandmann*" was published in *Image and Narrative: Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative* in 2003.

Kofman's<sup>90</sup> reading (1973, 1991) in his investigation, Scharpé's account addresses the function of the narrator but continues to place importance on the diverse representations of the sandman figure.<sup>91</sup>

Post-psychoanalytical readings continue to augment the function of the narrator and other characters but rarely discuss the sandman figure. These commentaries repeatedly begin to explore the tale's narrative structure and introduce philosophical and literary concepts such as Romantic irony and the concept of the modern sublime.<sup>92</sup>

Nikolai Vogel (1998) thematizes the different modes of communication in "*Der Sandmann*" als *Interpretation der Interpretation* (1998) and proposes the collapse of clarity because of them (23).<sup>93</sup> This collapse, as other scholars such as Maria Tatar (1980)<sup>94</sup> have argued, illustrates Hoffmann's use of Romantic irony. Tatar's explorations

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<sup>90</sup> Like Weber, Kofman presents an interpretation of Hoffmann's tale focusing on Nathanael's perspective.

<sup>91</sup> John Fletcher (2002) also moves away from a sheer characterization of Nathanael and instead explores the significance of the father figures (Spalanzani and Coppola) as well as of Olympia in order to explain (Nathanael's) death drive. His analysis thus still comments on Freud's argumentation while providing a new focus. Susan Bernstein's discussion on Freud's uncanny in "It Walks: the Ambulatory Uncanny" (2003, 2007) addresses the uncanny from philosophical and structural perspectives referring to Hegel as well as Todorov. She argues, following Weber, that the uncanny "demands reading." Reading the diverse sandman tales further problematizes an understanding of Hoffmann's entire text. The uncanny here is linked to movement. Movement here directly refers to characters that walk or objects that are moved spatially speaking to the change of a familiar position into an unfamiliar one. According to Bernstein these literary passages illustrate the uncanny. A more recent proposal on modifying Freud's concept can be found in Anneleen Masschelein's 2012 published *The Unconcept*, which traces the history and development of the uncanny within literary and psychoanalytical studies.

<sup>92</sup> The modern sublime characterizes Kant's notion of the sublime, as I outlined in Chapter I.

<sup>93</sup> He states: "In der Sandmann werden eine Vielzahl möglicher Arten von Kommunikation durchgespielt: Es gibt Briefe, sogar solche, die fehladressiert sind; einem Kind werden vom Vater Geschichten erzählt oder Bilderbücher gegeben; es gibt die Ansprache des Erzählers, etc alle Arten der Kommunikation werden unsicher" (23). In the sandman (tale) there are various possible ways of communications: There are letters, some of them are received by the wrong person; a father tells his child stories or shows him picture books; there is a direct address of the fictional narrator, any modes of communication are uncertain. (My translation.)

<sup>94</sup> In "E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*: Reflection and Romantic Irony" Tatar links Tzvetan Todorov's concept of the fantastic to Romantic Irony.

define the fantastic and address the function of the narrator. The narrator's interruptions within the text, according to Tatar, demonstrate Romantic irony that lends itself to confuse readers and characters alike. However, I argue that the (fictional) narrator's reflections and interruptions free him from this eminent chaos. This ability then distinguishes the narrator from Nathanael (Tatar 590) who becomes a prisoner of his own imagining about the sandman figure.<sup>95</sup> Nathanael's struggle for freedom is not only expressed in terms of Romantic irony as Neil Hertz<sup>96</sup> (1985) and Paul Fry<sup>97</sup> (1995) claim.

Instead of Romantic irony, Hertz identifies the sublime as the force behind Nathanael's odd outbursts. Moments of poetic inspirations, for example, take possession of Nathanael, resulting in creations of poetry that only he is able to appreciate (Latifi 48-9). While Hertz discusses these sublime moments and characterizes Nathanael as the unappreciated poet who is overcome by a powerful force, Raimund Belgradt (1969) speaks to the poet's lack of audience. He points out that Olympia, the doll, becomes the only willing but unresponsive listener. The poet's confrontation with an inevitable prosaic reality leads to his mental and physical self-destruction (699). Whereas Hertz' and Belgardt's explorations hint towards sublime expression and the lack of a poetic audience, Adam Bresnick (1996) calls forth the readers' responsibility to participate within the tale in order to experience the uncanny. Bresnick argues that readers initially repress the literary sense of words and phrases as a result of prosopoetic compulsion

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<sup>95</sup> Nathanael, according to Tatar, insists taking the fantastic literally and allows the phantoms of his mind to take palpable forms (606).

<sup>96</sup> Hertz, Paul. *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (1985).

<sup>97</sup> Fry, Neil. *Defense of Poetic Reflection* (1995).

(114-5).<sup>98</sup> Rejecting a sheer psychoanalytical approach, these investigations have contributed to new readings of Hoffmann's tale in applying aesthetic theory. Recently feminist and gender studies have proposed Olympia's characterization as a failed representation of the Other (Jane Marie Todd)<sup>99</sup> and as a fantastic fetishized object "refusing to be controlled by their fetishizers" (Jutta Fortin 272), Nathanael, Professor Spalanzani, and Coppola. Fortin argues that the fantastic in 19<sup>th</sup> century literary is linked to "inanimate objects endowed with autonomous life, and thus fetishized" (258). The fantastic here transforms these objects into "real" women that become "exchangeable and purchasable by men" (258). However, these women also assert their independence from men. While this seems plausible in terms of Olympia, this argument also can be applied to Professor Spalanzani and Coppola/Coppelius.<sup>100</sup> They are her creators. However, in terms of Nathanael this approach is more problematic unless one views his growing affection for her as the final stage of transforming the automaton into a "make-believe"-real woman that is a fetish.

Post-psychological studies show the on-going debate on how to interpret "The Sandman." Aesthetic readings, as we have seen, stress issues within the tale's structural analysis emphasizing the relationship between narrator and protagonist in this context. Recently, a feministic approach situates the narrative's female characters, Olympia and Clara, into a debate on gender. In particular, these studies address how male characters

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<sup>98</sup> Bresnick employs J. Hillis Miller's concept of prosopopeia. In *Versions of Pygmalion* Miller, according to Bresnick, defines prosopopeia as the drive "to ascribe a face, a name, a voice to the absent, the inanimate or the dead" (4).

<sup>99</sup> Jane Marie Todd in "The Unveiled Woman in Freud's 'Das Unheimliche'" (1986) argues that Olympia is the alter ego of Nathanael (523) and thus the mechanical automaton fails to represent women and women as the Other.

<sup>100</sup> The distinction between Coppola and Coppelius is unclear within the narrative since Spalanzani refers to Coppola as Coppelius. See Latifi's edition pages 70-5.

such as Professor Spalanzani, Coppola and Nathanael turn into obsessive father figures that attempt to control and fetishize these women, their non-biological daughters. However, the sandman figure remains ignored in these explorations. Who is the sandman in Hoffmann's narrative? In terms of this particular character that lends its name to the tale, we are faced with multiple obstacles to characterize the real narrative's protagonist. The title suggests a figure that lacks personal identification. Is it a name, profession, an enigma, or a metaphor? It is plausible that the title even refers to all of this and foreshadows the figure's multiplicity within the narrative. Situating the title solely in the field of folklore diminishes the significance and intricacy of a seemingly simple title. "The Sandman" embraces the various facets of a fantastic figure that unvaryingly defends its uniqueness. The sandman appears in multiple stories in Hoffmann's narrative. And although he is the subject of the tale, the sandman is also subjugated.

From my perspective the sandman figure's identity is veiled by a mystery that creates its own enigma and illustrates Schlegel's concept of chaos. In order to understand Hoffmann's tale one has to consider this issue that already emerges within the tale's ambiguous title. In Hoffmann's tale, the sandman figure's folkloric<sup>101</sup> characterization is challenged in at least six narratives about the sandman. Since we are confronted with several acts of story telling, Nathanael encounters several identities of the sandman. From this perspective Freud's discussion of the sandman becomes one-sided since it merely focuses on one of the stories, in particular on the story of Nathanael.<sup>102</sup> In his analysis, Freud insists on the fact that the detachment of the sandman figure from the eye motif is

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<sup>101</sup> Folkloric refers to the aspects of the sandman that reoccur in the folklore about the figure.

<sup>102</sup> Whereas both the mother and nurse's stories function only as subplots in Freud's analysis, I will elevate them to crucial forms.

unthinkable (59). This fixed attachment of figure and motif blinds his interpretation of Hoffmann's tale. In my reading, Freud's fixed character becomes fluid again as I draw attention to the various stories about the sandman that Nathanael listens to as a child and retells himself as an adult. I view these stories as performative acts that shape each of the fragmentary aspects of the figure. It is performative because each story describes the sandman figure. However, none of these descriptions predominate the tale. Each one adds another puzzling layer to the title character. As a result of this, Hoffmann's sandman is fantastic because the figure lacks a harmonious core. Each of the different storytellers narratives illustrate a different sandman figure. The diverse portrayals of the figure show the odd constellations, on which Schlegel insisted upon as characteristics of the (poetic) fairy tales. In Hoffmann's literary tale, the various stories about the sandman address such odd constellations and suggest multiple readings about the figure that are also confusing. These readings intertwine different portrayals and construct a bizarre character that is defined by its multiplicity. This odd arrangement of different illustrations dilutes the idea of one unified identity. The sandman figure is in a constant state of becoming. While different stories about the sandman construct the figure's mythos, they also problematize any discussion that prioritizes one depiction over others. In the six narratives the sandman appears at times as a character, motif or concept. Since he cannot be described by one literary term, the sandman resists even literary identifications.

### 3. Textual Analysis

In Hoffmann's narrative one representation of the sandman in one familiar world is juxtaposed with other representations in second or third familiar worlds. Such reshaping of the sandman figure within diverse storytelling performances exemplifies the

fantastic. Todorov characterizes the concept of the fantastic as indefinable. Similar to chaos, the fantastic also cannot be grasped and “occupies the duration of uncertainty” (25). Six narrative accounts on the sandman shape the figure’s identities – or present different sandmen – and also obstruct the formation of one harmonious sandman figure. This is a paradox. How can something create when it also obstructs at the same time? This paradox reinforces the enigma of the title figure which cannot be (re)solved. In my close readings of the six narratives about the sandman, I explore their bizarre link to present one possible meaning of the sandman figure. First I introduce the sandman figure as an affliction, in particular, I show how Nathanael’s and his father’s mind interrupt storytelling as communication. Then I suggest how the sandman figure is represented as a form of explanation that is conceptualized in the mother’s tale as well as Nathanael’s own speculations before the figure’s depiction is reinstated in the storytelling performances within the nurse’s tale and Nathanael’s. The fourth part of the close reading will suggest a link between the sandman as a “Gestalt” and a something (Etwas, 5). I conclude my textual analysis with a discussion on the narrator’s questioning of his own authenticity.

The sandman figure is first introduced as an affect within Nathanael’s mind placing the sandman figure within the context of Nathanael’s narrative.<sup>103</sup> In a letter to his friend Lothar, Nathanael exclaims: “Gewiß seid ihr alle voll Unruhe, dass ich so lange – lange nicht geschrieben...Ach wie vermochte ich Euch zu schreiben, in der zerrissenen Stimmung des Geistes, die mir bisher alle Gedanken zerstörte” (Hohoff 2).<sup>104</sup> Although

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<sup>103</sup> This idea can be contextualized within affect theory.

<sup>104</sup> “You certainly must be disturbed because I have not written for such a long, long time...Alas, how could I write to you in the tormented frame of mind which has disrupted all my thoughts!” (93). This translation is from *Tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann* (1969) edited and translated by Leonard J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight. The following entries are from their translation unless otherwise noted.

Nathanael's letter to Lothar is the first of three letters that open Hoffmann's narrative, and thus speak to an epistemological approach to storytelling. According to Hoffmann's handwritten manuscript, the facsimile is included in Latifi's edition, the narrative "Der Sandmann" begins with the mother's tale about the sandman.<sup>105</sup> There is no direct reference to the sandman figure here. The lack of the sandman in the letter parallels the uncertainty of the narrative's title. This letter's opening represents the beginning of Hoffmann's tale and suggests the fragility of Nathanael's mind. Nathanael's letter indicates his growing uneasiness about his family as well as himself although the term "gewiß" (2) addresses Nathanael's certainty that his lack of writing causes his family to worry about him, the phrase "Gewiß seid ihr alle voll Unruhe" (2)<sup>106</sup> also foreshadows Nathanael's own emotional change. The following textual interruption, fragmenting his assumption, indicates his lack of control, "dass ich so lange – lange nicht geschrieben" (2).<sup>107</sup> The dash not only presents a semantic fragmentation but also suggests a derogation of Nathanael's mind. The repetition of the temporal adverb "lange" (2) prolongs this process and points to a particular mental occupation bothering Nathanael. His inability to write becomes synonymous with his inability to articulate his mental state. A mystery arises to explain this mental lethargy. I propose that the mystery implies the presence of the sandman figure. While Nathanael's mind, specifically its mood is torn apart – "in der zerrissenen Stimmung des Geistes" (2)<sup>108</sup> – this notion personifies the sandman figure.

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<sup>105</sup> The three letters that open Hoffmann's narrative "Der Sandmann" are not included in his handwritten manuscript. See Latifi page 16-7.

<sup>106</sup> "You certainly must be disturbed" (93).

<sup>107</sup> "Because I have not written for such a long, long time" (93).

<sup>108</sup> "In the tormented frame of mind" (93).



Although the figure remains unnamed, it emerges as a construct – an emotional response – within Nathanael’s mind introducing the sandman figure’s first representation. The enigma of the sandman frames Hoffmann’s narrative. Different stories about the sandman attempt to shed light on this puzzle whose diverse representation will defy a coherent characterization. Although past interpretations center on both the mother and nurse’s tales about the sandman and demonstrate how Nathanael’s obsession with the sandman are related to these tales, it is through Nathanael’s father that storytelling as a performative act is introduced.

This storyteller influences the creative and performative act of storytelling and thus controls his audience. While Nathanael’s father becomes a storyteller, he influences Nathanael’s frame of mind: “Oft erzählte er uns viele wunderbare Geschichten und geriet darüber so in Eifer, daß ihm die Pfeife immer ausging, die ich, ihm brennend Papier hinhaltend, wieder anzünden mußte, welches mir denn ein Hauptspaß war” (5).<sup>109</sup> Based on a memory whose source cannot be entirely authenticated because of the diverse conflicting narrators, including Nathanael as the fictional author, who narrates, and the narrator, the father is characterized as storyteller. This memory nostalgically recalls how the father continuously creates wondrous stories. These creations take possession of the father, the storyteller, and his vivid animation and eagerness to tell them distract him from smoking his pipe. Storytelling causes the father to forget about the everyday routine: wonder versus everyday as indicated in the extinction of his pipe: “daß ihm die Pfeiffe immer ausging” (5).<sup>110</sup> His eagerness (Eifer, 5) for these wondrous tales afflicts

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<sup>109</sup> “He often told us marvelous stories, and he would get so carried away that his pipe would keep going out and I would relight it for him with a piece of burning paper, which I thought was great fun” (94).

<sup>110</sup> “That his pipe would keep going out” (94).

his family with a happiness that contributes to a family idyll. In *The Folktale* (1976 edition) Stith Thompson proposed the following about the wonder tale: “a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite creature and is filled with the marvelous” (8). The Grimms establish a connection between storytelling and the creation of idyll bourgeois family in their introduction to *Kinder- and Hausmärchen* (1837 edition). In particular, Nathanael is drawn towards father’s performative act of storytelling by willingly lighting the father’s pipe. Nathanael becomes an active part of his father’s storytelling performance. Thus any alterations within this performance also modify Nathanael’s active part. However, at times the father is unable to fulfill his role as a storyteller and cannot personally inspire his family, in particular his children. Oral storytelling loses its wondrous and harmonious effect on the family. Its replacement with literary storytelling, in the form of picture books, diminishes the idyll within bourgeois family and calls for individual engagements with the stories.

The father’s inability to tell wondrous stories parallels the lack of communication between Nathanael and his family resulting from the sandman figure’s representation as a mental affliction. At times the father cannot narrate any tales: “Oft gab er uns aber Bilderbücher in die Hände, saß stumm und starr in seinem Lehnstuhl und blies starke Dampfwolken von sich, daß wir alle wie im Nebel schwammen” (Latifi 84).<sup>111</sup> The father’s emotional state<sup>112</sup> as indicated through his lethargic behavior “stumm und starr”

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<sup>111</sup> “But there were occasions when he’d put picture books in our hands and sit silently in his armchair, blowing out billows of smoke till we all seemed to be swimming in clouds” (94).

<sup>112</sup> “Durch den Nebel schwimmen” illustrates a distortion in perception. The father’s pipe interferes with the other characters’ awareness and allows – or coerces – them to create their own explanations, different stories about and constructs of the sandman figure.

(84), interrupts the family idyll. Suspending his role of the active storyteller, he can only nurture his children's imagination through "Bilderbücher" (84). These picture books silence himself and his stories altering his portrayal as a devoted father figure. While a heavy smoke replaces the father's wondrous words, literary storytelling tradition represented through these books supersedes the oral one. This replacement also addresses an alteration within the family idyll. The father's altered behavior interrupts any communication within his family. The question arises: What is occupying the father's mind? According to Nathanael's memories, the culprit for this father's afflictions seems unknown and the family literary "swims within a fog." There is no indication in the narrative that the father thinks about Coppelius, the sandman, or any other character. However, the father's affliction is comparable to Nathanael's inner conflict that hinders him from writing a letter to his family. "Starke Dampfwolken" (84)<sup>113</sup> – just as "zerrissene Stimmung des Geistes" (84)<sup>114</sup> earlier – address the father's inner conflict and perhaps contributes to a future conceptualization of the sandman figure when Nathanael's mother explains the father's mysterious behavior and tells a story about the sandman.

The mother's instructive tale situates the sandman within the realm of parenting and transforms the figure from an affliction of the mind into a physical character. Nathanael observes his mother's sadness: "An solchen Abenden war die Mutter sehr traurig und kaum schlug die Uhr neun, so sprach sie: Nun Kinder! – zu Bette! zu Bette! der Sandmann kommt, ich merk es schon" (Latifi 84).<sup>115</sup> The mother, according to

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<sup>113</sup> "Billow of smoke" (94).

<sup>114</sup> "Tormented frame of mind" (93).

<sup>115</sup> "Mother was very sad on such evenings, and hardly had the clock struck nine when she would say: 'Now, children, off to bed with you! The Sandman is coming, I can already hear him'" (94).

Nathanael's observations, indirectly identifies the sandman figure as the culprit of her sadness. Her affliction that is similar to the father's and Nathanael's does not make her passive. Instead she acknowledges the sandman in her tale and recognizes him as the destroyer of the family's harmony. While the sandman's arrival is linked to nine o'clock, the children's bedtime, it also initiates the change within the parents' behavior. Compared to the unreceptive father, the mother takes over the father's authoritative role as a parent as well as a storyteller. Although her new roles contextualize women as storytellers, her attempt to assert authority, as indicated in the phrase "Nun Kinder! – zu Better! Zu Bette!" (84),<sup>116</sup> fails because she cannot entirely hide her own emotions. The dash and the following repetition of her instruction suggest the growing urgency to remove her children from their present location. While Nathanael's mother integrates the sandman as a fairy tale character, she does not attach a moral meaning to the character. Instead she transforms the fairy tale character into a psychological explanation for the father's changed behavior. The reinstatement of storytelling, in particular the telling of the sandman's story, demonstrates the merging of different representations of the sandman figure. Although all three cases – Nathanael's ravings, the father's passivity and the mother's sadness – illustrate the appearance of the sandman as an affect, the mother's mental affliction and her short tale about the sandman, in particular, begin to alter the sandman's representation. Still linked to some emotional responses, the sandman turns into a story-tale character, or rather a folkloric character.

Nathanael's curiosity to visualize this folkloric character transforms the sandman's representation of an internal affect into an unknown Gestalt. Nathanael points out: "Wirklich hörte ich dann auch jedesmal Etwas schweres langsamen Tritts die Treppe

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<sup>116</sup> "Now, children, off to bed with you!" (94).

heraufpoltern, das mußte der Sandmann seyn (sic)” (Hohoff 5).<sup>117</sup> Nathanael’s perceived auditory sensation links the sandman figure to an actual existence indicated in the term really (wirklich, 5). The sandman becomes part of Nathanael’s physical reality, although the figure itself remains a mysterious character that is only identified through the noises Nathanael hears. The sandman here turns into Nathanael’s speculation or interpretation of reality: “das mußte der Sandmann seyn” (5).<sup>118</sup> According to Freud this moment creates Nathanael’s infantile belief about the sandman. Logical deduction and childish imagination define the narrative’s reality. The narrative’s move from the parents’ affliction to the mother’s simple announcement “der Sandmann kommt” (Latifi 84)<sup>119</sup> transforms the sandman figure from a motif in a saying into an actual being. This is perceived as some thing: “Etwas” (Hohoff 5). This term in German is just a generic form referring to undetermined, unknown things or facts. Here it is not an indefinite pronoun but used as a noun that becomes the essence its pronoun cannot describe. The gender-neutral pronoun “Etwas” (5) not only turns into a noun emphasizing a description of the unknown object but also refers to an experience of an unknown phenomenon. Nathanael’s auditory experience, then, both confirms his mother’s sadness resulting from the arrival of this mysterious character, and also demonstrates the child’s need to explain these noises as well as the parents’ altered emotions. The sandman is first identified as the “Etwas” (5), an essence of the unknown that can be perceived with one’s senses, in particular the auditory sense. Although Nathanael, functioning as the narrator or creator,

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<sup>117</sup> “And at these times I always really did hear something clumping up the stairs with a heavy, slow step; it must have been the Sandman” (94).

<sup>118</sup> “It must have been the Sandman” (94).

<sup>119</sup> “The Sandman is coming” (94).

transforms the sandman into the subject, the newly adapted character is still enigmatic. It is questionable who exactly ascends the staircase. This fantastic moment – speculation and hesitant speculation – creates multiple representations of the sandman figure.

Associating the unknown Gestalt as evil, this aspect of the sandman figure is suddenly deconstructed. The mother apologizes: “Es gibt keinen Sandmann...wenn ich sage, der Sandmann kommt, so will das nur heißen ihr seyd (sic) schläfrig und könnt die Augen nicht offen behalten, als hätte man euch Sand hineingestreut” (Hohoff 6).<sup>120</sup> The sandman figure’s reassignment as an allegory for being sleepy suggests the mother’s attempt to influence the son’s reinterpretation of the character. Her abrupt dismissal of the sandman’s actual existence shows an employment of a children’s tale to nurture her son. She resituates the figure into the realm of folklore, reducing its significance to that of an irrelevant general saying. The sandman converts into a common explanation; in particular into a sign for being so tired that one can hardly keep one’s eyes open as if sand has been sprinkled into them.<sup>121</sup> The sandman represents the motif of falling asleep according to the mother. However, her effort to restrain the sandman’s portrayal is idled because the figure itself has transcended, and now exists within different layers of the narrative defending its fragmentary selves. There are now four conflicting presentations of the sandman figure that move beyond its mere folkloric depiction. Each presentation authenticates one aspect of the figure’s identity. These different depictions introduce the

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<sup>120</sup> “My dear child, there is no Sandman’ ...’When I tell you that the Sandman is coming, it only means that you are sleepy and can’t keep your eyes open any longer, as though someone had sprinkled sand into them” (94).

<sup>121</sup> The sand also alludes to the “exotic.” Sand evokes the images of deserts and recalls description from *Arabian Nights: Thousand and One Night*.

sandman's fluid multiplicity that allows for further constructions of this figure contributing to the tale's fantastic narrative structure.

The mother places the former infantile comprehension of the sandman figure within the context of proverbs. Although Ulrich Hohoff, referring to Maassen's analysis, addresses the correctness of the proverb the mother explains, he points out that the sandman figure belongs to a category of Kinderschreck with a sometimes more friendly disposition. Nathanael's question, "Was das für ein Mann sey (sic), der Sandmann?" (Hohoff 6)<sup>122</sup> shows that the sandman figure already has too much footing in Nathanael's consciousness. Identified as a man, he turns into a male figure that assures the survival of his offspring. The nurse's response encourages this perspective of the sandman:

Das ist ein böser Mann, der kommt zu den Kindern, wenn sie nicht zu Bett' gehen wollen und wirft ihnen Händevoll (sic) Sand in die Augen, daß sie zum Kopf blutig herausspringen und wirft sie in den Sack und trägt sie in den Halbmond<sup>123</sup> zur Atzung für seine Kinderchen; die sitzen dort im Nest und haben krumme Schnäbel, wie die Eulen, damit picken sie der unartigen Menschenkindlein Augen auf. (7)<sup>124</sup>

From the nurse's perspective the sandman figure is a cruel man, "ein böser Mann" (7),<sup>125</sup> with very antagonistic features. He mutilates children and steals their eyes. At the same

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<sup>122</sup> What kind of man is the sandman? (My translation.)

<sup>123</sup> The handwritten manuscript emphasizes the children's waiting for their meal: "da sitzen seine Kinder." (7). This image is analogous to children who are sitting at table and wait for meal.

<sup>124</sup> "He is a wicked man who comes to children when they refuse to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes till they bleed and pop out of their heads. Then he throws the eyes into a sack and takes to the half-moon as food for his children, who sit in a nest and have crooked beaks like owls with which they pick up the eyes of human children who have been naughty" (95).

<sup>125</sup> "He is a wicked man" (95).

time he also acts as a nurturing father, in particular an extremely caring father figure, who does anything to ensure his own children's survival. The robbed eyes serve as food for his children, as indicated by the phrase "zur Atzung<sup>126</sup> für seine Kinderchen" (7).<sup>127</sup> There is no doubt that from one perspective this is a didactic tale that teaches human children adequate behavior by scaring them.<sup>128</sup> However, from the sandman's perspective the tale narrates a parent's conflict to secure their children's well being regardless of the price. The sandman's children patiently await his arrival. The term "Kinderchen" (7) is the diminutive form for children in German. By referring to the sandman's offspring as little children, the nurse links the mother's parental instruction and the sandman's nurturing father-role. It is not the sandman who commits a cannibalistic act of eating the stolen (human) eyes, but his children do so. Their seemingly terrifying behavior illustrates the nurse's tactic to scold Nathanael. These (non-human) children as birds, judge and deform misbehaved children by picking their eyes: "picken sie der unartigen Menschenkindlein Augen auf" (7).<sup>129</sup> The diminutive form "Menschenkindlein" (7) distinguishes the two groups of children and separates the human children – that have to be saved – and the (non) human children, or the "other." Children judge children (their

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<sup>126</sup> According to the DWB the Grimms trace the term "Atzung" to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (referring to Voss) describing the master's right to receive food and meal (Futter und Mahl) at the house of his subjects (Bd. 1, Sp. 597 bis 598). In contrast, the term refers to food for birds. Hohoff also points out "Raubtiermotif," e.g. owls. Owls in particular, according to Hohoff's Stellenkommentar on page 238, note 7 are believed to possess magial powers. In "Der Sandmann" Coppelius, as Hohoff continues, is characterized as a "Raubtier."

<sup>127</sup> Paul Berry's 1991 "The Sandman" visualizes this particular moment as I show in the last chapter.

<sup>128</sup> Hohoff identifies the nurse's tale as the opposite to the mother's tale. Here, the sandman figure transforms into a "life-threatening monster" and "a maternal-punishment apparatus" (238). Although the sandman figure indeed seem to take over the role of the mother disciplining Nathanael, the sandman simultaneously cares for his own offspring. I argue that these offspring are also punishing misbehaved children.

<sup>129</sup> They "pick up the eyes of human children who have been naughty" (95).



counter-part). Some pick the others' eyes. The sandman figure mediates this act of violence. Although beaks like those of owls characterize the sandman's children, the sandman figure is not identified as a bird himself. The nurse's simple recognition of the sandman as an evil man and this man's birdlike offspring suggests a fantastic figure whose true depiction is reticent. The sandman's destructive violence then is part of his nurturing. He does not care for humans and insists on his own power and interests. The nurse's tale, in my opinion, clearly sets the sandman figure and his children apart from Nathanael and his surroundings. The half-moon as a living space synchronizes between man and bird and links the fantastic to the exotic. One can read this passage as a social commentary in which the sandman figure and his offspring represent the "Other" who are accused of harming a superior class while they merely pursue or maintain the survival of their own kind.

Shifting away from this parental role in my perception of the nurse's tale, the sandman figure remains a phantom. Nathanael exerts: "Gräßlich mahlte (sic) sich nun mir im Inneren das Bild des grausamen Sandmanns<sup>130</sup> aus" (7).<sup>131</sup> This is a creation of a fictional image. The uncommon usage of the past reflexive emphasizes the image of the dreadful sandman figure that turns into an agent: "das Bild des grausamen Sandmanns

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<sup>130</sup> The handwritten manuscript shows Hoffmann's initial depiction of the sandman here as "Mondmann" – man in the moon. This alteration suggests that the sandman should not be associated with the moon itself and leaves the moon as living space/home for his children. Later retellings, e.g. "Peterchen's Mondfahrt" by Gerdt von Bassewitz (1912 performed as play in Leipzig's "Alten Theater" and published as an illustrated children's book in 1915) will focus on this specific location. It is also graphically depicted in Paul Berry's 1991 animation short film.

<sup>131</sup> "A horrible picture of the cruel Sandman formed in my mind" (95).

mahlte (sic) sich” (7).<sup>132</sup> The image – or representation – takes possession of Nathanael’s imagination or fantasy. It creates itself and transgresses earlier representations. One perception of the sandman evokes a new one. In sum, it inserts control and overtakes Nathanael’s own agency. The narrative is further complicated through these diverse attempts of visualizing the sandman figure by pointing toward the shortcomings of literary expression. Metaphorical imaginations are the literary strategies that are exploited here. They become autonomous, controlling and authoritative agents. Elaborating on the sandman figure’s fleeing nature, Nathanael characterizes him as terrible appearance (7). Regardless of his increasing doubt in the actual existence of the sandman figure, Nathanael is unable to free himself of its imagery. The sandman lingers like a ghost (8) within Nathanael’s imagination and refuses to be controlled. The figure defies character development and keeps its indefinable Gestalt. One image escapes after the other and remains a “thing.” Its nature lies within the continuation of the “Etwas” (5) that reformats the multiple shapes and forms – conflicting representations of the sandman figure.

These sandman figures influence young Nathanael to become an avid reader of fantasy and adventure literature. Whereas the sandman figure formerly was identified as a man with fantastic powers and a nurturing father figure, the sandman is also praised for his ability to instill interest in the wondrous:

Der Sandmann hatte mich auf die Bahn des Wunderbaren,  
Abenteuerlichen gebracht, das so schon leicht im kindlichen Gemüth (sic)  
sich einmischt. Nichts war mir lieber, als schauerliche Geschichten von

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<sup>132</sup> The German states: “The horrible picture of the Sandman formed” (95). Children practice their drawing skills by coloring in prefabricated pictures. Adding their own interpretation with their chosen colors while being confined within the fixed sketch.

Kobolten (sic), Hexen, Däumlingen u.s.w. zu hören oder zu lesen; aber  
obenan stand immer der Sandmann. (9-10)<sup>133</sup>

The sandman figure inspires young Nathanael to a well of wondrous stories. Adding to Nathanael's exposure to storytelling through the father, the sandman figure impels Nathanael to explore literary narratives in order to enhance his imagination. For example, the young Nathanael eagerly reads or listens to tales about goblins, witches and tom thumbs.<sup>134</sup> The placement of the sandman above any of these creatures suggests the figure's agency of inspiration. The sandman figure becomes master of all other horrific characters, insisting on his influence over Nathanael's imagination.

The sandman's unidentifiable shape – its slippery identity – coerces Nathanael to pursue his endeavor of verifying his mental image. The previous literary endeavor is now supported by other visual and artistic efforts. A natural desire grows within him to satisfy his curiosity and eventually face the sandman figure himself: "selbst das Geheimniß (sic) zu erforschen, den fabelhaften<sup>135</sup> Sandmann zu sehen keimte mit den Jahren immer mehr die Lust in mir empor" (9).<sup>136</sup> This desire is linked to an unknown source and influences Nathanael's pursuit. The phrase "die Lust keimte in mir empor" (9) describes a vegetative awakening that exemplifies the sandman figure's increasing power as controlling agency within the desire for the narrative's literality. This creative and obsessive force persuades

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<sup>133</sup> "The Sandman had directed my thoughts towards marvels and wonders which can so easily take hold of a childish mind. I liked nothing better than to hear or read horrible tales about goblins, witches, dwarfs, and such; but at the head of them all was the Sandman" (95).

<sup>134</sup> Hohoff points out that Tom Thumbs here refers to a specific goblin characterized by its agile and mischievous nature (238).

<sup>135</sup> As Hohoff points out in the critical edition to "Der Sandmann" the term "fabelhaft" refers to "a fictional element" as in a character from a "fable, e.g. from the tale of the old nurse" (238).

<sup>136</sup> "If I could only solve the mystery and get to see the fantastic Sandman with my own eyes – that was the desire which increased in me year by year" (95).

Nathanael to visualize his fantasies in drawings in order to bestow a shape onto the sandman figure. Nathanael's drawing reviews the development among the different representations of the sandman figure from an affliction, auditory sensation, motif in a saying, proverb, evil man, nurturing father to a visual character that can be drawn. These changing depictions demonstrate that the sandman is synchronistic. Its fluid multiplicity constructs the fantastic that hinders the creation and/or representation of one unified figure.

Nathanael's artistic reproduction(s) of the sandman figure illustrates the figure's controlling authority. Nathanael creates his own artistic – if though childish – reproduction(s) of this phantasmagoria: “obenan stand immer der Sandmann, den ich in den seltsamsten abscheulichsten Gestalten überall auf Tische, Schränke und Wände mit Kreide, Kohle, hinzeichnete” (10).<sup>137</sup> Multiple variations of the sandman figure in all kind of forms emerge as peculiar and ghastly objects in these drawings.<sup>138</sup> These shapes remain fluid and relentlessly change their forms.<sup>139</sup> The move from mental images to artistic sketches cannot prevent the figure's collapsing image. Even the chalk and charcoal drawings present incomplete portrayals. The sandman figure's identity flees from the artist. The short-lived moments of chalk and charcoal, as the artist's choice of

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<sup>137</sup> “But at head of them all was the Sandman, of whom I was always drawing hideous pictures, in charcoal, in chalk, on tables, cupboards, and walls” (95).

<sup>138</sup> As the subtitle, “In Callot's Manier” to the Hoffmann's collection *Phantasie- und Nachtstücke*, indicates that Hoffmann admired the grotesque art of Jacques Callot and in particular his depiction of St. Anthony as Val Scullion points out in “Kinaesthetic, Spastic and Spatial Motifs as Expressions of Romantic Irony in E. T. A. Hoffmann's ‘The Sandman’ and Other Writings” (2009, *Journal of Literature and Science*, 8-9) I want to propose that the sandman's diverse depictions can or rather should be imagined in a hoffmannesque style. Art and literature fuse at this point in the narrative of “Der Sandmann.”

<sup>139</sup> Hoffmann's own illustration contributes to this fluidity juxtaposing words and images in conflict of constructing and representing the sandman's identity. I will further analyze Hoffmann's drawing in the next chapter.

media, suggest Nathanael's inability to clearly capture the sandman as one figure. Instead the produced variations in the sandman's outline – depending on the hues of lighter chalk and darker charcoal – emphasize its multiplicity and fluidity: the fluidity that directs the multiple representations.

Although Nathanael attempts to regain his independence and separate himself from the sandman figure and his infantile trauma, the diverse representations of the sandman challenge this retraction. The discovery of one of the sandman's depictions turns into a childish hide-and-seek play between Nathanael and the bizarre sandman figure: “aber nichts konnte ich erlauschen, denn immer war der Sandmann schon zur Thüre hinein, wenn ich den Platz hatte, wo er mir sichtbar werden konnte” (10).<sup>140</sup> The appearances of the sandman remain undetectable. With this unpredictability, the multiple representations of the sandman assert their control or authority over themselves and Nathanael. If Nathanael's endeavor to meet the sandman had been successful, it would have situated the fantastic figure into his realm of reality, and thus finally limited the character of the sandman into one particular layer of the narrative structure. Instead the figure's identity is complicated with the introduction of different characters that Nathanael identifies as the sandman, in particular with Coppelius. It addresses the danger of transforming the fictional onto the pragmatic reality. The question arises: Does fiction strive to become literal? This is the major topic of Romanticism that is outlined here.

Nathanael's perception of Coppelius as the sandman, as Freud prioritizes it in his interpretation of the tale, addresses merely one of the planes of reality in terms of the sandman's fluid multiplicity as we have now seen. Nathanael's construct of this

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<sup>140</sup> “But I could never discover anything, because the Sandman had already gone through the door by the time I got to a spot from which he would have been visible” (96).

particular representation of the sandman figure accelerates his maturation process: “mit Gewalt ermannend kukte (sic) ich behutsam hervor, der Sandmann stand mitten in der Stube vor meinem Vater” (Latifi 19-20).<sup>141</sup> Hiding behind a curtain, Nathanael’s glances verify his growing belief about the existence of the sandman. Commenting on the literarization of fictional characters, the violent force Nathanael faces breaks the fluidity of the sandman. The adverb “ermannend” (19) contains the gendered noun Mann<sup>142</sup> – thus in one sense, Nathanael becomes a man at this point facing a literalization of his phantasmagoria. The formerly ghost-like sandman figure suddenly materializes in front of Nathanael in the center of his home. Whereas the sandman formerly emerged as a fantasy or affliction that interrupts the family idyll, here the sandman is introduced as a character into the narrative. Past scholarship, beginning with Freud, discusses this introduction of the sandman figure and its substitution with Copellius/Copploa as the last and only instance of the various representations of the sandman. The text does collapse these characters. However, this particular characterization remains unreliable because of its specific link to one of the narratives about the sandman. Whereas Freud’s interpretation exposes this performative act of storytelling, I ask how this and other representations of the sandman situate the tale into the realm of the fantastic. Each act of storytelling – Nathanael’s affliction, the father’s passivity, the mother’s saying, Nathanael’s speculation as interpretation of reality, the nurse’s tale, Nathanael’s own storytelling – creates the sandman’s character contributing to yet another facet of its identity.

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<sup>141</sup> “Summoning up every drop of courage, I cautiously peeped out. The Sandman was standing in the middle of my father’s room” (96).

<sup>142</sup> “Er-mannen” literally describes becoming a man if one considers “mannen” as a verb and prefix “er-“ as introduction of a process.

The failure to identify one authentic narrator obstructs a unified sandman figure. In particular, the narrator's intrusion challenges the stress on one depiction of the sandman figure compared to the others. The narrator confesses:

Mir kam keine Rede in den Sinn, die nur im mindesten etwas von dem Farbenglanz des innern Bildes abzuspiegeln schien. Ich beschloß gar nicht anzufangen. Nimm, geneigter Leser! die drei Briefe, welche Freund Lothar mir gütigst mitteilte, für den Umriß des Gebildes, in das ich nun erzählend immer mehr und mehr Farbe hineinzutragen mich bemühen werde. (Latifi 40)<sup>143</sup>

The narrator renounces his authority as the reliable storyteller and interrupts the frame story. This interruption stresses the narrator's incapability of recreating the coloring of an internal picture, "Farbenglanz des inner Bildes" (40).<sup>144</sup> This storyteller's determination not to begin the act of storytelling ironically introduces the narrator's story about Nathanael. The narrator's referral to the three letters he receives from another fictional character, Lothar, diminishes the narrator's authority and raises questions about the narrative's authenticity. The mystery about the sandman's identity cannot be verified based on the narrator's reflections on Nathanael's story. The fact of multiple letters speaking to different aspects of this story is not thematized. This narrative structure deconstructs the sandman as a figure with a harmonious core. The conflict within the different representations of the sandman figure is embedded within the act of storytelling

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<sup>143</sup> "There were no words I could find which were appropriate to describe, even in the most feeble way, the brilliant colors of my inner vision. I resolved not to begin at all. So, gentle reader, do accept the three letters, which my friend Lothar has been kind enough to communicate, as the outline of the picture to which I will endeavor to add ever more color as I continue with the story" (105).

<sup>144</sup> The translation reads: "Brilliant colors of my inner vision" (105).

itself. Stories about the sandman and the authenticity of the diverse storyteller cannot be confirmed. The sandman therefore has to be read as a fragmented character – a synchronistic figure – that is only unified in so far as its conflicting images allow linking the figure to the fantastic. The sandman figure’s identity is unidentifiable in its nature and lacks a harmonious core.<sup>145</sup> The multiplicity of the sandman figure continues to be prominent in the narrative and demonstrates how the sandman figure can only exist in relation to its other presentations in the context of the fantastic.

The sandman figure counteracts any control that attempts to shape his identity and wields a kind of autonomy. Just as the mother before is unable to deconstruct the sandman figure, Nathanael cannot justify and erase the sandman as an uncanny experience, “unheimlichen Spuk, (dessen Bild) nicht bleicher wurde” (Latifi 16-7).<sup>146</sup> The representations of the sandman continue to take hold of the characters, forcing and simultaneously refusing their own individual depiction(s). The phenomenon of the sandman’s fluid multiplicity repeatedly situates the narrative within contemporary contexts because the tale of the sandman resists any one interpretation. It is the figure of the sandman that is perhaps the most complex and puzzling character in Hoffmann’s tale.

Previous scholarship, as I have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, has, for the most part, ignored the significance of the sandman figure’s fluidity in the context of chaotic narrative and structures. My reading of Hoffmann’s literary tale, and of the stories that the tale includes, explores different representations of this figure. Each fictional character contributes to the understanding of Hoffmann’s sandman. The figure

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<sup>145</sup> It is this resistance of portrayal that allows for continuous interpretation of the entire tale. An interpretation then, has to acknowledge the obscurity of the title-character in order to appreciate Hoffmann’s masterful writing.

<sup>146</sup> “My imagination of the horrible Sandman grew no paler” (95).



of the sandman and/or its portrayal within the narrative are complex at the very least, if not even fragmented or synchronic. There is no one solid identity of the sandman figure, and this encourages the figure's enigma probing the reader's imagination and reason. The text describes the gray areas between metaphoric, fantastic processes and their literalizations. This is what Schlegel comes to admire in poetic fairy tales because – as we witness in Hoffmann's case – understanding the tale requires unraveling its meta-fictional structure as it entails critical analysis. In terms of narrative structure the sandman figure always has to be considered in terms of all the in between of its representations. However, at times, the overlapping boundaries between these depictions interrupt one layer within the narrative, in particular the different storytelling performances.

These narratological sites, as I show in the following chapter, are not only a case in point for Romantic irony but also create the interplay between Romantic irony and the postmodern sublime. I explore this relationship further in Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann" as well as Hoffmann's illustration of a scene from his tale. I discuss how different representations of the sandman figure(s) generate the sites of resistances that point toward the postmodern sublime.

### CHAPTER III

#### FRACTURED NARRATOLOGIES AND THE POST-MODERN SUBLIME IN E.T.A. HOFFMANN'S "DER SANDMANN" AND HOFFMANN'S ILLUSTRATION

In the previous chapter I introduced the sandman character as an enigmatic figure that lacks a harmonious core. I showed how Friedrich Schlegel's understanding of the fairy tale's structure and Tzvetan Todorov's concept of the fantastic contribute to a discussion of E.T.A. Hoffmann's literary tale "Der Sandmann" (1816). The sandman's fluid multiplicity arises from the bizarre questions of relation and meaning that the diverse stories of the sandman pose. There is no doubt that the sandman figure is both complex and bizarre. This chapter explores these stories further, introduces them as sites of resistance to identify the sandman figure, and looks at the different representations of this figure these sites produce.

Word choices create various mental images of the sandman figure. However the tale's structural narratology withstands the sandman's changing characterization. Moving away from the concept of the fantastic, my reading discusses these moments in the narrative, and I also call attention to one of Hoffmann's pen and ink sketches. Although these two texts epitomize polished modes of representations, they both mark and sustain the paradox that mystifies the tale's title figure. In a way, their individual narratologies insist on obscuring a visualization of the sandman figure. The 1815 illustration<sup>147</sup> (Figure

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<sup>147</sup> In *E.T.A. Hoffmann und seine Illustratoren* (1976) Elke Riemer states that Hoffmann finished a vivid pen-ink sketch within a few minutes and introduced the until then unwritten tale "Der Sandmann" to his friend and publisher Julius Eduard Hitzig (born as Isaac Elias Hitzig). Hitzig, according to Riemer, became Hoffmann's first biographer and used this particular illustration to demonstrate Hoffmann's ability to colorfully visualize the characters of the tale on an available deed paper. Riemer points out that Hitzig's account is insofar incredible because one would not predate this drawing before the writing of the tale because of illustration's incredible details (2-3).

6) depicts a scene from the narrative and shows two male figures in the center and another figure, a child, on the left side towards the background.<sup>148</sup>



Figure 6: Hoffmann's pen and ink drawing

Hoffmann's literary tale "Der Sandmann" hybridizes different forms of storytelling and resists singling out one particular story about the sandman figure. It is not so much the "what" that is told and communicated but how the picture and acts of telling phrase this "what." For example, in the middle of the literary tale the fictional narrator insists on not beginning the story he has already been narrating (Latifi 40).<sup>149</sup> This is a paradox. This moment in the narrative identifies a site of resistance and forces the reader to stop reading and reflect on the tale.<sup>150</sup> While it also addresses what cannot be represented, it nevertheless represents. The tale's plot unfolds but the narrator pauses the process and reflects on it. His pondering results in the obstruction of the plot. In fact, the narrator

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<sup>148</sup> After presenting my theoretical framework, I further analyze this illustration.

<sup>149</sup> Kaltërina Latifi's historically critical edition *E.T.A. Hoffmann: "Der Sandmann" Historisch-kritische Edition* (2011) juxtaposes both the facsimile and the typed pages. Latifi's edition transcribes Hoffmann's handwritten manuscript maintaining his textual and marginal comments. Therefore, I use this edition when quoting from Hoffmann's tale unless I note otherwise.

<sup>150</sup> This is also a moment in which the text reflects on itself. This is characteristic of Romantic irony as I have briefly addressed in the previous chapter.

presents his interpretation of Nathanael story. Therefore, the reader has to call his authenticity into question.

Recent readings of Hoffmann's tale and in particular, traditional discussions of the tale's structure identify this paradox as Romantic irony. In her 1980 essay "E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Der Sandmann': Reflection and Romantic irony," Tatar analyzes textual interruptions in Hoffmann's narrative as a form of Romantic irony and links these moments to the fantastic.<sup>151</sup> Building on Friedrich Schlegel's concept of Romantic irony from his 1797 *Lyceum*-fragments<sup>152</sup> that associates doubt, uncertainty, and textual interruptions, she argues: Hoffmann's tale "sustains the hesitation that defines the fantastic" (587) through an intriguing style of writing. In her reading, Tatar situates the source of "chaos and confusion"<sup>153</sup> within a presumed real friendship between the fictional narrator and the protagonist Nathanael. Her interpretation points toward the narrator's role in creating the fantastic by paradoxically suggesting that actual people – Nathanael, Lothar, Clara are real – are described in the fantastic tale; especially the friendship between the narrator and the protagonist illustrates – or rather proves – this reality aspect. In addition, these two fictional characters contribute to Romantic irony in the tale's narrative structure because their accounts, or retellings of the events, are in

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<sup>151</sup> While the previous chapter discusses the concept of the fantastic in detail, this chapter moves away from it. Therefore, I only provide a limited definition of the concept to recall the previous discussion. In his influential work *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970) Tzvetan Todorov defines the concept of the fantastic "in relation to those of the real and the imaginary" (25). It describes the precise moment, in which the reader and a fictional character reflect on and also evaluate a supernatural event.

<sup>152</sup> One year prior to his larger collection the *Athenäums*-fragments, in 1797 Schlegel wrote the *Lyceums*-fragments. This collection consists of 127 critical fragments that show Schlegel's reflection on various studies such as philosophy, Greek and German literature, and rhetoric. For the purpose of my project, I use Ernst Behler's *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (1967), Band II, unless I note otherwise.

<sup>153</sup> In the same essay Tatar comments on the German Romantics: "The German Romantics never tired of extolling the virtue of chaos and confusion... (E.T.A. Hoffmann) persistently exerted his right to exercise the power to confuse" (585).

dialogue with each other while resisting the attempt to evaluate one as more correct or plausible than the other. The narrator reflects on Nathanael's tragedy whereas Nathanael succumbs to madness. Tatar's reading suggests that the relationship of both reinstates the tale's authenticity and reestablishes a harmonic narrative structure (605-6). My analysis contextualizes them differently refraining to view them as interruptions.

These moments present sites that allow for ceaseless interpretations through the suggestions of infinite relations and meanings between what the text says and what the text means. In his *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (1991),<sup>154</sup> Lyotard defines the postmodern sublime as a "principle of thinking's getting carried away" (55). My analysis of Hoffmann's tale and his 1815 illustration suggest that such moments in the narrative<sup>155</sup> become a site of chaos allowing infinite relation and meaning to emerge. I also argue that these sites paradoxically address a visualization of a figure that cannot be visualized through words or sketches. In fact, I assert that such visual attempts remain always insufficient and conclude that the diverse stories about the sandman can be read as sites that create, obscure, and resist presenting the post-modern sublime. Traditionally, the explorations of such textual moments have been linked to Schlegel's concept of Romantic irony.

The concept of Romantic irony is complex, and therefore it remains troublesome to define. In *Die Romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (1960), Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs situates one of the challenges to define Romantic irony within its cross-disciplinary characteristic drawing from psychology, philosophy and literary theory

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<sup>154</sup> As I already noted in Chapter I, I am relying on and using Elizabeth Rottenberg's 1994 translation of *Leçons sur l'analytique du sublime* because it is the accepted translation.

<sup>155</sup> I view Hoffmann's illustration as a text; therefore it is also a narrative.

(14) although the term has been ascribed to Schlegel who explored and modified it in his writing between 1797-1803. In his 42<sup>nd</sup> *Lyceums*-Fragment (1797) he introduced the concept's roots: "Philosophy is the true home of irony, which might be defined as logical beauty, for wherever men are philosophizing in spoken or written dialogues, and provided they are not entirely systematic, irony ought to be produced and postulated."<sup>156</sup> This fragment situates irony in the discipline of philosophy and also links the concept to a logical beauty (*logische Schönheit*, 152). The English translation of the fragment correctly presents these two characteristics; however, later, it begins to deviate from the German text. While the English translation identifies men that are philosophizing in spoken and written dialogues, this distinction is not apparent in the original German text at all. In fact, the two types of discussion themselves, and one's participation in them, call for the production and postulation of (Romantic) irony. Schlegel insists on distinguishing between at least two different forms of irony: the ordinary rhetorical irony within the polemic and the sublime (urban) sophistication of the Socratic muse. While he quickly dismisses the first, he values a modified form of Socratic irony, which would later influence his understanding of poetry and poetic infinity. Schlegel himself interchangeably uses the terms Romantic irony and Romantic poesy in his *Lyceums*-fragments. Although literary theory, in particular Romanticism, uses the term Romantic irony it is not really definable. The definition of the word "romantic" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* clearly points to this problem: "What Schlegel meant by the term 'romantic' (*romantisch*) and its apparent cognate Roman (usually translated as

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<sup>156</sup> The German is as followed: "Die Philosophie ist die eigentliche Heimat der Ironie, welche man logische Schönheit definieren möchte; denn überall wo in mündlichen oder geschriebenen Gesprächen, und nur nicht ganz systematisch philosophiert wird, soll man Ironie leisten und fordern (*Lyceum*-Fragment 42, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Hrsg. Ernst Behler, 1967, 152).

‘novel,’ but having among the Romantics a much wider sense) has long been disputed.” This dispute arises from Schlegel’s own shift in thinking from his classicist to his romantic phases. While Plato’s understanding of irony surfaces in Schlegel’s concept, Romantic irony resists a closed system of philosophy, and thus, the concept’s description withstands clear definition.

In his essay “On Plato” (1800) Schlegel first differentiates and characterizes Socratic irony as authorial or stylistic: “Die höchste sokratische Bedeutung: das ist der Sinn dieser schriftstellerischen Ironie und Unverständlichkeit...Ironie der Ironie” (XXVIII).<sup>157</sup> Authorial irony and incomprehensibility describe Socratic irony at its utmost. Irony turns into the irony of irony and so forth extending infinity. In Schlegel’s understanding it is the combination of writing style and its incomprehensibility that defines irony, in particular Socratic irony. It is this reference to incomprehensibility that is crucial in my reading of Hoffmann. Romantic irony creates stylistic contradictions and paradoxes that are similar to the concept of the postmodern sublime.

Attempts to define the concept of the sublime still lead to endless debates among philosophers and literary scholars, who situate different aspects of the sublime within various areas of study including rhetoric, metaphysics, and even psychology. In *Solitude and the Sublime: The Romantic Aesthetics of Individuation* (1992) Frances Ferguson addresses the paradox linked to the term: “Although the notion of the sublime has received an increasing amount of attention during the last decade or so, its currency has not significantly enhanced its accessibility” (37). While employment of the notion of the sublime has increased since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term remains arbitrary and carelessly

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<sup>157</sup> The highest Socratic meaning is, in a way, the poetized irony and incomprehensibility...an irony of the irony. (My translation.)

used in vernacular culture. For academic use, one cannot simply reduce its significance to a vernacular meaning that describes sheer emotions that exaltations such as “O altitude” (37) or “Wow” (37) express. The discourse on the sublime is more complicated.

The sublime in its first definition refers to a stylistic characteristic in rhetoric. Longinus’ treatise<sup>158</sup> “Peri Hypsous” (around 50 C.E.), or “On the Sublime,” regains importance during the eighteenth century. According to Samuel Monk, Romanticism, in particular, contextualizes the sublime within rhetoric. Reflecting on Longinus’ essay in his *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (1935), Monk summarizes Longinus’ view of the rhetorical sublime characterizing a grand style of writing that moves the audience emotionally: “the idea that rhetoric is an instrument of emotional transport was dominant among the ancients, and the grand style. The purpose of which was to move, was an integral part of their rhetoric” (11). Grand writing then evokes different emotional responses that demonstrate how the sublime style captures and transports the audience. This particular concept of the sublime style presents an expression as ornamental – or figurative – and in simple language. It also becomes an agent that influences the audience: “The sublime came as a justifiable category into which could be grouped the stronger emotions and the more irrational elements of art....under Longinus sublime the emotions of terror, horror, and ecstasy” (85). Building on its rhetorical significance, this notion of the sublime categorizes emotions such as terror, horror, and ecstasy which other critics such as Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, and much later also Jean-François Lyotard further address and modify.

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<sup>158</sup> While there is some debate about the correct authorship of this treatise, most English scholars such as the late Samuel H. Monk ascribed this writing to Longinus.



While Longinus' rhetorical sublime focuses on the style and its expression in ornamental and figurative speech, eighteenth century philosophers explore the sublime's affect within a metaphysical context. In *The Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke suggests that the sublime builds on the rhetorical sublime's emotional purpose and specifically links it to the immediate feeling of terror. He contends this emotion was its primary characteristic: "Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too" (101). While Burke stresses that the sublime induces a terror, he also limits the sublime as a response to the visual. He points out that "it is impossible to *look* (my emphasis) on any thing as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (101). Although the sublime becomes more than a rhetorical device, it remains limited to the senses, in particular sight. For Burke, the observations of familiar (animated and "inanimated") objects, including the examination of the defined muscles of a horse, elicit an emotional response and also a physical reaction, for example the sensation of drawing closer to or farther from an object. Although he validates positive responses as an expression of the sublime, it is negative responses, and specifically the "terror" that marked the true sublime for Burke. The connection of terror to the sublime is further reinforced when Sigmund Freud and Tzvetan Todorov refer to the creation of fear and terror when an individual, in particular a reader, encounters a moment of uncertainty, giving rise to the "uncanny," in Freud's case, and to the "fantastic," in Todorov's case.

Poetry, according to Burke, allows one to lessen this sensual limitation of the sublime and calls upon its connection to the metaphysical realm. In the *Enquiry's* fifth part of the addendum "Examples that Words may Affect Without Raising Images" Burke

adds to his initial reflection on the beautiful and the sublime and points to the limitations of his previous definition:

Indeed so little does poetry depend on its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this were the necessary result of all description. Because that union of affecting words which is the most powerful of all poetical instruments, would frequently lose its force along with its propriety and consistency, if the sensible images were always excited. (193)

Burke observes that poetry does not have to “raise sensible images” to be effective and insists that poetry “would lose a very considerable part of its energy,” if it tried to. Instead, its power derives from the “union of affecting words” (193) that cannot be visualized. Burke argues that the sublime has an emotional purpose; however, he also suggests that the sublime lies within a moment of textual resistance in which words appear insufficient to create a visualization of the object that calls forth an emotional response:

The truth is, all verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect, if the speaker did not call in to his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself. Then, by the contagion of our passions, we catch fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described. (198)

Burke confesses the inability of words, of “verbal description” (198), to convey “an idea of the thing described” (198) and acknowledges the speaker’s need to “aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself” (198). Through the “contagion of our passion” (198), the sublime emotionally transports an audience. Although Burke refers specifically to the emotional investment of the speaker to the reader, I will suggest that this transmission of emotionally charged words also occurs between fictional characters in Hoffmann’s “Der Sandmann.”

In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) Immanuel Kant specifies that “true sublimity,” despite the Romantic belief, “must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in nature” (139). While Kant presents at least four concepts of the sublime in his three *Critiques*, in his third Critique he distinguishes the dynamical sublime from the mathematical<sup>159</sup> sublime as relating to the faculty of desire in the representation of a “dynamical disposition of the imagination” (§ 24). For Kant, it is not the greatness of nature but the process of judging nature as separated individuals that describe the modern concept of the sublime:<sup>160</sup>

It is also evident from this that true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in the object of nature, the judging of which occasions this disposition in it...the mind itself feels elevated in its own judgment if, in the consideration of such things, without regard to their form, abandoning itself to the imagination and to reason which,

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<sup>159</sup> Kant defines the mathematical sublime as “that...sublime which even (the ability) to think demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses” (§ 25). This concept takes into account physicality between different entities.

<sup>160</sup> The term “modern sublime” traditionally refers to Kant’s concept of the sublime whereas the term “post-modern sublime” describes Lyotard’s concept of the sublime. This distinction is especially important in the discipline of philosophy.

although it is associated with it entirely without any determinate end, merely extends it, it nevertheless finds the entire power of imagination inadequate to its ideas. (§ 26, 139)

Marveling at the distant mountain and an approaching storm are two illustrations that demonstrate how the individual can begin to understand his/her separation, or rather disbarment, from nature, which results in the logical expulsion of fear of objects or forces formerly perceived as threatening and dangerous. In this process the mind asserts that imagination is insufficient to capture its ideas. This leads to the individual's separation from nature and also results in the elimination of fear. Reason, the form of judgment, takes over and governs the mind's feeling. The modern sublime is not achieved through fear, terror or any other emotion aroused through nature – although a thunder storm, for example, can be perceived as terrifying – it is, “the judging (*Beurteilung*) of which occasions the disposition of it” (139) that characterizes the sublime.

The concept of the modern sublime lies within the power of judgment and reasoning. The separation from nature empowers agency of the rational; and the mind reevaluates fear and views it not as an emotional response to something threatening:

In this way, in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power (which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial, and hence regard its power (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to

bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. (145)

Kant does agree that terror, or fear, is necessary and therefore, must be in the disussion of the sublime. The sublime resides within reasoning, “in our mind” (147), and reassigns agency to *reflecting* (my emphasis) concepts of individuality. In “aesthetic judgment” (145) the individual becomes aware of his/her “power, which is not part of nature” (147). This separation from nature establishes a “sort of dominion over ourselves” (145), one’s own agency and self-authority. From Kant’s perspective, it is this reasoning that characterizes the sublime. Kant challenges us to contextualize fear, reasoning and the sublime using fear as the medium that allows us to differentiate the sublime from the trivial. Thus, fear turns into awestruck or the modern sublime.

Jean-François Lyotard builds on Kant’s sublime but objects to Kant’s system of closure. For him, there is no harmony; imagination and reason cannot be reconciled. This is also something Friedrich Schlegel criticizes and modifies in his progressive universal poetry that describes an open system of thinking, especially in the poetic fairy tale and its link to chaos which resists such close systems. Schlegel therefore advocates infinite possible rearrangements of relation and meaning between (poetic)<sup>161</sup> fairy tales. Lyotard’s concept of the post-modern sublime also addresses an open system, although he does not analyze literary tales.

In his 1991 *Lessons*, Lyotard draws on Immanuel Kant’s perception of the sublime and argues that, despite Kant’s uniform approach in his 1764 essay “Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen” and later in his 1790

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<sup>161</sup> Poetic specifically refers to literary fairy tale.

*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, the concept of the postmodern sublime, is “a denatured aesthetic, or better, an aesthetic of denaturing, (and) breaks the proper order of the natural aesthetic and suspends the function it assumes in the project of unification” (53). Lyotard moves away from Kant’s reflection on the modern sublime and introduces an aesthetic of denaturing. The emphasis of this aesthetic lies within its suspension of functions in a system of unification. Reason, in Lyotard’s understanding of the concept of the sublime, does not necessarily dominate imagination. In fact, the result of the conflict between imagination and reason is less significant than the existing conflict itself:

What awakens the ‘intellectual feeling,’<sup>162</sup>...the sublime, is not nature, which is an artist in forms and the work of forms, but rather magnitude, force, quantity in its purest state, a ‘presence’ that exceeds what imaginative thought can grasp at once in a form – what it can *form*. (53).

The concept of the postmodern sublime is therefore removed from nature and characterizes a “presence” that surpasses mental visualization. It resists the presentation of a resolution to the conflict between imagination and reason, although it notices and marks it (149). In a way, the post-modern sublime “bears testimony to what the dynamical synthesis (unifying system) is, of which the sublime feeling is the result” (149).<sup>163</sup> In both analyses, of Hoffmann’s tale and the illustration, I show how both narratives’ structure shape the reader’s understanding of the sandman figure. In fact, the figure remains unrepresentable in his many representations.

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<sup>162</sup> In German this is referred to as “Geistesgefühl” (33, 29) as Lyotard points out. Kant uses this term in his third *Critique*.

<sup>163</sup> I provided further explanations in parentheses that Lyotard does not include.

The postmodern sublime becomes a paradox illuminating perception and obscuring meaning. Lyotard rightly links his contemplations on critical thinking and its relation to this paradox to “a philosophical neurosis” (150):

It (the sublime feeling) can do one thing and its opposite, present an object in a finite way and conceive of an object as actually infinite...the sublime feeling is the subjective state critical thought must feel in its being carried to its limits (therefore beyond them) and its resistance to this impetus, or, conversely, what it must feel in its passion to determine and in its resistance to this passion. One might consider this a philosophical neurosis. (149-50)

The concept of the postmodern sublime shapes, modifies, and limits presentations and points to endless meanings; it is enigmatic (54). Critical thinking constantly occurs to unravel obscure constellations and bizarre interpretations, as they emerge in the poetic fairy tale.

Lyotard’s characteristics of the (postmodern) sublime lead me to call attention to Schlegel’s view on the poetic fairy tale whose chaotic structure allows for infinite rearrangements and interpretations. The postmodern sublime speaks to these rearrangements from a structural as well as a philosophical context. While Lyotard builds on Kant’s philosophy, he does not mention Schlegel or his concept of Romantic irony. In fact, the concept of postmodern sublime and Romantic irony differ from each other. Schlegel considers the poetic fairy tale and its structure on meta-fictional levels; Lyotard attributes emotions to the sublime feeling. Critical thinking results in the sublime feeling

when it “must feel” when it is “being carried to its limits” and when it “resists” this movement; and vice versa.

My analysis of Hoffmann’s tale and his illustration does not collapse these concepts but shows that both concepts may be employed to discuss how structure obstructs an identification of the sandman figure(s).<sup>164</sup> For example, in Hoffmann’s tale Nathanael’s mother contributes to shaping a bizarre portrayal of the sandman figure through her announcement of his arrival. However, she also renounces the sandman’s existence. On the textual level, the question arises of how the sandman figure is present but it is not present. While this is a paradox, on the meta-fictional level of the narrative the sandman figure is absent. The tale’s fictional characters as well as Hoffmann’s reader cannot imagine the figure. Their contemplations about the sandman figure present a form of judgment. This cannot be resolved. Each moment in the narrative – and on a smaller scale in the illustration – marks a site that illustrates this conflict and also accentuates the conflict’s existence.

The concept of the postmodern sublime characterizes and points to existing sites of resistance that emphasizes critical thinking, or critical contemplation. It shows the nuances of shaping, obscuring, and resisting mental images: “The absolute is never there, never given in a presentation, but it is always ‘present’ as a call to think beyond the ‘there.’” Ungraspable, but unforgettable. Never restored, never abandoned” (150). The question arises of how can something be always absent when it is always present, as a reminiscent of an unknown something? It cannot be understood but it also cannot be forgotten. It also cannot be reinstated; however, it cannot be ignored either. This is a

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<sup>164</sup> Hertz and Fry investigated how Hoffmann’s tale addressed the modern sublime and the fantastic. My reading of the tale and the illustration demonstrates that their structures present sites for the post-modern sublime as outlined by Lyotard.



paradox that E.T.A. Hoffmann's literary tale and illustration of the sandman demonstrate. The different stories about the sandman in the tale become moments in the narrative's structure that are "presentation(s) of the fact that the unrepresentable exists" (11).

While the usage of the concept of Romantic irony in the poetic (or literary) tale marks textual sites that lead to infinite interpretations, the employment of the concept of the postmodern sublime suggests the reasons for these sites' existences. In his 1987 article "Socratic Irony," Gregory Vlastos describes irony as the interplay between two characters (81). Romantic irony takes this interplay and integrates it into the Romantic narrative structure. It is the combination of writing style and incomprehensibility that defines irony, in particular Socratic irony. Unlike multiple frame stories, Hoffmann's narrative and his illustration show a complex inner structure that does not have one dominant tale that identifies the sandman figure. Considering the concept of the postmodern sublime in the analyses of both of their structures allows us to identify moments in the narrative as more as textual interruptions. These moments, in particular, focus on portraying the sandman figure and also present sites that obscure such portrayals.

In his *Interpretationskonflikte am Beispiel von E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Der Sandmann: Kognitive Hermeneutik in der praktischen Anwendung* (2009), Peter Teters and his colleagues investigate the conflicts of the text and collect an array of secondary literature that present approaches from structural, psychoanalytical, and cognitive contexts. Teter argues that the challenge of classifying Hoffmann's text "Der Sandmann" arises because the figure exists and interacts in different meta-fictional realities (73). In order to resolve this dilemma many prominent interpretations focus on the protagonist

Nathanael and employ a literary theory such as psychoanalysis, in order to explain his behavior. Teter investigates the text's narrative structure and supports a relationship between the sandman figure and its tale, while observing that the text's challenge to interpretation – because of the interaction between reality and meta-fictional reality – parallels the textual world of fairy tales and myths: “The textual world of many fairy tales and mythological narratives employs this method; which the literature of the fantastic also uses” (58).<sup>165</sup> The sandman figure, then, allows for the construction of the fantastic and further contributes to a meta-fictional reality. The sandman, as a mysterious character, constantly is reshaping its identity through different storytelling performances, and places the entire text in the genre of the fantastic literary tale. In addition, these tales act as fictional variants of the fictional folk tale of the sandman; and thus it is necessary to read the text focusing on the sandman and its diverse appearances. A sheer analysis focusing only on Nathanael, then, becomes just one possible approach to dissect the different layers of the text.<sup>166</sup> While this approach gives rise to one possible interpretation, the textual reference suggesting it becomes one of the sites for the postmodern sublime.

Paul Fry and Neil Hertz<sup>167</sup> explore the tale's narratology and use a psychoanalytical approach. They both explore the relationship between Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, Tzvetan Todorov's idea of the fantastic and Edmund Burke's

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<sup>165</sup> “Die Textwelt vieler Märchen und mythischer Erzählungen ist von dieser Art; auch die fantastische Literatur” (58).

<sup>166</sup> Other discussions have focused on the role of the narrator (see Vogel, Hertz, and Tatar).

<sup>167</sup> In 1983 Neil Hertz explored the concept of the sublime in “A Reading of Longinus” and refers to a passage in Hoffmann's “Der Sandmann” Paul H. Fry would readdress in his 1987 “The Possession of the Sublime.”

notion of the sublime.<sup>168</sup> In his 1987 “The Possession of the Sublime,” Paul Fry discusses the confrontation of imagination and reason in terms of the sublime and the uncanny. He presents a complicated genealogy of interpretations as he analyzes Neil Hertz while Hertz critiques Freud’s perspective on Hoffmann. Fry states:

Neil Hertz has shown that the repetition-compulsion in Freud, a structure rather than an object of affectivity, is invisible except insofar as it is ‘colored’ by the appearance of its double, the ‘uncanny.’ And so it is with the sublime, a movement that is repetitive in part because it involves the confrontation with the double— a double however that is invisible until it is troped either conservatively as an alien being, malign simply in being determined (demon, daemon, witch, ghost, incubus), or progressively as the self-recognition (and hence, objectification) of some faculty of the mind. (193)

Fry comments on Hertz’ reading of Freud and reiterates Freud’s limitations in interpreting Hoffmann’s narrative. However, he links Freudian concepts to the reflections on the sublime. In fact, he inscribes the sublime into the Freudian concept of the double, transforming it into the uncanny. In that way, Fry situates the invisible into the visible: the sublime into the uncanny. It is uncanny in so far as the self is seen as alienating, but is also able to recognize itself. The alien being becomes visible confronting its double in the

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<sup>168</sup> Edmund Burke in 1756 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* as experience to terror (101).

uncanny as well as in the sublime. Nathanael's poem<sup>169</sup> (Latifi 48-51) serves as evidence that a terrifying force, "an alien being," takes possession of Nathanael (48). Fry observes:

Like the pellucid 'Klara,' the poem carefully composed by the self-possessed Nathanael is 'gelingen,'<sup>170</sup> trimly first-rate: she and it are 'persuasions,' the beautiful. But the 'other' poem, the demonic subtext as readily perceived to be inimical by Clara as it would have been by Goethe's Gretchen, is sublime, and even Nathanael recognizes intermittently that its horrible voice is not his. (198)

Nathanael's poem is an example of the tension between two concepts of the sublime: the stylistic sublime that Fry refers to as "gelingen" (Latifi 50) and "first-rate" (198) and the demonic sublime. The inability to recognize one's own voice marks the demonic here. This kind of self-alienation is in stark contrast to the poem's stylistic grand narrative. This tension between self-alienation and self-recognition Fry identifies as uncanny and applies Freud's terminology as the modern sublime. It has to be emphasized that all of Hoffmann's readers including Fry and Hertz do not get a glimpse of the poem itself.

The poem's physical absence is only addressed through the characters and thus, through its negation of its presence. It is present through its absence. I argue that this is exactly what Lyotard describes as the postmodern sublime. Fry, however, does not talk about the postmodern sublime but links the modern sublime to the fantastic: "We recognize, then, in that discussing the sublime we have in mind the same, or much the

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<sup>169</sup> Hoffmann's tale does not present the poem itself but the text describes Nathanael's demeanor writing and reciting it in front of Clara, his fiancé.

<sup>170</sup> The verb "gelingen" is a strong third class verb in the German language. Although this form is in present tense, the prefix "ge-" indicates that something happened in the past. In fact, the result of this action is a very positive one. In Hoffmann's tale the character Nathanael composes a poem that fulfills its purpose. It is "gelingen."

same, phenomenon as Todorov's fantastic, and in his work we will find the structure of our problem well delineated; yet from our perspective his premise seems breathtakingly unwary" (200). Fry asserts that the modern sublime and the fantastic follow a similar trajectory and create uncertainty by juxtaposing the uncanny and marvelous with the supernatural as their backdrop. In my discussion of Hoffmann's tale and drawing I argue that a reading of the diverse representations of the sandman figure parallels that of Nathanael's poem. Nathanael does not recognize his voice in the poem, which constitutes a loss of identity. There is a split between the poem's voice and Nathanael as its reader and reciter. To solve this conflict, Klara suggests discarding the poem – to burn the alien being or Nathanael's double. Unable to follow this advice Nathanael falls into madness. This loss of identity and incapability sustains the sublime as an alien being. While Nathanael's death eventually resolves this conflict and obliterates the modern sublime in this tale, the different narratives about the sandman place the postmodern sublime in the character.

Building on Schlegel's concept of Romantic irony, the post-modern sublime allows the exploration of the different tales in terms of their contribution to the synchronism of the sandman figure. On the one hand, the text presents a trajectory of diverse story telling performances, in which characters challenge and compete with each other in the construct of the sandman figure. On the other hand, these characters, including the narrator, Nathanael and his father, rewrite the oral tale of the sandman. Inka Mülder-Bach, in her (2005) essay "Das Grau(en) der Prosa oder Hoffmanns Aufklärungen zur Chromstik des 'Sandmann,'" comments on the visible and making

visible – “Wissen des Sehens” (201).<sup>171</sup> Multiple narrators address the figure of the sandman attempting to visualize this character. But just as sand remains structureless in its original form – Mülder-Bach asks the question of what shape should the man made of sand take (205)?<sup>172</sup> The sandman’s identity shifts depending on the narrators’ tale.<sup>173</sup> The sandman figure not only is constantly created, deconstructed and re-constructed, but in that process contributes to the creation of the fantastic and the (postmodern) sublime in the larger tale. Both Hoffmann’s tale and illustration obstruct a clear identification of the sandman figure. However, identifying one single dominating shape of the sandman figure destroys the intricacies of both their narrative structures. There is no need to limit interpretations depicting one, two or three sandman figures. Building on Schlegel’s desire to critically think about and assess the poetic fairy tale, these textual sites about the sandman figures construct the impossible – the philosophical neurosis or the concept of the postmodern sublime.

In his essay “Allgemeine Grundsätze über die Malerei” (1803), Friedrich Schlegel comments on the similarities between visual art and literary composition through the arrangement of objects: the poesy of the visual piece (139-40). Applying his concept of Romantic poesy to art and literature, Schlegel recognizes that artistic and literary compositions are similar:

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<sup>171</sup> Mülder-Bach uses Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1817) to argue that Hoffmann’s narrative allows identifying the sandman as a “grey figure” situating its portrayal as “die Figur des Grauens und Grausens” (202). Her wordplay on the color “grey” and the adverb “horrifying” is unconvincing because it points to a mistake in translation. “Die Figur des Grauens and Grausens” here refers to a figure of horror that triggers a horrifying feeling.

<sup>172</sup> “Zu welcher Gestalt sollte ein Mann aus Sand sich verfestigen?”

<sup>173</sup> In a conference talk (1980) that was later published (1985) Shelley L. Frisch has pointed towards the role of narrators in the construct of the sandman figure and its relation to the uncanny. Although this proposal is amiable, Frisch focuses on only two of the five narrators that construct the sandman figure/tale.

Nicht als ob der Gegenstand erdichtet sein müßte; aber doch muß der Maler, was er darstellen will, eigentümlich sich denken und ordnen, seine eigene Bedeutung ihm leihen, sonst trag' er nicht diesen Namen und sei bloß ein Kopist. Geist und Buchstabe also, das Mechanische und die Poesie, das sind die Bestandteile der Malerei, weil eins in einem gewissen Grade sein kann ohne das andere, oder doch weit unvollkommener. Einer möglichen Mißdeutung müssen wir noch vorbeugen, was die Forderung der Poesie betrifft. Der Maler soll ein Dichter sein, das ist keine Frage; aber nicht eben ein Dichter in Worten, sondern in Farben. Mag er doch seine Posie überall anders herhaben als aus der Poesie selbst, wenn es nur Poesie ist. (140)<sup>174</sup>

Although Schlegel observed that the painter becomes a poet of colors, his reflections address the painter's responsibility to view and arrange an object's (a subject in the context of art) idiosyncratically in order to construct its meaning. Schlegel's discussion of the painter's influence on the perception of his art parallels Longinus' understanding of the speaker's effectual influence on an audience. However, the postmodern sublime lies within this creation of unconventionality. Hoffmann was an artist himself and often illustrated scenes from his writings. In 1815, a year before the publication of the literary tale "Der Sandmann," Hoffmann shared a quick pen-and-ink sketch with his friend and publisher Julius Eduard Hitzig.

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<sup>174</sup> The object should not appear poetized, however the painter has to view the thing he wants to paint as peculiar and instill in it his own interpretation, otherwise he would not be considered a painter but only a copyist. Therefore the Spirit and the letter, the mechanical and the poesie are the components of art because one, in a way, cannot be without the other, or it remains incomplete. We have to consider at least one possibly wrong interpretation. The painter has to be poet; that is not the issue; however he should not be a poet of words but of colors. Even though he derives his poesy from anywhere, it just has to be poesy. (My translation.)

The illustration “Der Sandmann” (Figure 6)<sup>175</sup> foreshadows the narrative’s complex structure through the obstruction of the title character’s identity. While the illustration’s title is placed in the middle of the pages, it appears on the bottom; and therefore it falls into oblivion. In fact, on first glance the viewer may easily ignore the title altogether.

The question arises: where does the illustration depict the sandman figure? Is he one of the figures in the foreground? Is the sandman figure hiding behind the curtain on the left side of the frame? It seems very striking – perhaps peculiar even – that Hoffmann’s illustration does not portray the sandman figure in question but depicts an anxious boy peeking from between a curtain that mostly envelops his entire body. The 1816 literary tale identifies this boy as Nathanael who observes his father and the advocate Coppelius. While Hoffmann’s reader may be aware of these characters, the illustration itself does not offer the characters’ names. Placed toward the left and behind of a looming figure with a stern face featuring a prominent nose, the boy seems to look up towards the mysterious character – clad as a merchant – worryingly observing the interaction between him and his father. In a questioning gesture, the boy lifts his left hand – his fingers level with his mouth – while holding the curtain with the other hand ready to raise it in order to completely hide from any fearsome event. His eyebrows being raised and his left hand raised toward his left cheek suggest astonishment and concern. The onlooker takes the position of the boy although he/she can view the scene from the front. The viewer mirrors the boy because he/she observes the rearranged objects and also proposes possible relations between them. Like the illustrated (fictional) boy, the viewer

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<sup>175</sup> I refer to Figure 6 on page 79 in this dissertation.



analyzes the scene. Therefore, the illustration draws the viewer into the scene to speculate about the identification of the characters.

Two other figures in the foreground build a bridge with their touching arms – while the left figure touches the other’s right shoulder. This leads me to conclude that he marks his superiority. The second figure complies – never touching the other – and offers an open gesture but with slightly hunched back. Despite the depiction of these two men, it is interesting where the placement of the inscription “Der Sandmann” appears. That is underneath the left figure – though one can also argue it seems slightly towards the left frame but is nevertheless centered. This placement underlies the ambiguity of the sandman figure. Is he a merchant? Or a member of the bourgeoisie as the man’s clothing and wig indicate?<sup>176</sup>

In this illustration the title signature marks the presence of the sandman figure and also indicates the figure’s absence from the scene. There are only three characters presented, none of which can be clearly associated with the sandman figure. In fact, the boy – as Hoffmann’s literary tale later proves – searches for evidence of the sandman’s existence and his identity. The illustration visualizes his search, although it sustains the sandman’s mysterious identity. This leads me to conclude that the illustration – and its underlying structure (composition) – produces a site of resistance and also marks the existence of such a site resulting in infinite interpretations. One of these possible

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<sup>176</sup> While Riemer vividly describes the drawing, she connects the scene to an event from Nathanael’s childhood. She states: “Auf der Zeichnung ist ein Kindheitserlebnis von Nathanael dargestellt. Hinter einem Vorhang versteckt erlebt das Kind Nathanael mit Angst und Entsetzen, wie sein Vater den dämonischen Advokaten Coppelius in der Nacht zu alchemistischen Experimenten empfängt. Der Vater, in Schlafrock und Zipfelmütze, begrüßt mit demütiger Verbeugung den Riesen Coppelius, welcher deutlich als böser Eindringling gekennzeichnet ist. Er kommt als Fremder in robuster Wanderkleidung, den Hut an den Körper gedrückt, in ein friedliches Heim, in dem man sich schon zur Ruhe begeben hat. Sein Gesicht wirkt unmenschlich und teuflisch, so, wie Nathanael es in seinen kindlichen Alpträumen sah. An der hinteren Wand befindet sich der Kamin, der den Experimenten dienen soll” (3).

interpretations is the identification of the merchant as the sandman figure. The title signature “Der Sandmann” appears beneath the figure’s left foot and also turns into a label. However, on further observation of this particular image, the foot or rather the shoe steps on the signature. The merchant tramples on the sandman obstructing the link between both figures. Hoffmann’s illustration coerces its viewer to reflect on the sandman’s existence and its identity.

In a way, the viewer turns into a reader of the illustration and also ponders its structure from a meta-fictional level. This speaks to Schlegel’s call for a poetic society because Hoffmann’s 1816 tale also coerces the reader to imagine the incomprehensible. While the tale describes the scene that the illustration depicts, the tale also sustains the sandman’s mysterious identity. Fusing art and literature, Hoffmann’s narratives advocate their own universal poesy producing multi-layered structures that give rise to a pool of ceaseless interpretations of the sandman figure(s). Both narratives “present an object – the sandman figure – in a finite way and conceive of an object as actually infinite” (149). This leads me to conclude that the concept of the postmodern sublime helps us to comprehend the chaos in Hoffmann’s poetic tale.

If Hoffmann’s text prevents the reader from imagining one solid figure as the title suggests then the text becomes a case in point for the postmodern sublime because this notion “suspends the function it assumes in the project of unification” (53). While the diverse stories about the sandman shape the figure’s various presentations, the introduction of each new story marks this suspension and contributes to the divergence of a unified sandman figure through the reader’s (or character’s) resulting reflections on these stories:

Schon alt genug war ich geworden, um einzusehen, daß das mit dem Sandmann und seinem Kindernest im Halbmonde, so wie es mir die Wartefrau erzählt hatte, wohl nicht ganz seine Richtigkeit haben könnte; indessen blieb mir der Sandman ein fürchterliches Gespenst, und Grauen – Entsetzen ergriff mich, wenn ich ihn nicht allein die Treppe heraufkommen, sondern auch meines Vaters Stubenthür heftig aufreißen und hineintreten hörte. (85-6)<sup>177</sup>

While the wet nurse's story about the sandman formerly nurtured Nathanael's imagination about the figure, he begins to question its probability. In fact, at an unspecified age ("schon alt genug war ich geworden," 85) Nathanael reflects on and judges the wet nurse's story. The German verb "einsehen" (85) can be translated as to realize, to accept, and to see. However, in the German the verb also suggests a viewing within because of the prefix "ein" meaning "within." Nathanael re-views the story about the sandman and also pauses to verify its factual elements. This textual moment marks a site of resistance that calls into question a previous story. In a way, Nathanael's critical thinking deconstructs the particular sandman's depiction in the nurse's tale. However, the constructed sandman figure remains significant for the older Nathanael. In fact, the sandman turns into a terrifying specter ("ein fürchterliches Gespenst," 86) and a horror ("Grauen," 86) tormenting the growing Nathanael. While he does not see the sandman in his parents' house, he hears it coming up the stairs and also accompanying his father. His former philosophical and logical contemplations of the sandman figure that the verb

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<sup>177</sup> In *Tale from the German, Comprising Specimens from the most Celebrated Authors* (1844), John Oxenford translates Hoffmann's tale: "I had already grown old enough to perceive that the nurse's tale about the Sandman and the nest of children in the half-moon could not be quite true, but, nevertheless, this Sandman remained a fearful spectre, and I was seized with the utmost horror, when I heard him not only come up the stairs, but violently force open my father's room-door and enter."

“einsehen” (85) indicated become confusing. He cannot see clearly and a terror possesses his mind. Nathanael’s rejection of the nurse’s tale nevertheless upholds his belief in the sandman figure’s presence.

Through Nathanael’s futile contemplations the narrative marks and resists identifying the sandman figure. While words cannot illustrate this figure, they influence Nathanael’s imagination; and therefore they paint the sandman figure into existence as a mental image:

Nichts als den unter Thränen hergestotterten Ruf: der Sandmann! Der Sandmann! konnte die Mutter aus mir herausbringen. Ich lief darauf in das Schlafzimmer, und wohl die ganze Nacht über quälte mich die fürchterliche Erscheinung des Sandmanns. (85)<sup>178</sup>

Nathanael calls forth the sandman figure even though his cries are frail and feeble. In fact, these cries give rise to the sandman figure’s terrifying appearance. This mental image torments the boy, especially during the night. Nathanael’s confrontation with the mysterious sandman figure parallels Kant’s exploration of the (modern) sublime illustrated in experiencing an approaching storm. Nathanael’s failure to overcome his fear of the sandman links to the postmodern sublime because a denaturing takes place that eventually leaves him stunned:

Endlich von unwiderstehlichem Drange getrieben, beschloss ich, im Zimmer des Vaters selbst mich zu verbergen und den Sandmann zu erwarten...Das Herz bebte mir vor Angst und Erwartung. – Dicht, dicht

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<sup>178</sup> Translation by Oxenford: “My mother could get nothing out of me, but the cry of “The Sandman, the Sandman!” which was stuttered forth through my tears. I then ran into the bed-room, where the frightful apparition of the Sandman terrified me during the whole night.”

vor der Türe ein scharfer Tritt – ein heftiger Schlag auf die Klinke, die Tür springt rasselnd auf! – Mit Gewalt ermannet guckte ich behutsam hervor.

Der Sandmann steht mitten in der Stube. (87)<sup>179</sup>

As an approaching force the sandman threatens the individual. While Kant's concept of the modern sublime highlights the conflict – or power struggle – between imagination and reason in this moment, Hoffmann's text elucidates Nathanael's attempt to grasp the vastness of the unknown – the powerful sandman figure. The phrase “von unwiderstehlichem Drange getrieben” (87)<sup>180</sup> indicates that an irresistible force controls Nathanael to confront this unknown. The German dative suggests a separate entity from Nathanael and claims its authority over Nathanael. His anticipation of the sandman figure generates a physical response – “das Herz bebte mir vor Angst” (87)<sup>181</sup> – alluding to Burke's understanding of the sublime as “fear and exaltation from sight.” The dashes mark the fast approaching force that materializes into a sharp kick (ein scharfer Schritt, 87) against the door, a heavy blow against the doorknob (ein heftiger Schlag auf die Klinke, 87) and a noisy opening of the door. The alliteration of the “s” sound in the German phrase “die Tür springt rasselnd auf” (87)<sup>182</sup> stresses the violations against objects and the immediacy of the approaching dread. Nathanael cannot overcome this

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<sup>179</sup> “At last, urged by an irresistible impulse, I resolved to hide myself in my father's room and await the appearance of the Sandman...My heart trembled with anxiety and expectation. A sharp step close—very close to the door, — a smart stroke on the latch, and the door was open with a rattling noise. Screwing up my courage with all my might, I cautiously peeped out. The Sandman was standing before my father in the middle of the room, the light of the candles shone full upon his face.” Oxenford's translation deviates from the German text adding the presence of the father behind the sandman figure and also stressing the light on its face. The German text, however, underlines the sandman's presence in the middle of the living room.

<sup>180</sup> Oxenford's translation states: “urged by an irresistible impulse.”

<sup>181</sup> Oxenford's translation states: “My heart trembled with anxiety.”

<sup>182</sup> Oxenford's translation states: “the door was open with a rattling noise.”

dread, although this violation forces him to become a man in this moment. The phrase “mit Gewalt” (87) is juxtaposed with the adjective “behutsam” (careful, 87) and suggests a continuation of the conflict that results in Nathanael being spellbound: “Ich war wie festgezaubert” (88).<sup>183</sup> The narrative here solidifies the sandman’s power over Nathanael as well as the readers.

The narrative defies the sandman figure’s various portraits and also insists on shaping the figure, especially through Nathanael’s contradictory responses to the possibility of an existing sandman figure and how he imagines this figure:

Ein sanfter warmer Hauch glitt über mein Gesicht, ich erwachte wie aus dem Todesschlaf, die Mutter hatte sich über mich hingebeugt. “Ist der Sandmann noch da?” stammelte ich. (89)<sup>184</sup>

Hoffmann’s handwritten manuscript continues: “Das war mein erstes gesundes Wort und das Zeichen meiner Genesung – meine Rettung” (Latifi 24).<sup>185</sup> Nathanael’s awakening from a deathlike slumber indicates how much power his mental image of the sandman figure has over him. In fact, the act of sleeping maintains this image causing Nathanael to ask the question: where is the sandman figure? While the manuscript now connects this question to Nathanael’s rescue, the published narrative omits this sentence. Nathanael’s first healthy words are about the sandman’s presence. Contrary to Nathanael’s self-assessment, his question shows how the sandman figure can be everywhere and nowhere

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<sup>183</sup> I was enchanted and could not move. (My translation.)

<sup>184</sup> A soft and warm wind touched my face and I awake from my deathly sleep. Mother was above me. I stuttered: “Is the sandman still here?”... These were my first healthy words signifying my recovery – my rescue. (My translation)

<sup>185</sup> “Were my first words after regaining consciousness, the first sign of my recovery, my deliverance” (Kent and Knight 98).

at all. This leads me to conclude that this textual moment becomes a site of resistance identifying and obstructing the sandman figure.

To summarize, the postmodern sublime marks philosophical neuroses within both of Hoffmann's narratives. Contradictions within the narrative mark sites that resist identifying and also shaping the sandman figure. The narratologies' constant resistance, in reshaping the sandman, addresses a prolonged conflict that Nathanael's death and the fictional narrator's reflections cannot resolve at the end. Thus, instances of the postmodern sublime create a multi-layered narrative structure and also construct the sandman figure as a synchronistic figure. The postmodern sublime opens up the psyche to the wonder and breaks with all formalistic approaches. This characteristic cannot be grasped with Freud's concept of the uncanny or Todorov's concept of the fantastic. In a way, the sandman figure equates death and life, existence and non-existence, presence and absence through the employment of Lyotard's concept.

The following chapter explores yet another variant of Hoffmann's sandman figure. My analysis of Paul Berry's 1991 stop-motion animation "The Sandman" shows how Berry's cinematographic narrative recycles the 1816 tale and also introduces a new interpretation of the sandman figure as a shape shifter. Building on Julia Kristeva's concept of "uncanny strangeness" my reading of Berry's film shows how this sandman figure speaks to the familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. This leads me to conclude that Berry's sandman figure restores a unifying character, but it also can be viewed as pastiche of the tale on the sandman itself.

## CHAPTER IV

### KRISTEVA AND BERRY: THE SANDMAN'S "UNCANNY STRANGENESS"

So far, I have introduced the sandman's enigma in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 narrative as a case in point for the intersection between the fantastic, Romantic irony and the postmodern sublime.<sup>186</sup> The tale's complex narrative structure moves beyond the creation of Romantic irony<sup>187</sup> and lends itself to an investigation of Jean Francois Lyotard's philosophical concept of the postmodern sublime.<sup>188</sup> Building on Immanuel Kant's view of the modern sublime in a closed system of thinking, Lyotard focuses on the limits of critical thinking. In a way, thinking – or reasoning – links feelings to the state of subjectivity. In fact, in *Leçons sur l'analytique du sublime* (1991), he states: "the sublime feeling is the subjective state critical thought must feel in its being carried to its limits and its resistance to this impetus" (149). The concept of the postmodern sublime characterizes a particular analytical moment. This moment shows how it reaches its limit of representation and also indicates how it resists any limits. This contradiction intensifies the aesthetic feeling of the postmodern sublime. Moving away from Kant's finite reasoning, Lyotard points to "the representation of the fact that the unrepresentable exists" (11) – to use Barbara Claire Freemann's summary of Lyotard's concept in her *The Feminine Sublime Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (1995). My analysis of both Hoffmann's literary tale and illustration address how their meta-fictional narrative

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<sup>186</sup> I refer to the previous chapters, in which I excessively define and discuss these concepts.

<sup>187</sup> As a reminder, Maria Tatar's work on Hoffmann's tale, in "E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Der Sandmann': Reflection and Romantic Irony" (1980), investigates this particular narrative device and focuses on the relationship between the fictional narrator and the protagonist Nathanael.

<sup>188</sup> Lyotard's post-modern sublime distinguishes itself from Jonathan Friedman's modern sublime as I have discussed in the previous chapter.



structures present and also obstruct the sandman figure's identity.<sup>189</sup> This leads me to conclude that such contradictory moments illustrate textual sites that represent a rupture and moreover, they identify such ruptures as the existence of the unrepresentable. The sandman figure in Hoffmann's literary tale and his illustration is present and absent, one-dimensional and multi-faceted. They coerce Hoffmann's reader into reflecting on the different stories about the sandman.

This chapter further develops my reading of Hoffmann's narrative through an exploration of Paul Berry's 1991 same titled stop-motion animation. The film explores "a small boy's<sup>190</sup> fear of the dark at bedtime" (Moving Image Education, 2009).<sup>191</sup> Although the film is reminiscent of the nurse's tale in Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann" and Sigmund Freud's interpretation of Hoffmann's narrative, it is more than a mere visual recycling of the 1816 tale. Instead of merely visualizing the Ammenmärchen<sup>192</sup> (the nurse's tale), Berry's film suggests an independent sandman character. Compared to Hoffmann's narrative, the film reduces the cast to the mother, the boy Oscar, and the nestlings centering on the sandman's story that the 1816 narrative only dealt with in a few pages (Hohoff 5-10). Nevertheless, the film visually contextualizes both Hoffmann's tale and

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<sup>189</sup> As I showed in my previous discussion, I understand the sandman's fluid multiplicity as evidence of these multiple meta-fictional realities. I argue that this multiplicity arises from the synchronism of the figure resulting from the diverse stories told in each plane of reality.

<sup>190</sup> The film's storyboard names the boy Oscar. In the following I will refer to the boy as Oscar although the film itself does not establish this name. Curiously, the boy who plays the tin drums in Günther Grass' 1959 novel *Die Blechtrommel* shares the same name and is also afflicted by seemingly "supernatural" forces.

<sup>191</sup> Moving Image Education is a film education website (2009) based in Scotland. I am using the website's synopsis of the film but I will provide a film summary when I introduce Paul Berry as a filmmaker on page 114.

<sup>192</sup> The term "Ammenmärchen" according to Grimm's *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache (DWB)* describes as "fabulae nutricum" (Bd. 1, Sp. 279) whereas Hohoff points out in the "Stellenkommentar" number 18 that this type of tale characterizes an unbelievable story that, according to Adelung, nurses told children. The effectiveness of such tales was widely discussed during the Goethe period (242).

Freud's traditional interpretation of that tale, and utilizes the viewers' familiarity with the sandman character and (his)story. Through this familiarity and the sandman's agency, the sandman character becomes more than uncanny – not as Freud suggested through turning the familiar into the unfamiliar – but as Julia Kristeva hints in her 1991 *Strangers to Ourselves*, through the film's<sup>193</sup> recognition of past experiences and through the framing of ourselves as other and foreign (187). This agency shapes the sandman's individuality through the concept of uncanny strangeness. The construct of such concepts also depends on the reader's reflection on another concept Kristeva introduces.

In her 1969 essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel"<sup>194</sup> Kristeva coins the term "intertextuality" and also postulates the significance between different forms of writings that a literary word contains. Reflecting on Mikhail Bakhtin's writings, she points to his skill in introducing a dialogue between writer, reader and the text: "the literary word as an intersection of textual surfaces...as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (36). Her emphasis on the "intersection of textual surfaces" (36) defines poststructuralist studies. Writing, in particular the literary word itself, becomes a representation and signifier for the writer, the addressee, and the cultural context between both. In fact, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and

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<sup>193</sup> While I focus on the film as an agent (or "sensuous object") here, I recognize the importance of the viewer in this process, whose presence transforms "cinema from a sensuous object" into "a sensing, sensual, sense-making subject," as Vivian Sobchak in her 1992 book *The Address of the Eve: Phenomenology of the Film* shows. This intertextual approach recently gained popularity in film studies, especially in the analyses of Michael Haneke's films. I acknowledge that the viewers' knowledge parallels the film's knowledge of vernacular and literary sandman figures and also admit their involvement in the sandman's "uncanny strangeness." For the sake of the clarity and space, I will save any further discussion on this subject for future projects.

<sup>194</sup> While she wrote the essay in 1966, she published it in *Séméiotiké* in 1969. An English translation of the essay is available in 1980 and appeared in her collection *Desire of Language*.

transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*” (37). There is no original text. Any written text becomes a pastiche<sup>195</sup> of previous texts, the writer’s experiences, and his/her cultural background. For example, in his *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (2006) Jack Zipes reads fairy tales as historical statements (10) and shows how every variant of a tale becomes “a dynamic part of the historical civilization process” (10). In my reading of Berry’s film, I build on Kristeva’s understanding and show how the film’s fantastic plot and gothic setting play with the viewer’s knowledge of the (vernacular and literary) sandman. While E.T.A. Hoffmann’s sandman figure appears enigmatic, Berry’s representation of the sandman is visually one-dimensional. However, Berry’s sandman figure can be read as a Doppelgänger of the boy, Oscar.

Both concepts of intertextuality and uncanny strangeness shape my reading of Berry’s cinematographic text and its representation of the sandman figure in it. Reflecting on Freud’s concept of the uncanny in *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva shows how the uncanny links to the other and how this other becomes part of oneself: “On the one hand, the sense of strangeness is a mainspring for identification with the other, by working out its depersonalization impact by means of astonishment” (189). The perceived other separates from oneself. However, it is also part of that self. This is a contradiction that astonishes and leads to both the understanding of the self as foreigner and the obliteration of it: “I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners” (192). While the concept of uncanny

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<sup>195</sup> In *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (2001) Ingeborg Hoesterey defines the term pastiche as a postmodern form that respects the different elements it uses.

strangeness describes this depersonalization<sup>196</sup>, the question arises: how is the other part of us, when it “also leaves us separate (and) incoherent” making us “feel we are not in touch with our own feelings” (187)? Critical thinking, through philosophical reflections on a narrative, points to the response to this question.

The concept of uncanny strangeness arises from the confrontation with the other within us. In a way, the identification of the self with the other deconstructs any boundaries between past and present experiences:

On the other hand, analysis can throw light on such an affect but, far from insisting on breaking it down, it should make way for esthetics (some might add philosophy), with which is saturated its phantasmal progression and insure its cathartic eternal return, for instance with readers of disturbing tales. (189-90)

Critical reflections may contribute to understanding the process of depersonalization but they cannot entirely identify each element of the self, the other, and their relationship. However, aesthetic and philosophical analyses are necessary to unravel bizarre constellations (phantasmal progression and...cathartic eternal return, 189) within disturbing (literary) tales. It is in this moment that the rearrangement of elements is possible: “The uncanny strangeness allows for many variations: they all repeat the difficulty I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification-projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy” (187).

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<sup>196</sup> In a way, Lyotard suggests a similar approach using the term “denaturalization” in his reflection on Kant’s modern sublime. This is characteristic of the postmodern thinking.

In his essay “On the Uncanny” (1919) Sigmund Freud stresses the storyteller’s freedom to create different variations that call the tale’s reality into questions,<sup>197</sup> and therefore he coerces his readers to “frankly accept” any world of representation (17). The reader’s acceptance of presented reality in the narrative links to Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality. The reader pauses, reflects on, and interprets the fairy tale, Hoffmann’s literary tales, especially. Kristeva continues:

Such are fairy tales, in which the generalized artifice spares us any possible comparison between sign, imagination, and material reality. As a consequence, artifice neutralizes uncanniness (sic) and makes all returns of the repressed plausible, acceptable, and pleasurable. As if absolute enchantment – absolute sublimation – just as, on the other, absolute rationality – absolute repression – were our only defense against uncanny strangeness. (187-8)

While Freud previously commented on the artificiality of fairy tales, Kristeva identifies a textual analysis as optional. The deceptive world of representation in poetic fairy tales “neutralize uncanniness” (187) leading to positive responses of the repressed. My reading of Berry’s film “The Sandman” shows how cinematographic techniques such as the play with different Points of View suggest mirroring actions between different characters as well as the same character in different phases, chiaroscuro and the rapid change of camera movements contribute to the film’s uncanny strangeness and also construct a

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<sup>197</sup> “The story-teller has this license among many others, that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them in what particulars he pleases. We accept his ruling in every case. In fairy-tales, for instance, the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted” (17).

fantastic setting. This change from the literary tale, which identifies Berry as an auteur, situates the sandman figure within a modern context.

Before his death in 2001, Paul Berry was an acclaimed stop-motion animator. Directors such as Tim Burton and Henry Selick noticed Berry's talent and frequently collaborated with him in their films *The Nightmare before Christmas* (1993) and *James and the Giant Peach* (1996). Selick, who had been working with Berry on *Monkeybones* just previous to his sudden death, confirms Berry's talent: "He was extraordinarily accomplished. Paul was one of the best stop-motion animators who ever lived" (Elizabeth Miohaelson 2001). Besides working with Burton and Selick, Berry had also produced his own animation including eight episodes of *The Wind in the Willows* (1984-88). In 1991 he produced and directed a 9:13min short animation film "The Sandman." While the film received credit in 1992 with the award of the Craft Prize for Best Animation at the Ottawa International Animation Festival, it was also recognized as a 1993 Oscar nomination in the category "Best Animated Short Film." The film, as the English animator and director Barry Purves states, showcased Berry's extraordinary talent to create fantastic settings and life-like characters that served as inspiration for a new generation of animators:<sup>198</sup>

This film really made the world take notice... The standards he set in his own animation on these films, and in his direction of others, were an inspiration to his crew and fellow animators. His characters were clear, precise, eccentric, funny, dark, and very, very credible...knocking for six any hint of cute 'n cuddly and bland often associated with some

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<sup>198</sup> Moving Image Education uses Berry's film to teach techniques in camera, sound and editing. I will refer to Moving Image Education as "MIE" in the text hereafter.

animation. The fluidity of his animation betrayed little sign of his tremendous technique...his puppets just lived, and will happily continue to live, inspiring new audiences, and inspiring new animators with the skill. (2001)<sup>199</sup>

In *Stop Motion Passion, Processes and Performances* (2008) Purves outlines the challenges of a “model animator” to “measure time in inches” (11) in order to “seamlessly link the pieces of a story” (11) and capture his audience. Berry, as Purves and other directors verify, knew how to animate figures to create the illusion of life-like characters. His creations suggest masterful deceptions (evocative of Magic-Lantern device in 19<sup>th</sup> century Cinema) that hide the fact these clay dolls are actually life-less. Stop-motion, or rather frame motion,<sup>200</sup> a cinematographic technique, adds to the deceptive process since it utilizes “dolls with movable joints or clay figures...for their ease of repositioning” (11). Through the physical manipulation of such objects, characters begin to “breathe” (11) and to move on the screen with ease. In order to enhance this continuous motion, they are manipulated in small increments to “suggest a movement forward, and a close relationship to the previous frame” (10). Purves adds “the series of frames creates the illusion of movements when it is played as a continuous sequence” (10). In terms of the sandman’s story, stop-motion animation contributes to the fantastic aspect.

Through these illusionary processes of stop-motion animation, the sandman figure materializes and suggests a connection between this particular technique (as form) and

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<sup>199</sup> Elizabeth Miohaelson writes this obituary in 2001.

<sup>200</sup> For a detailed history of this genre, see *Stop Motion Passion, Processes and Performances* (2008). Barry Purves provides a detailed history on stop motion animation.

the sandman (as content). It is form (here, the frame motion) that informs the content (the sandman's agency). Frame motion animates the sandman's tale and breathes life into a phantasmagoric figure. Technically, the film "The Sandman" was shot with a film camera with a zoom lense that captured each frame as a photograph. Thus the 9 minutes and 12 second film consists of approximately 13,800 frames and 157 shots (MIE). MIE states: "The running time of *The Sandman* on DVD (c. 9'12") is shorter than in the cinema (c. 9'35"). The average shot length (on video) is 3.52 seconds; the longest shot is 23.68 seconds (shot 1); the shortest is only 8 frames, 0.32 seconds (shot 59)."<sup>201</sup>

Frame motion not only identifies the sandman character but also presents a way to deal with vernacular and literary sandman figures that ordinarily resist characterization. In folklore, the sandman is part of the tale, children fear, because it narrates how the sandman steals their eyes. In Hoffmann's literary tale, the sandman's identity – as I have discussed in previous chapters – remains enigmatic although diverse characters repeatedly attempt to identify him. The figure in the literary tale cannot be conceptualized. Berry's animation visualizes the sandman and in a way destroys its incomprehensibility. The film casts the sandman as one of its three main characters and ascribes agency to this character. The sandman materializes as an independent character that acts on his own and even breaks the fourth wall.<sup>202</sup> Through this technique, Berry's film shifts the fantastic from the figure itself onto the interactions (or dialogues) between

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<sup>201</sup> For the film's storyboard I refer to Appendix A. In the following summary I use a general time frame and provided time references when appropriate. The film's summary merely serves as an overview and guide to my following discussion on the film.

<sup>202</sup> The fourth wall is a dramatic concept, which breaks the imaginary lines between the actors on the stage and the audience in front of the stage through speaking directly or acknowledging otherwise the audience. Though this technique is characteristic in realistic theater during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several of William Shakespeare's (trickster) characters such as Puck from *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590-96) display such behavior in his 16<sup>th</sup> century English plays.



1) the figure and the audience and 2) between the sandman figure and other characters in the film.

Berry's clay animation begins with an establishing shot that introduces a fantastic mineral world.<sup>203</sup> The camera then utilizes a pan shot to convey the vastness of that fantastic world and its blue gleaming crystal mountains. The next scene presents a view of gothic houses with their crooked windows, door frames and roofs.<sup>204</sup> The camera moves inside one of these houses to convey a bourgeois family in their living room. A woman<sup>205</sup> sits in a rocking chair and sews a piece of white cloth while a little boy plays a toy drum that hangs like a necklace around his neck. While playing one particular tune, which will be repeated in various ways throughout this nine-minute feature, he also moves in circles within the living room. After the clock strikes and a skeleton figure moves to an eight o'clock position, the woman gets up and motions the boy to hand over the drum sticks and drum. She leaves the frame and reappears with a candle, pads the boy on his head and gently pushes him out of living room into a hallway.

In the next scene, the boy is surrounded by darkness. His candle is the only light source and aids him to ascend a steep staircase. In one frame the camera focuses on the bars of the old crooked stair case and calls forth a mental image of prison bars. The boy emerges on the left and enters the frame moving diagonally across the frame accessing its

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<sup>203</sup> In a later frame towards the end of the film (8:05min), this shot can be identified (in retrospect) as an establishing shot, when this setting is identified as the location of the nest.

<sup>204</sup> As MIE points out, the house reappears "in shot 143, and then only once and during an ultra fast zoom (lasting all of 18 frames, 3/4 of a second!). This economy of scene-setting (and storytelling in general) is typical of much contemporary screen fiction."

<sup>205</sup> The woman's appearance closely resembles a woman that Vincent Van Gogh portrays 1881-2 in his watercolor painting "Scheveningen Woman Sewing." This painting is part of his *Peasant Character Studies* series he undertook between 1881 and 1885. It is now located in the P. and N. de Boer Foundation in Amsterdam. Its access number is F\_869 JH\_83.

upper right corner. He enters a bedroom, immediately climbs into a bed that is located in the center of the room and pulls the blanket over his head. He then peeks from underneath the safety of his cover and looks around before lying down to his side and closing his eyes. The camera then moves in another wide pan shot across the room and rests on the closed French style windows behind the bed. After this establishing shot, the same window opens waking the boy and reveals a glimpse of the waning moon. 3:53 minutes into the film, a cloud (or shadow) floats over it and transforms into the face of a figure. This figure can later be identified as the sandman.

In the next frame the camera moves back onto the boy who rubs his eyes in response to watching the transformation. A sudden noise disrupts any further contemplation on this strange sight. The boy looks around and eventually peeks under the bed to find a gnarly old mouse that stares back at him and runs away (4:14min). The camera now descends the stairs and zooms in onto the front door of the house. In the following shot, the moon-figure reappears. In fact, the viewers witness the figure's magical and fantastic skill to walk through solid walls and materialize unharmed on the inside of the boy's house. The figure turns to convey the same profile like the figure previously displayed in the waxing moon. Here, the film suggest that both frames show the same figure, namely the sandman.

However, in this shot the sandman's profile faces to the right suggesting a mirror image of his previous display. His long crooked nose and chin closely resemble the shape of the half moon. His hair appears in layers and suggests the presence of feathers. His suit further compliments his bird-like quality. Paralleling the colorful fantastic setting from the opening shot, the suit's color is a dark blue that stands in contrast to the rather white

pale color of hands and face. The suit's white collar reminds the viewer of a gentleman's dress/necktie. The figure's eye sockets are prominent and seemingly hollow, although they harbor the sandman's piercing yellow eyes. His thin and long mouth provides the sandman with a grotesque appearance. While the sandman is stationary, his eyes move from one side to other, creating the sense of the figure looking around. He then noisily ascends the stairs, stopping half way to single out a creaking step several times (5:17min). The camera's point of view changes from a frontal perspective to a bird's eye view, looking down at the sandman who is almost on top of the staircase. This is the beginning of cross-cuttings and several fast paced PoV changes that only last a few milliseconds each. Traditionally this technique is used in horror films (Moving Image Education, MIE hereafter) to create suspense and to focus on the victim's impending danger. MIE points out: "Each time we cut back to the victim, the shot is closer still" (MIE on Suspense). The fast paced PoV changes in Berry's film do not victimize<sup>206</sup> the sandman character, but these changes create a kind of dizziness while portraying the sandman from all angles and sides. The assemblage of various projections and facets of the sandman figure that does not allow the establishment of one identity is called into question. The film suggests one single identity although it still toys with the figure's reality. In between these shots the film includes brief scenes showing either the woman or the boy. The sandman then enters a door that looks like a coffin. His turn and huge step towards the screen suggests a zombie motif that links the sandman figure to the undead/vampire. Although I do not want to explore these suggestions further at this point, I do want to point out that this moment speaks to Berry's mastery in animating life-less clay figures. This is also the second full frame shot the film conveys about the sandman

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<sup>206</sup> If victimization occurs the film identifies Oscar as the victim.

further detailing his clothing. He wears tight blue knee pants and long white stockings. A black pouch is tied around his hips.

In the next scene the boy climbs out of his bed, drops his candle and veils the room in almost darkness. The camera moves towards the left frame and zooms onto the door knob (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Doorknob, 5:42min

In the next shot the sandman's face briefly appears before a shadow approaches the bed and the boy hides under his blankets. However, instead of the sandman, a hand pulls the blankets away and the next frame reveals the woman who then tucks the boy in and leaves the room. The boy appears to fall asleep again while the sandman moves through his bedroom door. The sandman quietly circles the boy's bed once before he jumps around it and flaps his arms in the back making bird-like wing sounds. The boy moves in his sleep uneasily. The next shot shows the glistening sand in the sandman's hands. The boy wakes and the camera moves to his and the sandman's shadows projected on the wall. The sandman's shadow hovers over the boy's. Red flashes appear on the wall. The sandman's hand swiftly reaches toward the boy twice and drops something in exchange for the glistening sand. Then the shadow turns breaking the fourth wall. In the next shot, the camera reveals the sandman again who puts something in his pouch adding to the figure's general enigma and escapes through the open window towards the moon.

Zooming onto the moon, the camera focuses onto the sandman who appears on top of a nest in the magical mineral world. What initially appeared as an establishing shot showing the magical landscape of glistening minerals now transforms into a fantastic world including the sandman's nest. This change alludes to the fairy tale building upon the *Ammenmärchen's* narrative device to locate the sandman's nest with his children on the moon. Within a split-second, the camera switches between the showing of three young birds in the nest and a fast ascent onto the boy's house. While two eyes drop into the nestlings' mouths, an eyeless boy appears on the middle of the screen. His mouth opens but no scream escapes. This hollow black mouth compliments the black eye sockets. The credits appear in the next shot. However, the film ends with the eyeless boy emerging on the left side of the frame, holding up his out-stretched hands and shows how he staggers across a black screen towards the frame's right side. When the boy reaches the other side, he becomes part of a group of other eyeless children, although he remains in the center of them. The last shot reveals this group of children who all lack eyes and open their mouths in horror. They crowd the frame and their presence seems to press onto the viewer before the screen turns black and veils the scene into darkness (and thus robbing the viewers of their own sight).

The film's utilization of early twentieth century German expressionist cinema contributes to the sandman's "uncanny strangeness." In particular, its diegetic (sound that appears from a source on the screen or displayed action on the screen, e.g. the sound of the drum when Oscar plays it) and non-diegetic (sound that has its source off the screen and is not related to displayed scene, e.g. the repeated melody of the drumming throughout the film) sound and *Mise en scène* draw on Expressionist cinema. *Mise en*

scène includes lightening, costume, acting, setting, props and their placement within a scene.<sup>207</sup> In Berry's "The Sandman" German Expressionist Cinema inspires lightening and the graphic design of the setting in this otherwise "silent"<sup>208</sup> animation. Andrew Warren in his 1991 review of *The Sandman* notices Alfred Hitchcock's influence on Berry's style:

Alfred Hitchcock appears to have influenced Berry; his fresh use of shadow is clearly mirrored in *The Sandman*, as is the high camera angles from above the victims shoulder, representing danger. Indeed, the clashing semi-tonal music of *The Sandman* is highly reminiscent of Hitchcock, and all of these things work together to create Mise en scène filled with suspense. Another influence was the German expressionism of the 1920's, particularly films such as *Nosferatu*<sup>209</sup> ... The surreal interpretation of the moon being incorporated into the Sandman's face and the central, often vignetted shots, such as of the bedroom, create a claustrophobic, compressed impression.<sup>210</sup>

Being shot in black and white, German expressionist films rely on the use of shadow to enhance the plot and create suspense. While Hitchcock, as Warren observes, continued

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<sup>207</sup> Timothy Corrigan's *A Short Guide on Writing About Film* (2004) provides a brief but comprehensive overview of these terms.

<sup>208</sup> Berry's animation – as I stated earlier – is silent in so far that it does not rely on dialogue but music (sound in general) and Mise en scène.

<sup>209</sup> *Nosferatu*. Dir. F.W. Murnau. Perf. Max Schreck Greta Schröder, Ruth Landshoff, and Gustav von Wangenheim. Film Arts Guild, 1922. Kenneth S. Calhoun's 2001 *Peripheral Visions: The Hidden Stages of Weimar Cinema* provides a collection of various scholars' insightful discussions of German Expressionist Cinema. Calhoun's article "Silence Restored: Three Re-released Films by F. W. Murnau" is forthcoming in *Modernism/Modernity*.

<sup>210</sup> Review of Berry's *The Sandman*, 1991 at New Forest Film Festival, <http://newforestfilmfestival.com/thesandman>

this cinematographic technique in his 1950ies film, Berry's 1991 stop-motion animation uses color. Nevertheless, the film recycles the shadow technique and embeds the interplay between light and dark colors, in the way of modern chiaroscuro within the film's *Mise en scène*. The film's opening title stresses this technique. In the 25 second opening of Berry's film, a pan shot reveals a fantastic setting that resembles mountains or crystals, that emit blue, red and white lights. Through a deep focus, the camera creates a three-dimensional landscape that calls forth associations with Ludwig Tieck's 1804 "Der Runenberg." After the camera zooms in on one of the mountains, the frame transitions into a black screen. Within the following three seconds, an off-screen source that seems to be located behind the black frame begins to etch the title into the frame moving from the right side to the left and ending with the article "the." I view this moment already as part of the narrative because it introduces the fantastic through the magical appearance of – what at the end of the process viewers identify as – letters. Just as these letters take shape and form the word "the" the sandman character that the film portrays also takes shape and materializes in a particular form. In a way, the opening title anticipates this sandman's materialization. Nevertheless, this moment sustains the figure's enigma because it never reveals the source of the writing. The straight lines that will make up the title initially appear like scratches on the frame. Their whiteness stands in contrast with the darkness suggesting a mysterious and dangerous presence. This contrasting of colors is characteristic of an expressionist style, chiaroscuro later modernized in color. It also speaks to the violation (or rather mutilation) of the black screen is violated through the etching. The screen's mutilation (and the finalized titled "The Sandman") forestalls the sandman's violent act against the boy, Oscar.

*The Sandman*'s opening then establishes a link between the sandman figure and German expressionism, in particular its metonymic images of horror and fear. Lotte Eisner in *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*<sup>211</sup> (1965) states while referring to Hölderlin's implication in *Hyperion* (1797 and 1799): "The German is obsessed by the phantom of destruction and, in his intense fear of death, exhausts himself in seeking means of escaping Destiny" (89). Although Berry was an English model animator, his film *The Sandman* deals with a fictional character from German folklore that Hoffmann's 1816 literary tale had initially bestowed attention upon. In vernacular lore, fear and horror describe the sandman who steals innocent children's eyes.<sup>212</sup> In Hoffmann's tale, the wet nurse shares this variant with the protagonist. While I have analyzed this tale elsewhere, in this context I want to point out the similarity between this particular section of Hoffmann's tale and Berry's film. Although the story of the sandman is narrated in two different forms of media, both forms use silence to enhance the sandman's horrific character. The stop-motion animation's lack of spoken words relies on expressionistic techniques to convey the sandman's tale.

*The Sandman* becomes a case in point to study the link between German expressionist cinema and the cinematographic variant of the sandman's tale. Film, in general, seems automatically to embed the notion of the uncanny because it signifies the shift from one's reality to an imaginary reality portrayed for example in early silent

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<sup>211</sup> First published in France under the title *L'Ecran Démoniaque* in 1952; revised and reissued in 1965 by Le Terrain Vague.

<sup>212</sup> Although the origin of the sandman is lost, there is some evidence that the sandman appeared to be a profession in Basel, Switzerland and Thüringen, Germany as Michaela Vieser and Irmela Schautz outline in *Von Kaffeerichern, Abtrittanbietern und Fischbeinreißern: Berufe aus vergangenen Zeiten* (2010).



movies. In 1912/1913 Alfred Kerr points out, “Kein Wort (wird) gesprochen...man kann sich selber (alles) vorstellen” (76). On the one hand this film represents reality captured in “animated pictures”, moving photographs in some way. However, on the other hand, there is no sound, and thus, the viewers need to employ their own imagination to comprehend the images in front of them.

Berry’s vivid animation about the sandman story enters the viewers’ unconsciousness and triggers emotional responses such as fear and terror. In his *Cinema 1. The Movement Image* (1986) Gilles Deleuze viewed Expressionism as “the *non-organic life of things*, a frightful life, which is oblivious to the wisdom and limits of the organism, is the first principle of Expressionism, valid for the whole of Nature, that is, for the unconscious spirit, lost in darkness, light, which has become opaque, *lumen opacatum*” (50-51). The plot and fantastic setting of Berry’s film correspond to Deleuze’s notion. The *Sandman*’s opening scene exposes a life-less mineral world that nevertheless, appears fantastic and magical. The sharp edges of the mountains and the swift changing of four primary colors (red, blue, white, and black) emit darkness in which the “unconscious spirit” (read the viewer) may be lost in it. In fact, the film’s utilization of lifeless clay figures and their uncanny seamless movement in the film speak to the uncanny Expressionism calls forth. It also brings Kristeva’s concept of uncanny strangeness to mind because the film operates on previously known ideas about the sandman. John S. Titford in “Object-Subject Relationships in German Expressionist Cinema” (1973)<sup>213</sup> states: “Expressionist Cinema is a impossibility. Like all other art forms, which believe that only the subjective inner life is real. (sic) It can ultimately never be externalized, and thereby partake of the world of objective reality” (17).

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<sup>213</sup> This article was published in *Cinema Journal* by UP Texas.

According to Kristeva the uncanny has to be located within the film's and one's unconsciousness.

While Berry's film does evoke the uncanny, the film does not visualize Freud's reflection on Hoffmann's tale in his 1919 essay "Das Unheimliche." The sandman, without a doubt, threatens the harmony between the mother and the boy in Berry's film. He enters their peaceful home uninvited. I propose to move away from a merely psychoanalytical discussion of the film and argue that the sandman is not replacing the mother or substituting for a father figure. There is no Oedipal complex in Berry's film because the film presents the sandman figure as independent from the mother-son relationship. In several frames the film establishes the link between the sandman and his offspring that sit in a nest located on the moon.

Paul Berry's cinematographic narrative is not only a visualization of Hoffmann's narrative. It also speaks to what Kristeva identifies as "uncanny strangeness." The uncanny is more than someone simply being afraid of the unfamiliar. The Uncanny arises from the juxtaposing of transformation and positioning. "Consequently therefore, (she argues,) that which *is* strangely uncanny would be which *was* (the past tense is important) familiar and, under certain conditions (which ones?), emerges. A first step was taken that removed the uncanny strangeness from the outside, where fright had anchored it, to locate it inside, not inside the familiar considered as one's own and proper, but the familiar potentially tainted with strangeness and referred (beyond its imaginative origin) to an improper past. The other is (one's) ("own and proper") unconscious" (183). The uncanny does not emerge in the outside of one's self. But it is part of "the familiar potentially tainted with strangeness" (183). The Uncanny, it seems to me, is a powerful

device because it arises in one's very own unconsciousness, and thus, it becomes challenging to expose it in detail. The sandman figure in Paul Berry's 1991 animation is an uncanny or rather horrific figure. However, the figure is only uncanny insofar as the sandman relates to the boy Oscar. As Kristeva in her concept of uncanny strangeness clarifies, it is through the relationship between the sandman and the boy that the sandman character is made familiar. While this process originates in a recognition of the figure in the past, Berry's sandman illustrates uncanny strangeness.

In Berry's film the sandman becomes a *Doppelgänger* who mimics the boy's action in order to suggest his agency and uncanny strangeness. The film constructs the sandman that is portrayed in the first opening scene from nine representations. Compared to the sandman in Hoffmann's text – or according to my argument – the sandman figure in Berry's narrative is not enigmatic. The different representations construct a terrifying figure. At the beginning the sandman's profile appears within the clouds and suggests transparency (Figure 8). The figure-cloud association speaks to the shape shifting abilities and introduces the sandman as dream figure. While an expressionistic, waning half moon fills the frame at 3min53sec, the next shot transitions into a floating cloud. The moon turns into a liminal space that allows the sandman to travel between his fantastic reality (the mineral world on the moon) and the boy's house.



Figure 8: The sandman in the moon, 3:53min

The brief transformation of the cloud into the profile of the sandman suggests his fantastic character and also speaks to Kristeva's uncanny strangeness. Sustaining the position of the half moon, the sandman's face takes center stage in the frame, and his eyes slowly turn towards the right in order to directly face the audience. While this is the first time the film exposes the sandman figure visually, it also establishes the character as a fantastic figure. The constant shift between the different forms in this shot contributes to the supernatural abilities of the sandman. The sandman's upward looking profile is sharp-edged, recalling the font of the title in the opening scene. The moon's light that exposes the sandman's profile and a seemingly unidentified light source beyond the screen support the contrast between the surrounding darkness and the sandman. This effect underlies the sandman's eerie appearance. His yellow eyes that roll in his eye sockets across the screen – in a manner of scanning the audience and the boy – achieve a spine-chilling sensation. The film utilizes general knowledge about the sandman, in

particular the figure's horrific presence and association with the night, and also suggests the uncanny turning strange and other.

The half-moon, home of Berry's sandman, merges man and bird and therefore links the fantastic to the exotic.<sup>214</sup> In the opening scene (14sec) of Berry's "The Sandman" (Figure 9), bizarre crystals that sparkle blue, red and white mark the sandman's fantastic world. In retrospect at the end of the film the framing of this environment will become an establishing shot for the sandman's nest in which his children reside (Figure 10).



Figure 9: Opening 14sec



Figure 10: The Nest, 8:10min

Although the sandman remains a magical being, it is now defined by the fantastic surrounding and is cast into the predator role. In fact, the sandman is situated within an unfamiliar and gothic context. From the boy's expressionistic house to the confinement of the sandman's nest, Berry's visual narrative recycles the nurse's tale, that Hoffmann's 1816 includes, and also creates yet another variant on the sandman story.

In this fantastic moment, Oscar is unaware of the true danger looming over him. However, the film clearly introduces the horrible sandman to its viewers as they anticipate the figure's arrival. While in Hoffmann's tale the sandman's identity is

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<sup>214</sup> This motif often occurs in the sandman's folklore. Hohoff, van Maassen and Steinecke attribute the location of the half moon to the sandman's traditional home.

problematized with the introduction of different characters that Nathanael identifies as the sandman, in Berry's visualization the phantasmagoria turns out to be a rodent. While the sandman lingers like a ghost (Hohoff 8) within Nathanael's imagination and refuses to be controlled, the figure plays with Oscar's fear in Berry's adaptation. In Berry's film the figure defies character development and keeps its indefinable Gestalt. One image escapes after the other and remains a thing. The sandman's nature lies within the continuation of the "Etwas" (Hohoff 5) that reformats the multiple shapes and forms – conflicting representations of the figure. While Nathanael attempts to regain his independence and separate himself from the sandman figure and his infantile trauma, the diverse representations of the sandman challenge this retraction. The discovery of one of the sandman's depictions turns into a childish hide-and-seek play between Nathanael and the synchronistic sandman figure: "aber nichts konnte ich erlauschen, denn immer war der Sandmann schon zur Thüre hinein, wenn ich den Platz hatte, wo er mir sichtbar werden konnte" (10).<sup>215</sup> The appearances of the sandman remain undetectable. With this unpredictability, the multiple representations of the sandman assert their control or authority over themselves and Nathanael. If Nathanael's endeavor to meet the sandman had been successful, it would have situated the fantastic figure into his realm of reality, and thus finally limited the character of the sandman into one particular layer of the narrative structure. In the 1991 stop-motion animation, Oscar investigates the noises that disturb his sleep. Here, the anticipated sandman turns into a gnarly old mouse (4:14min). While this surprising moment focuses on the mouse's harmlessness that rustles under Oscar's bed, it does enhance suspense in the continuation of the sandman's anticipation.

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<sup>215</sup> "But I could never discover anything, because the Sandman had already gone through the door by the time I got to a spot from which he would have been visible" (Kent and Knight 96).

If Romanticism aims to visualize the literal, Berry's variant outlines this characteristic in his depiction of the sandman. The figure himself desires to be noticed when he enters Oscar's house. At first, the film establishes the sandman's magical power and shows how the figure effortlessly moves through the solid door like a specter (Figure 11). The sandman's ability marks him as a shape shifter without a solid identity. However, the next scene deconstructs this fantastic characteristic and shifts the focus from the sandman's fluid identity onto a single identity (Figure 12).



Figure 11: Sandman's Invisibility, 4:28min

Breaking the fourth wall, the sandman character gazes at the viewer, reaches for the door, and opens it before shutting it noisily (Figure 13). This act transforms the ghost-like figure into a literary character.



Figure 12: The Ghost, 4:31min



Figure 13: Closing the Door, 4:41min

In the next shot, the sandman ascends the stairs and follows the way Oscar previously took to his bedroom. He stops at the same step that caused Oscar to pause and continues to make everyone aware of his presence by his noise (Figure 14).



Figure 14: The Sandman's Step, 4:59min

Here, Berry's text does not merely visualize the sandman as a horrific ghost but constantly gives him form. For the viewer, the sandman exists although the boy and his mother yet apprehend him as noise. At the least, the sandman emerges as a frightening bugbear (Schreckgestalt) within the boy's imagination. Whereas Hoffmann's tale constructed a fantastic sandman, here the figure is clearly uncanny and strange.<sup>216</sup> The

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<sup>216</sup> While I argued the literary tale's interruptions elude to the post-modern sublime, in Berry's variant a crisis within the narratology is avoided through the location of the uncanny in the past and distancing oneself from the event in the past. The sandman becomes an independent character.



sandman becomes an autonomous character and controls the boy, his mother and the viewer.

The sandman takes on an ornithic behavior (Figure 15), circles his prey and swiftly jumps over the boy's bed and also folds his lengthy arms suggesting the beating of wings (6:45-7:34minutes).



Figure 15: The Sandman's Dance

The film clearly identifies the sandman as a birdlike figure that seeks food, in the form of children's eyes, for its offspring. The film at this moment recycles the old woman's tale from Hoffmann's narrative. The wet nurse's simple recognition of the sandman as an evil man and this man's birdlike offspring suggests a fantastic figure whose true depiction is reticent. The sandman's destructive violence then is part of his nurturing. He does not care for humans and insists on his own power and interests. The nurse's tale, in my opinion, clearly sets the sandman figure and his children apart from Nathanael and his surroundings.

The film shifts the emphasis from the fantastic sandman figure onto the little boy. Through this significant change, the film coerces viewers to identify with him and elicits a terrifying response in them when the boy eventually loses his eyes (Figure 16, 17, and 18).



Figure 16: The Approach



Figure 17: The Act



Figure 18: The Aftermath

The violent act of robbing the boy's eyes becomes even more violent through the utilization of shadows. The film switches from a black and white background to a black and red background two times before it settles back into the black and white background (7:49min). While the sandman's shadow in this last shot places something in his pouch, the film transitions into color again and resumes its plot. The sandman's penetration of the boy, his robbing of the eyes, is enhanced through this swift change of colors. The red hues (7:50min) indicate the moment of the violent act, robbing each eye in the split-second before some normality is restored in the black and white frame (7:51min). While this usage of shadows clearly is reminiscent of early twenty century German Expressionist cinema, it also sustains the fantastic element of the tale and also contributes to the creation of suspense and horror.

Although the act is violent, the sandman figure also is identified as a caring father figure. On the first plain of the film's reality, the sandman character emerges as a tending

father who merely seeks food for his young offspring (Figure 19 and 20).<sup>217</sup> Swift interchanging scenes between both the sandman figure's magical world and the boy's reality establish both of their worlds (Figure 21 and 22).



Figure 19: Frame 1, 8:19min



Figure 20: Frame 2, 8:20min



Figure 21: Frame 3, 8:21min



Figure 22: Frame 4, 8:25min

Using a rapid zoom-in, the scene that transitions from the sandman's magical world, displaying first clouds, to a bird's eye view of a city. The PoV changes to the sandman again who exposes the food for his offspring (Figure 23). Within a second, this becomes an establishing shot for the eyeless boy who emerges in the next shot (Figure 24).

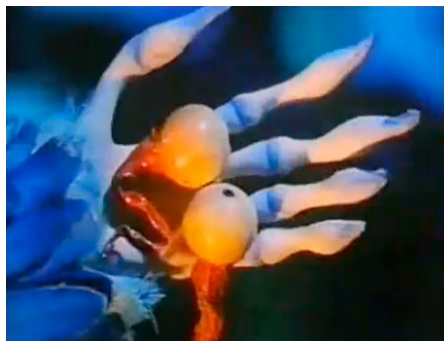


Figure 23: Frame 5, 8:29min



Figure 24: Frame 6, 8:30min

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<sup>217</sup> The following labeling of the frames 1-6 are my own classification, and do not correspond to the frame per second of the storyboard in Appendix A. Here, these labels serve for an easier understanding of my analysis of the scene.

While the music continues, the boy does not emit any sound although his mouth is open. The film again illustrates Kristeva's uncanny strangeness bringing to mind Edvard Munch's 1895 series "Der Schrei der Natur" (Figure 25).<sup>218</sup>

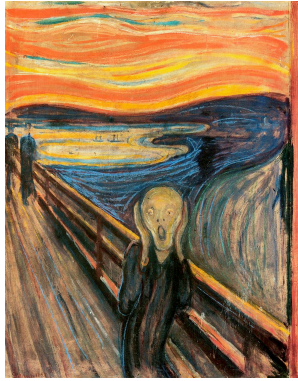


Figure 25: Der Schrei der Natur

What the film visualizes in the depiction of the sandman, the film has to negate through the boy's loss of sight (Figure 24). The scene is fantastic because the ending raises the question as to whether the events that happened to the boy are supernatural or marvelous. And it is also sublime because his empty but piercing eye sockets break the fourth wall. This gaze illustrates an interaction between the eyeless boy and the viewer and breaks the boundary between imagination and reality.

The boy's empty gaze into the unknown – directly at the viewer – creates a sublime feeling. The film, in particular this shot as well as a later shot displaying multiple children like the boy, speaks to uncanny strangeness. While the boy in the last scene (9:03min) emerges on the left side of the screen and stumbles into the black frame, other children like him, become visible and the boy takes his position in the middle of them, in the middle of the frame (Figures 26 and 27).

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<sup>218</sup> The series consists of four color-pastel paintings depicting a screaming figure. While the German title "Der Schrei der Natur" suggests "Urschrei" and becomes a symbol for Nature's life force and destruction, the English "The Scream" may be derived from Norwegian "skrik." The paintings are located in the National Gallery and in the Munch Museum, in Oslo, Norway.



Figure 26: The eyeless Oscar



Figure 27: Oscar among eyeless children

The loss of his eyes represents the fear of the unknown. Showing Oscar after the credits, the film suggests a continuation of the story and in this manner ends with an emphasis on the boy (9:11min). In his loss, the film makes him part of a group of almost identical looking children. It is unclear to me if this motif, therefore, lessens the boy's faith or suggests a unifying force behind the group. It is uncanny and strange at the same time.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In recent years the discourse on fairy tales has been primarily approached in two ways: from the structuralist's and the historical cultural's points of view. While the first employs Propp, Lüthi and others, the second approach traces, comments on, and predicts socio-political contexts of the (literary) fairy tale. Traditionally fairy tale study analyzes a narrative's structure and investigates a particular motif in the Aarne index. Classifying folktales – and showing how their history moved from an oral to a literary tradition – these indexes are helpful. However, there is also an increasing amount of complex literary tales that challenge such simple classification systems. Such tales pose the phenomenon of the fantastic.

This present dissertation “Afterlives of the Sandman: Refiguring the Fantastic-Sublime,” calls attention to German philosopher and literary critic Schlegel's view of fairy tale structure, in particular how absolute chaos underlies any poetic tale. This chaos produces an infinite pool of interpretations that are sometimes bizarre and allow the reader to ponder philosophically on the literary tale.

My reading of E.T.A. Hoffmann's literary tale “Der Sandmann” introduces the sandman figure as an example appropriate to Schlegel's theory and identifies the sandman as a complex character that lacks a coherent core. Moving away from traditional interpretations inspired by Sigmund Freud's reflections on the narrative, my textual analysis reflects on the diverse representations of the sandman figure within Hoffmann's narrative and Paul Berry's film. I show how various stories on the sandman figure shape Hoffmann's portrayal(s) of the sandman. There is more than one portrayal of the

sandman. Characterizing the sandman as a fluid character calls attention to the ambiguity that the narrative sustains. This leads me to conclude that Freud's reading of the narrative is one-sided. Freud focuses on one interpretation, and I suggest additional ones making Hoffmann's sandman figure a fluid character. In every tale each representation adds to understanding the figure. These portrayals construct an ambiguously enigmatic figure. This is different from traditional Hoffmann scholarship, for example, Tatar. It is important because the tale's extraordinary structure allows for the bizarre constellations that Schlegel anticipated in poetic fairy tales. It cannot be classified in the fairy tale index or motif index because there is not one dominating motif in the tale. The sandman – similar to Gaiman's depiction in his graphic novel series – consists of a fluid figure. It is the synchronism of these diverse representations that makes Hoffmann's tale a postmodern phenomenon although it is written in 1816. Therefore, my reading of the tale contributes to the vast array of scholarship on Hoffmann.

To give justice to the complexity of plot and construction of the figure, I also employed Lyotard's concept of the postmodern sublime. This is a 20<sup>th</sup> century notion – and different from Schlegel's 18<sup>th</sup> concepts of Romantic irony. However, I introduce a reading that calls attention to both of them. Lyotard's concept marks the rapture and the existence of the unrepresentable. If one detects such raptures as structural sites in a literary tale, one is also confronted with endless possibilities of interpretations. In terms of identifying the sandman this is important because these sites sustain the figure's mystery.

These sites also require a moment of intertextuality because the reader and the character interact. Viewing the literary tale in the context of chaos is new. Any

postmodern literary tale that intertextualizes folktales and traditional tales appears as a pastiche and in a way, respects former variants while adding its own twists. Such structures are complicated and complex. Therefore, a purely structural or motif approach limits one's analysis and also neglects the interpretation of fragments and movements in these tales. Nothing is new, but it is rearranged to create bizarre constellations creating a ceaseless pool of meanings.

The more variants a particular fairy tale has, the more the texts' interconnectedness become relevant in a discussion of a particular tale from a specific time period. Postmodern concepts such as Lyotard's postmodern sublime and Kristeva's uncanny strangeness aid in understanding narrative's complexity. This study on the various representation of the sandman figure calls attention to the intersection between aestheticism and philosophy. As a comparatist, I am advocating cross-disciplinary studies in the reading of literary tales because their writers were inherently comparative in the modes of shaping their literary works. While E.T.A. Hoffmann's tales remain puzzling and significant today, there are other 21<sup>st</sup> century writers like the Canadian literary critic and novelist Margaret Atwood and the German writer Walter Moers who evoke Hoffmann's style.

### 1. Future Projects

This project focused on textual analyses of a literary tale, an illustration, and a film. While I mostly discussed Romantic irony in my review of traditional scholarship on Hoffmann, I did allude to the concept of irony in my presentation of diverse texts about the sandman figure including English stage songs. In a future project I would like to extrapolate on the link between irony and the sandman figure as represented in 18<sup>th</sup>



century texts. This will require further archival research in order to detect narratives that discuss the sandman figure as the 19<sup>th</sup> century tales develop it.

After such archival work I will further discuss the hype of the sandman figure in vernacular and literary culture. Neil Gaiman's graphic novel series *The Sandman* (1989-1996) introduces a sandman figure that consists of six different characters that have split from him during his imprisonment in darkness. This portrayal is very different from the depiction in the 2012 film *The Rise of the Guardians*. Although the sandman figure in this cinematographic text appears as a guardian, the figure is a minor character and often falls asleep. In addition to these two particular illustrations of the figure, the sandman remains a subject in newer TV-Shows.

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