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The functions of dreams in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Meister Floh* (1822)

Meister Floh presents a spectrum of dream states, beginning with childish day-dreaming and culminating in a revelatory night-time dream. While this dream allows the protagonist to achieve heightened self-understanding, it also solves a narrative riddle for the reader. The following chapter explores the dual function of dreams in Hoffmann's story. Most obviously, they play a role in the hero's psychological development. But they are also used as a structural narrative element. Filled with easily recognisable images from the cultural reserve of Romantic myth, dreams in *Meister Floh* invite the Romantically initiated reader to decode the meaning of the text. This double function means that Hoffmann participates in the Romantic creation of a collectively accessible dream world, while respecting the symbolic meaning of specific dreams for individuals. The tale presents an understanding of dreams which encompasses the individual's psychological progression without detracting from the belief in the collective pre-conscious existence that informs the reader's comprehension.

1. Introduction

E.T.A. Hoffmann's last fairy-tale, *Meister Floh* (1822), is full of dreamers. Several characters, from the hero Peregrinus Tyss and the fairy-tale Princess Gamaheh to relatively minor figures such as the bookbinder Lämmerhirt and Tyss's unnamed gardener, experience various conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious states associated with dreaming. These include an untroubled acceptance of dreamlike scenarios while fully conscious, daydreaming, hovering on a border between madness and dream, catatonia or somnambulant states, falling asleep or unconscious, and finally having a night-time dream. For all these dreamers, the reader gets to know only one dream. This is Peregrinus's night-time dream, narrated in detail at the denouement; it is described in short order as both »der höchste Moment« and »der große Moment«.¹

Peregrinus is a troubled although benevolent recluse whose fantasy life shields him from overwhelming grief following his parents' unexpected deaths. The seven »adventures« of *Meister Floh* furnish him with a belated education in the ways of the real world and ultimately enable him to form a healthy and lasting adult relationship. His dream, set in a magical space which merges the fairy-tale world Famagusta with his own bedroom, is the final stage in this education and simultaneously the solution to a narrative riddle involving a mysterious gemstone. Peregrinus's enlightenment thus happens in tandem with that of the reader. The dream gives the individual dreamer a new insight into his own psychological make-up, and additionally invites the reader to share in a »transindividual« Romantic dream space which resolves fragmentation and confusion in a synthesis of sensory and spiritual

¹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, »Meister Floh«. In: *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. by Hartmut Steinecke and Wulf Segebrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 6 vols, 1985-2004), vol. VI (2004), 303-467, here 458 and 459; henceforth cited in the main body of the text as: MF.

experience.² To the same end, *Meister Floh* blurs the boundaries between daydreams, madness, trance, and dreams, the better to promote the combined epistemological value of consciousness and dream as means of understanding the multifaceted nature of lived experience.³

The following chapter identifies two major functions of dreams in *Meister Floh*. The first, well-documented in existing scholarship, is the dream's educative and curative function for Peregrinus. This reading exhibits Hoffmann's interest in psychological development. The second is the narrative function of dreams. Writing against psychological readings of Hoffmann's dreams, Gerhard Lauer suggests that their primary role is to foreground narration as a theme. Since another person's dreams can only ever be narrated and not experienced, narrative dreams implicitly invite the reader to engage their interpretive faculties.⁴ Taking Hoffmann's novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815) as an example, Lauer argues that even if uncanny events make characters unsure about whether they are dreaming or awake, readers can generally identify the dividing line, but must make an effort to establish the connection between the two states.⁵ Lauer's argument sits alongside those of Rüdiger Steinlein and Inge Stegmann, both of whom identify the dream's double nature as seemingly fantastical yet rooted in routine experience common to everyone. Readers can thus enter the Romantic imagination via a familiar path.⁶ This relative ease of interpretive access is bolstered by the reader's knowledge that literary dreams are not idiosyncratic, but relate to a story's broader context and present a code that can be unlocked via close attention to this context, as Ricarda Schmidt has argued.⁷ *Meister Floh* similarly invites the reader to decode the dream world, by

² See Peter-André Alt, »Romantische Traumtexte und das Wissen der Literatur«. In: Peter-André Alt and Christiane Leiteritz (eds.), *Traumdiskurse der Romantik* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 3-29, here 9. Ricarda Schmidt likewise identifies, as one function in Hoffmann's literary night-time dreams, the revelation of the essential connection between the individual and the cosmos. This harmonious function of dreams constitutes the often overlooked flip side of Hoffmann's more frequently analysed exploration of individual conflict in frightening nightmares. Both together demonstrate the range of Hoffmann's dream-scape from dissonance to harmony. See Ricarda Schmidt, »Nachtraum, Tagtraum und Rausch bei E.T.A. Hoffmann«. In: *KulturPoetik*, 9:1 (2019) 68-84, here 70.

³ For a discussion of how Romantic anthropology advanced the joint importance of sleep and consciousness as equally important states of human life, see Manfred Engel, »The Dream Theory of Romantic Anthropology«. In: Sheila Dickson and Mark G. Ward (eds.), *Romantic Dreams: Proceedings of the Glasgow Conference, April 1997* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1998), 1-15, here 8.

⁴ Gerhard Lauer, »Hoffmanns Träume. Über den Wahrheitsanspruch erzählter Träume«. In: Alt and Leiteritz (eds.), *Traumdiskurse der Romantik* (note 2), 129-47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶ Rüdiger Steinlein, »[E]igentlich sind es nur Träume«. Der Traum als Motiv und Narrativ in märchenhaft-phantastischer Kinderliteratur von E.T.A. Hoffmann bis Paul Maar«. In: *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 18:1 (2008), 72-86, here 76f., and Inge Stegmann, *Deutung und Funktion des Traumes bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1973), 191-93.

⁷ Ricarda Schmidt, »Lovers' Dreams - the Path to Heaven or Hell. The Janus-Face of Dreams and their Discursive Context in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Gelübde* and *Prinzessin Brambilla*«. In: Bernard Dieterle and Manfred Engel (eds.), *Theorizing the Dream / Savoirs et théories du rêve (Cultural Dream Studies 2)*

presenting it as a recurring element that affects many of the characters, rather than Peregrinus exclusively.

2. *Plot summary*

Peregrinus Tyss, a thirty-six-year-old bachelor and only son of a rich merchant, spends his childhood immersed in daydreams. After attending university, he disappears to an unknown location, possibly India, for three years, and returns to find his parents have died. In shock, he retreats into his Frankfurt home, where he obsessively reenacts annual feast days as cherished family occasions. His only pleasure is giving the treats he procures for these occasions to local poor families; he is a bystander in happiness. This shallow peace is disturbed one Christmas Eve when a beautiful young woman suddenly appears as he is distributing gifts to the Lämmerhirt family, and, to Peregrinus's amazement, declares her undying love and begs him to return a captive on whom her life depends. She is later identified as Dörtje Elverdink, the partially reanimated Princess Gamaheh. In her previous life in Famagusta, Gamaheh was attacked by the Leech Prince, whose deathly kiss sent her into a deep sleep, in a reverse Sleeping Beauty narrative. In an effort to rescue her, the spirit Thetel carried her away. Meister Floh, the head of a republican nation of fleas who is in love with Gamaheh, clung on and was carried with her. It so happened that at this moment, two natural scientists, Swammerdamm and Leuwenhöck, were observing the skies through a telescope. Its powerful glare dazzled Meister Floh, knocking him from the sky, whereupon Leuwenhöck put him in chains and forced his entire nation of fleas to perform in a flea circus.

Much of the action centres on the question of how Gamaheh can be revived and restored to her original self. Fate delivers her to the scientists, who want to complete this task to advance their professional reputations. Gamaheh has shrunk to microscopic proportions, but with the help of magnification the scientists reanimate her as the Dutchwoman Dörtje.⁸ Swammerdamm and Leuwenhöck are the chief antagonists because although they want to revive Gamaheh, it is for personal gain. Meanwhile Leuwenhöck exploits Dörtje by treating her as a beautiful exhibit who attracts legions of young men to his flea circus. Dörtje is however only partly alive and needs periodic bites from Meister Floh to keep her blood

(Königshausen & Neumann, 2018), 249-269.

⁸ For a fuller discussion of the scientists' reanimation methods, see Eleoma Joshua, »Illusional Optics: Motifs of Mental Image Projection in E.T.A. Hoffmann's Literary Narratives«. In: Raluca Hergheligi (ed.), *Etudes à la Loupe: Optikinstrumente und Literatur* (Suceava: Editura Universității »Ștefan cel Mare«, 2010), 73-82, here 80f.

circulating, otherwise she shrivels and ages drastically; her reanimation thus has financial as well as professional implications for Leuwenhöck. When Meister Floh escapes Leuwenhöck's circus, Dörtje turns bounty hunter and uses all her wiles to recapture him, including charming Peregrinus with whom he seeks protection. As Meister Floh explains to Peregrinus, his entire nation will fall back under Leuwenhöck's control should their leader be captured.

As a gift of thanks for his protection, Meister Floh gives Peregrinus a lens enabling him to read minds. This teaches Peregrinus to understand human behaviour better and helps him navigate difficult encounters, and so significantly aids his reintegration into society after his years of retreat. Ultimately, however, he rejects the lens, recognising its potential to corrupt trust, when he discovers true love with Röschen Lämmerhirt, the daughter of the bookbinder whose younger children benefited from Peregrinus's generosity at Christmas. Despite being tempted by Dörtje, he remains loyal to Meister Floh. It transpires that the secret to Gamaheh's permanent revival lies neither in scientific enquiry, nor in intermittent flea-bites, but in the power of love, nascent but dormant in Peregrinus's breast. This is represented by a mysterious gemstone or talisman, which the scientists have seen in Peregrinus's horoscope; they understand it holds the key to Gamaheh's restoration and so desire its power, but because they have no emotional intelligence they do not identify it as an image of Peregrinus's heart. Its power is unleashed in the dream sequence of the final chapter, in which Peregrinus appears as his Famagusta alter-ego, King Sekakis, to affirm the beauty of nature's mystery and the transformational quality of love. Both these things have eluded the scientists, whose quest is duly defeated. Peregrinus emerges from his reclusive lifestyle to enjoy married life with Röschen, and Meister Floh returns to Famagusta to rule his democratic nation of fleas. Dörtje marries Peregrinus's friend George Pepusch; both die a Romantic *Liebestod*, but survive in Famagusta as Gamaheh and the thistle Zeherit.

3. *Peregrinus's dream and his psychological development*

Tyss's revelatory night-dream comes only after he has progressed to a certain stage in his development. Through the story, his initiation into the fantasy-world Famagusta is guided by Meister Floh, who first tells him Gamaheh's history and promotes the truth-value of dreams.⁹

⁹ With regard to the truth value of dreams, Meister Floh takes on the voice of the Romantic theorist G.H. Schubert. Peregrinus expresses bewilderment at all the fantastical things that have happened, whereupon Meister Floh upbraids him for doubting the very wonders to which, as a Romantic daydreamer, he is so naturally drawn.

Meister Floh appears at significant narrative moments when Tyss is on the cusp of sleep, and he plays a role in the final dream because he is both present in the bedroom when Tyss sleeps, and an actor in the dream. He also helps Peregrinus understand the real world around him by means of the magic lens, so that a clear connection between empirical reality, fantasy, and dream is established, with the dream functioning as a bridge between the first two.¹⁰ Having made use of this lens to manage some difficult social situations, Peregrinus eventually realises that the ability to read others' thoughts could lead to lasting misanthropy, and so he rejects it in favour of mutual faith and respect.¹¹ This insight arises largely from his love for Röschen, and his horrified realisation that he might compromise the nature of this love when he is briefly tempted to use the lens to read her mind. Only at this stage does Meister Floh deem Peregrinus fit for the final stage of his education, that is, for the dream, at which point he commands Peregrinus to give in to sleep. The dream both signifies and enhances Peregrinus's new emotional maturity, for its major insights are made available to him only when he has developed enough to apply them to real life.

Peregrinus's dream comes in two stages, clearly separated by a moment when he rouses to a state of semi-consciousness before returning to sleep. In the first stage of the dream, he passively receives divine pronouncements directed at King Sekakis, Gamaheh's father and the ruler of Famagusta. In the second stage, he recognises that he is Sekakis, and subsequently metes out justice to the Leech Prince, the spirit Thetel, the two scientists, and

Meister Floh asks, »Ist es Euch wohl jemals aufgefallen, daß Ihr an die Bilder des Traumes glaubt?« (408). In *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (1814), Schubert describes »Bilder im Traume« and »Traumbildersprache« as a language we cannot consciously understand, but which is known to »der versteckte Poet in unserm Innern«. Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert, *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (Bamberg: C.F. Kunz, 1814) facsimile reprint (Cambridge: CUP 2011), 2 and 3. For further discussion of Schubert's influence on Hoffmann, see Monika Schmitz-Emans, »Night-sides of existence: Madness, dream, etc.«. In: Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel and Bernard Dieterle (eds.), *Romantic Prose Fiction* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007), 139-67, here 140.

¹⁰ For a general discussion of dreams in Hoffmann as bridges between man's »higher and lower order« see Diana Stone Peters, »The Dream as Bridge in the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann«. In: *Oxford German Studies* 8:1 (1973), 60-85, here 61.

¹¹ Surveillance also happens in the political sphere, particularly in the satirical Knarrpanti episode which will not be considered here. For scholarship dealing with this aspect of *Meister Floh*, see Val Scullion and Marion Treby, »Repressive Politics and Satire in E.T.A. Hoffmann's Fairy-tales, ›Little Zaches Acclaimed as Zinnober« and ›Master Flea««. In: *Journal of Politics and Law* 6:3 (2013), 133-45; Marko Pavlyshyn, »Word as Act: The Debate on E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Meister Floh*«. In: *Seminar* 17:3 (1981), 196-204; George S. Williamson, »Thought Is in Itself a Dangerous Operation: The Campaign Against ›Revolutionary Machinations« in Germany, 1819-1828«. In: *German Studies Review* 38:2 (2015); Michael Niehaus, »Gedanken lesen / Gedanken sehen. Inquisitorisches in E.T.A. Hoffmanns ›Meister Floh««. In: E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Meister Floh. Ein Märchen in sieben Abentheuern zweier Freunde* (1822). *Mit Kommentaren von Michael Niehaus und Thomas Vormbaum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 223-51. See also Ricarda Schmidt's investigation into why this text by Hoffmann posed such a threat to the Prussian authorities in »Literarische Rechtsfälle und politische Legitimität: Zur Bedeutung der Diskrepanz zwischen dem Gesetz und seiner Anwendung bei Heinrich von Kleist und E.T.A. Hoffmann für die Konstituierung von nationaler Identität«. In: *Heilbronner Kleist-Blätter. Das Jahrbuch aus Heilbronn* 28 (2016), 158-178.

the lovers Dörtje/Gamaheh and George/Zeherit. The shift from passive understanding to action between the two dream stages underscores Peregrinus's new readiness to live meaningfully without guidance from Meister Floh. In stage one, Peregrinus finds himself in a stereotypically Romantic setting: by the shore of a woodland brook where the wind whispers, the bushes rustle and insects hum. This soundscape suggests an initiation into the language of nature, or holistic understanding of the material and spiritual worlds, but Peregrinus only gradually begins to understand what initially presents as »ein verwirrtes sinnebetörendes Geschwätz« (MF 459). This signifies the merging together of the tale's fragmentary happenings into a coherent message for the dreamer, as William H. McClain has argued.¹² Of particular note here are the parts of the dream relating specifically to Peregrinus/Sekakis. One voice becomes ever-clearer, announcing the following:

\$\$Unglücklicher König Sekakis, der du das Verständnis der Natur verschmähst, der du, verblendet von dem bösen Zauber des arglistigen Dämons, den falschen Teraphim erschauest, statt des wahrhaften Geistes.

An jenem verhängnisvollen Orte, auf Famagusta, in tiefem Schacht der Erde verborgen, lag der Talisman, doch da du dich selbst vernichtet, gab es kein Prinzip, seine erstarrte Kraft zu entzünden\$\$ (MF 459).

The real-world correlate to Sekakis's scorning of nature is Peregrinus's initial infatuation with Dörtje, who is a teraphim, or false idol, because she transgresses the laws of nature, so cannot inspire true love.¹³ A scientific creation, produced in a laboratory, she is a mirror-image of Gamaheh but lacks her spirit (»der wahrhafte Geist«). This missing element is symbolically recovered when Peregrinus unlocks his own ability to love – or, in the dream metaphor, when the buried talisman is unearthed and its frozen powers reawakened. Gamaheh's true love for Zeherit is realised when she casts off of her false identity as Dörtje, in the second part of the dream, so that her reawakening *within* a dream narrative corresponds to Peregrinus's awakening *from* a life of daydreaming which was a form of shelter from meaningful human interaction.

Within the second part of the dream, which reveals Peregrinus's new agency, there is a three-stage progression. First, he recognises himself as Sekakis and »fühlte, daß der zum Leben

¹² William H. McClain, »E.T.A. Hoffmann as Psychological Realist: a Study of »Meister Floh««. In: *Monatshefte* 47:2 (1955), 65-80, here 77.

¹³ Paola Mayer, »Transgressive Science in E.T.A. Hoffmann's Fantastic Tales«. In: Christopher Clason (ed.), *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Transgressive Romanticism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 65-80, here 68f., discusses how the scientists transgress nature by creating Dörtje.

entzündete Karfunkel glühe in seiner eigenen Brust« (MF 461). Sekakis's robes, »[die reichen Gewänder] eines indischen Königs« (MF 461) recall Peregrinus's childhood games, when he fashions his dressing gown into a Chinese style so as to transport himself via the imagination to a distant land. So Peregrinus's imaginative disposition is affirmed, but must henceforth be viewed as an aspect of his personality that can complement loving adult relationships, rather than a method for avoiding them. This imagination, or faith in a kind of understanding that is not evidence-based, underpins Peregrinus's trust in Röschen and informs his decision prior to the dream not to spy into her mind: it is the basis of mutual love. Peregrinus's self-recognition in the dream is thus, as Stegmann writes, a new understanding of the higher part of his humanity.¹⁴ The second stage in the dream's presentation of love is Sekakis's pronouncement to George/ Zeherit and Dörtje/Gamaheh and its consequences:

\$\$ »Der Strahl des Karfunkels wird euer Herz durchdringen, und ihr werdet die Seligkeit des Himmels genießen.« Mit einem Laut freudiger Hoffnung erhoben sich Beide, die Prinzessin Gamaheh und die Distel Zeherit, und Peregrinus drückte sie fest an sein flammendes Herz.

So wie er sie ließ, fielen sie sich in hohem Entzücken in die Arme; – verschwunden war die Leichenblässe von ihrem Antlitz und frisches jugendliches Leben blühte auf ihren Wangen, leuchtete aus ihren Augen\$\$ (MF 464).

This moment is accompanied by the third and final strand in the revelation of love, when a real-life figure thus far excluded from the imaginary realm enters the dream: »in demselben Augenblick lag auch Röschen in hoher unbeschreiblicher Anmut holder Jungfräulichkeit prangend, überstrahlt von dem Glanz der reinsten Liebe, wie ein Cherub des Himmels, an Peregrinus Busen«. (MF 464)¹⁵

The temporal coincidence of the pairing Gamaheh-Zeherit and Peregrinus-Röschen provides the bridge back from the dream into Peregrinus's real life. It also sets the stage for Dörtje and George's *Liebestod*, which in turn makes way for Röschen's and Peregrinus's more earthly enjoyment of married life. When Gamaheh and Zeherit lose their corpse-like pallor and take on a healthy youthful glow, moreover, this symbolises on the mythical level Peregrinus's

¹⁴ I. Stegmann (note 6), 350

¹⁵ In the interim, the dream also shows the scientists being duly dispatched for their wrong-headed attempts to penetrate the mysteries of nature. This is a Romantic statement about the importance of imagination and intuition as ways of restoring a connection to the natural world; in my analysis, however, I focus on the role of love in the dream as it pertains much more closely to the protagonists' development and therefore also to the unfolding of the narrative.

return to the world. For Dörtje's life, as a semi-automaton whose gaze often deadens, is an exaggerated metaphor for Peregrinus's own.¹⁶ Considering Peregrinus's lifestyle following his bereavement, his friend George rightly recognises what might now be termed depression: an »Abgespanntheit aller bessern Kräfte« (MF 378), caused by his retreat from the wider world and an obsessive-compulsive repetition of the feast-day rituals. George likens this to a living death: if everyone were like Peregrinus, the world would be a »Leichenhaus[.]« (MF 378). While this discounts the very positive effects of Peregrinus's generosity towards others, George has nonetheless grasped his friend's essential problem. Peregrinus himself feels his own home is like »ein düstres Grabmal, in dem er selbst mit allen seinen Freuden begraben« (MF 317). The remedy for Dörtje's »Scheinleben« (MF 425), effected by human sympathy, mutual faith, and love, is thus simultaneously the remedy for his own.

Commentators beginning with McClain have noted the significance of Peregrinus's dream as a »self-generated« phenomenon.¹⁷ This is one reason why Stegman identifies *Meister Floh* as the text in which Hoffmann develops the Romantic potential of the dream to its fullest: this is a story about complete self-comprehension via a dream revelation.¹⁸ But this understanding is not uniquely the preserve of the individual dreamer. Rather, it progresses in tandem with the reader's comprehension of a tangled narrative.¹⁹ Steinlein's investigation of the double function of the literary dream shows how this works: as a narrative motif or plot device, its symbols present a meaning of relevance to the dreamer; as a narrative model, on the other hand, it suggests a way of accessing the meaning of the story as a whole.²⁰ The first function is relevant to the dreamer; the second to the reader. But they are blurred because literary dreams place the reader in the unusually privileged position of being able to view the dreaming subject's visions – as if the reader herself were the dreamer.²¹ The reader has two interpretive tasks: identifying the symbolic meaning of the dream for the dreamer, and, going up a level, applying her reading of the dream to the narrative as a whole. As Peter-André Alt suggests, an increasing cultural and popular knowledge of the symbolism of dreams in the Romantic period paved the way for »eine neue Sprache des Imaginären, in der sich sowohl

¹⁶ Ritchie Robertson notes that Dörtje »at time resembles [the automaton] Olimpia«. See Robertson, »Introduction«, in E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*. Trans. by R. Robertson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), vii–xxxii, here xxviii.

¹⁷ W.H. McClain (note 12), 77.

¹⁸ I. Stegman (note 6), 350.

¹⁹ »Hoffmann here employs dream symbols to reveal to both hero and reader the sense underlying all of the apparently senseless adventures of the tale«, W.H. McClain (note 12), 77.

²⁰ R. Steinlein (note 6), 72f..

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

individuelle als auch transindividuelle Wahrnehmungsperspektiven abzeichnen.«²² The dream now becomes a literary medium for the expression of the unity of all things: as Peregrinus understands the »totality of his own personality«, so the reader starts to grasp the fusion of myth, imagination, and reality presented in *Meister Floh*.²³ For Hoffmann, »[d]er Traum wird zum organisierenden Thema des Romans, das den Stoff bedeutungsvoll anverwandelt«. ²⁴ This leads us to the second function of dreams in *Meister Floh*.

4. *The narrative function of dream in Meister Floh*

There is a logic to the fact that *Meister Floh*'s narrative threads – or most of them - come together in a night-time dream. Dreaming and dream-states are consistently referenced, and appear along a scale beginning with Peregrinus's childhood daydreams, moving through waking dreams and catatonic states, and culminating in the night-dream. The different, but connected, points along this dream scale will be explored in the final part of this chapter. The night-dream is the closest one gets to full immersion in the imagination without leaving behind empirical reality (everyone dreams), but this immersion happens gradually, so that the reader is primed to receive the wisdom that has already been half-promised by references to other sorts of dreaming. As shall be discussed below, this new wisdom amounts to the acceptance of a Romantic worldview that acknowledges the central importance of the imagination and, relatedly, semi-conscious and unconscious states, as means of understanding the world that complement observations we make in waking life. The following will explore how Hoffmann's reader is educated in the importance of dreamlike states as gateways to Romantic insights. The reader learns not to distinguish too sharply between consciousness and dreaming, but rather to identify their overlapping moments as precursors to new modes of understanding.

Even when the night-dream unfolds, it is not clear when exactly Peregrinus is fully asleep: nowhere do we see the word »träumen« on its own. Rather, Meister Floh tells him he will enter a »träumerisches Delirium« (MF 459), whereupon »Herr Peregrinus Tyß wä^hnte bald, er liege an dem Ufer eines rauschenden Waldbachs« (MF 459, my emphasis). The dream pauses when he »erwachte halb aus der Betäubung« (MF 460) then resumes when he fails to rouse

²² P.-A. Alt (note 2), 9.

²³ W.H. McClain (note 12), 77.

²⁴ G. Lauer (note 4), 145. This comment is made specifically with reference to *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, but can be more broadly applied.

himself »ganz aus dem Schläfe« (MF 460). Its conclusion is definitive: we do not see Tyss waking up to consider its meaning and impact, which is in any case by now clear; rather the narrative jumps to his new country house where the marriage with Röschen is concluded.²⁵ There is no clear break between his dream and a waking life in which he reflects on it. Rather, states of consciousness merge into each other and are mutually influential. This is particularly fitting given that Meister Floh's very first words to Peregrinus are »Schlaft nicht« (MF 349). The figure who initiates Tyss into a world of higher truth first chooses to impart his knowledge when the hero is awake, only to encourage him to finish this education in a dream. There is no divide, but a continuum, so that the states of consciousness complement one another.

Meister Floh demonstrates the imperative of progressing from daydreaming, an activity associated in the story with childhood, to the synthesising of dream and consciousness as dual parts of real-life experience. Recognition of this duality comes in the presentation of alternative identities in the imaginary world which is also the backdrop to the dream. The major characters have avatars in Famagusta, representing a spiritual side of their existence. This in turn appeals to the reader because it taps into a cultural knowledge, well-established by 1822, of Romanticism's promotion of mythical worlds as tools for restoring the power of the imagination. Hoffmann's contemporary readers come to *Meister Floh* already well-versed in the typical narrative spurs intended to unlock imaginative potential. These include states of seeming madness or melancholy in a character with an imaginative disposition, the incursion of incongruous fantasy figures into real-life settings, split personalities and shapeshifters, and characters' sudden and fleeting recognition of a world temporally distant from their own. Such tropes are familiar from Hoffmann's repertoire, especially *Der goldene Topf* (1814) and *Prinzessin Brambilla* (1820) in which the fantasy worlds Atlantis and Urdar merge with Dresden and Rome respectively. They return to the reader in *Meister Floh* via the real-world phenomenon of the dream, appealing to us to combine the self-knowledge symbolically unlocked by dreams with a literary-cultural knowledge of the collective pre-conscious or mythical state of being proposed by the Romantics to combat modern alienation from nature. Thus, whether characters feel they are dreaming, slip into somnambulant states, or simply

²⁵ Incidentally, this reads like an alternative happy ending to *Der Sandmann*, in which Nathanael awakes from his nightmarish madness and makes doomed plans to move to a country estate with his fiancée Clara and his family. Nathanael's awakening »wie aus schwerem, fürchterlichem Traum« (my emphasis) highlights the overlap between dreaming and altered states of mind that occur during waking hours, in this case madness. See E.T.A. Hoffmann, »Der Sandmann«. In Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke* (note 1), vol. III (1985), 11-49, here 47.

daydream, these states are consistently linked with an imaginary world, reinforcing the connection for the reader.

Daydreaming is presented as the first positive step in Romantic education, which must however be left behind as a naïve stage, because it separates two apparently incongruous worlds rather than synthesising them.²⁶ Children are at home in this state, and maternal figures are well attuned to its developmental function.²⁷ Notably, however, daydreaming does not function as a bridge, because it consists either of entering into a fantasy life with no relation to the real present, or innocently accepting apparently impossible happenings without provoking reflection on their meanings, as the following examples will clarify. *Meister Floh* begins in the tone of a child's Christmas story, recalling almost exactly the opening of *Nußknacker und Mausekönig* (1816), and just like Marie, Peregrinus enters wholeheartedly into a game of imagination inspired by his toys. This is the same acceptance of wonder later exhibited by the Lämmerhirt children when Dörtje, seemingly a glamorous princess, enters their home and declares her love for Peregrinus. While all the adults are flabbergasted, the children behave »als seien sie mit der Fremden lange bekannt gewesen« (MF 323). Meanwhile their uncomprehending father feels as if »er läge im Traum« (MF 320). Peregrinus fares even worse, with a sensation »als drehe sich in seinem Kopfe eine Windmühle« (MF 322). Unlike

²⁶ Hoffmann is never an advocate of getting lost in daydreams, or at least not after protagonists have passed childhood. We see this in his obvious parody of fantasy worlds with no relation to reality at the end of *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober* (1820): the benevolent magician Prosper Alpanus disappears over a flaming rainbow, in a crystal carriage, leaving behind a surveillance state that has banned disruptive elements, and in which the hero's happy ending in marriage is presented as a cynically knowing narrative convenience. The hero's world (ostensibly a fairy-tale kingdom which however obviously alludes to Restoration-era Germany) and Alpanus's fantasy world are severed, leaving the reader doubtful as to the value of escapism. As *Der goldene Topf* and *Prinzessin Brambilla* show, fantasy worlds can aid in protagonists' progress – in these cases artistic progress – only if they can be connected to material experience. For this reason, figures who inhabit both the real and the fantasy worlds act as guides, initiating heroes into imaginary spaces without tearing them from reality: Lindhorst actually exists in Dresden, and Celionati conducts Giglio Fava's education from Rome, not Urdar. *Meister Floh* likewise exists in Frankfurt and Famagusta.

²⁷ We might identify a further mirroring of *Der Sandmann*, in so far as a godmother, a mother and a nursemaid are all sympathetic to and even encourage Peregrinus's imaginative games and (day-)dreaming. In *Der Sandmann* it is the nursemaid's tale that marks Nathanael for life, haunts his dreams, and indelibly stamps Coppélius with the identity of a malign adversary with supernatural powers, in Nathanael's mind. The link does not induce terror in *Meister Floh*, but it does remain. When the infant Peregrinus appears slow to develop, his godmother makes him a present of a harlequin doll, which as a prompt to the imagination awakens his »Empfindung und Verstand« (MF 310); his mother cannot understand his dreams and fantasies but is happy to tolerate them; and Aline, his former nursemaid, helps him set up the annual feast days, indulges his child-like behaviour at Christmas, and encourages him early on in the belief that Dörtje is a princess. Aline also forms a link between Famagusta and Frankfurt, in an unresolved narrative thread which presents her as another of Dörtje's alternative identities, and she appears in the final dream. At the Lämmerhirt household, it is notably the bookbinder's wife who is the first to recover her composure when Dörtje arrives unexpectedly, »wie aber die Weiber am wenigsten über irgend etwas seltsames, ungewöhnliches zu erstaunen pflegen und sich überhaupt am geschwindesten fassen« (MF 320). The link between women, especially from poorer classes, and the imagination and dream worlds echoes the narrator's statement in the opening pages that »Ammen, alte Weiber u.a.« are »die vortrefflichsten Märchenerzähler« (MF 303); here, the cultural memory of folk tales passed on orally and represented by such women is linked to dreams in a modern narrative.

Marie and the Lämmerhirt children, Tyss is a fully-grown man. Unreflecting acceptance of fantastical happenings is no longer an appropriate response; instead their uncanny disturbance of everyday life challenges the adult's trust in their own perception of the world. Lämmerhirt senior, grasping for a comprehensible equivalence, equates the experience to a dream, while Tyss fears madness.

Peregrinus's first ever separation of dreamlike scenarios from graspable reality is, however, the first step towards his maturity. From this point onwards, instead of retreating into imaginary worlds, he must productively engage with them without fleeing life's challenges. Similarly, the reader is robbed of initial childlike pleasure in a Christmas fairy-tale by the narrator's sudden intervention. Following several pages in which Peregrinus, apparently a child, enjoys his Christmas toys and rides with abandon on a rocking horse, the reader is disabused when the narrator interjects: »Sehr irren würde jener, welcher glauben sollte, daß Peregrinus Tyß ein Kind sei [...] Nichts weniger als das! Herr Peregrinus Tyß hatte sechs und dreißig Jahre erreicht und daher beinahe die besten« (MF 306). Here the narrator throws cold water on the reader's expectations of what will follow: having been set up for a children's story, or at least a story of childhood, in which we might reasonably leave our rational selves at the door, so to speak, we are now asked to consider the disturbing implications of this lonely bachelor's psychological regression. In other words, like Peregrinus, we must leave behind straightforward immersion into a childlike world and better engage our interpretive faculties when dealing with this narrative. From now on, both reader and hero must navigate a path to understanding. Narratively, this way to enlightenment is signposted by references to dream states of increasing significance.

Although Peregrinus's Famagusta avatar is Sekakis, there is an analogous relationship between the narrative trajectory of his plotline and that of Gamaheh. Both characters become their truest selves following a period of sleep and reawakening. Peregrinus enters Famagusta in a dream and reawakens in the real-world Frankfurt; conversely Gamaheh enters the real world as Dörtje, a sometimes uncannily frozen woman who slips into dreamlike states, and only becomes Gamaheh again in Famagusta. Gamaheh's story provides a metaphorical guide for Peregrinus and for the reader who seeks the connection between the imaginary realm and Frankfurt. Above all, Peregrinus must stop the particular type of daydreaming in which he stages imaginary self-contained worlds that satisfy his obsessive memorialisation not only of his parents but of his own lost childhood. This activity is self-directed and leaves no room for engagement with others: even when he sees the happiness of the poor families he visits at

Christmas, he is an external observer. Peregrinus's father had described him as »Hans der Trumer« (MF 313), lost in »Trumereien« (MF 313). When the boy imagines himself transported to distant China, »alles ubrige konnte durchaus nicht seine Aufmerksamkeit reizen« (MF 311). In the child this fantasy retreat is harmless, in the traumatised adult it is stultifying. Peregrinus's approach to daydreams must shift, from a damaging and even solipsistic one to one that places his imagination into a wider and more inclusive context.

Sheila Dickson's study of the Romantic appeal to myth suggests a framework in which to consider this shift. For Hoffmann as well as the earlier Romantics, there is a »goal of aesthetic reunification of self and world through the medium of imaginative, symbolic, inexhaustible myth«.²⁸ In *Meister Floh* this is achieved in stages, via the evocation of the mythical world of Famagusta, via daydreams and the imagination, and finally a night dream.. Manfred Engel has claimed that dreams in Romantic literature »have no individual-psychological cognitive function« precisely because they return us to a harmonious collective past life.²⁹ In the case of *Meister Floh*, however, they have both these functions: the tale advances Romantic dream theory to encompass the individual's psychological progression without detracting from the belief in a collective pre-conscious existence. For this reason, even as Peregrinus embarks on a personal psychological cure via the imagination and dream, he is confronted with dream scenarios which are not of his own making but part of Romanticism's cultural reserve. He is brought into a narrative dream world that the reader can share in too, for it represents the collective pre-conscious myth of Romanticism. Tyss's challenge is the same as that posed to the reader of Hoffmann's stories with mythological backdrops. As Dickson argues, Hoffmann gives his readers familiar myths, then challenges them to reintegrate these into their modern world, in other words, to engage intellectually with the imagination in order to identify its role in their lives.³⁰

The path to understanding via dreams is presented as a step-by-step initiation. Peregrinus's early day-dreaming and imaginative games are entirely directed by him, with the annual feast days minutely planned and restricted to his home. When Dortje appears, however, the dreamlike scenario is foisted on him unexpectedly from without. Although he succumbs to sudden and highly uncharacteristic passion for this beautiful stranger, after carrying her through the streets to his own home he suddenly feels, »als erwache er mit einem Ruck aus

²⁸ Sheila Dickson, »E.T.A. Hoffmann: Mind, Mythology and Meaning«. In: *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 33:3 (1996), 251-63, here 255.

²⁹ M. Engel (note 3), 12.

³⁰ S. Dickson (note 27).

dem Traum« (MF 325), and claims that these happenings could easily be understood as a »Fiebertraum« (MF 327). Dreaming is now an analogy for unfamiliar events that threaten one's stable perception of the world; more positively, this is a step away from self-directed daydreams.

At this point the first adventure ends, and the scene shifts away from Peregrinus's perspective to the story of Gamaheh. The setting is Leuwenhöck's flea circus, where the scientist discusses the problem of the lost princess and the runaway Meister Floh with George Pepusch. Pepusch has come to visit Dörtje after falling hopelessly in love with her, but in his recollection of his alternative self, Zeherit, he also recounts Gamaheh's story, and Leuwenhöck tells a version too. This establishes a narrative connection between Dörtje and Gamaheh almost immediately after the former's appearance. The reader is thus given a clue not yet available to Peregrinus: the narrative implies that Dörtje/Gamaheh will bring an all-important mythical strand to his character's development. Significantly, Famagusta has little that is distinctive. It is a stock mythical world reflecting a Romantic longing for unity with nature: Gamaheh, we read, once wandered »in ein dunkles anmutiges Zypressen-Wäldchen [...] [v]erlockt von dem lieblichen Säuseln des Abendwindes, dem Murmeln des Baches, dem melodischen Gezwitzcher der Vögel« (MF 334). We might as well be back in the Atlantis of *Der goldene Topf*, where the emerald-green trees move »in sanftem Säuseln und Rauschen«, »die Quellen und Bäche plätschern und sprudeln« and coloured birds »zwitschern und singen«.³¹ This is a relatively simple equation for the reader. Gamaheh signifies Romantic harmony, now lost both for her alter-ego Dörtje and for Peregrinus who misses the innocence of childhood. Famagusta is thus a narrative shorthand for the reader. Significantly, all dream states that follow bear some relation to Famagusta, so that the reader establishes a connection between the challenge to integrate myth with modernity, and the role of dreaming in this process.

These dream states increasingly approach the experience of an actual dream, and they do not affect Peregrinus alone, so that their significance for a collective is stressed. Self-indulgent daydreaming, which as a discrete activity respects an implied boundary between life and dreams, is followed by experiencing reality as if it were a dream, which uncannily blurs that boundary. The next stage is slipping into a waking dream, referenced in *Meister Floh* by somnambulant or catatonic states. The characters who do this most often are George and

³¹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, »Der goldene Topf«. In: Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke* (note 1), vol. II/i (1993), 229-321, here 319.

Dörtje, and it happens when they remember their previous existence in Famagusta. For George this is triggered by the sight of Dörtje at Leuwenhöck's flea circus. His staring surpasses the admiration of other young men who come to look at her and is so extreme that Dörtje compares him to a lifeless ghost. The image of the blankly staring ghost »mit [...] erstarrterem Blick« (MF 344) suggests a degree of altered consciousness, precipitated by George's »dumpfe Erinnerung, als habe er die Holländerin irgendwo einmal gesehen, wiewohl in ganz anderen Umgebungen und anders gekleidet« (MF 342). He shares this memory with Dörtje, and they begin »[ein] träumerische[s] Reden von den Wundern in Famagusta« (MF 347). »Träumerisch« here takes on a double meaning. It is the dreamy talk of lovers, but it is also dreamlike, not least because Dörtje shares George's intuitive feeling that they were once intimately connected. For her, this dim memory is »wie ein schöner Traum« (MF 345). Upon initial acquaintance with Dörtje, George tortures himself trying to remember the nature of their connection »in der schlaflosen Nacht« (MF 343); this is fruitless, for the connection can be reestablished only in dream, the gateway to Famagusta. Incidentally, when Peregrinus tells Swammerdamm what he has learned about Gamaheh from Meister Floh, the scientist replies that it all seems to be »ein merkwürdiger jedoch ganz angenehmer Traum« (MF 370). By this point, however, the reader is canny enough to spot Swammerdamm's tactic to put Tyss off the scent. For the narrative has by now established that dreams must not be separated from waking life.

Dörtje's own periodic catatonia is more prominently highlighted in the story. It recalls George's fixed stare but also, in terms of the plot progression, prepares the way for Peregrinus's dream. At one point, Peregrinus confusedly calls Dörtje by her Famagusta name. The effect is instant: »Gamaheh«, fuhr sie wie somnambul sprechend fort, »Gahameh sagst du? – Gamaheh, die Tochter des Königs Sekakis? Ja, ich erinnere mich, in Famagusta!« (MF 388). Following the cue given by her mythical name, Dörtje slips into a dream and, by means of the magic lens, Peregrinus looks into her mind. This provides the reader with their first dream vision of Famagusta. While the lens gives the ability literally to read thoughts, the dream cannot be so easily deciphered. Accordingly, Peregrinus is confused by the fibres he sees in Dörtje/Gamaheh's mind that seem to produce the dream. Meister Floh reassures him: »verwirrt Euch nicht, guter Herr Peregrinus, das sind Gedanken des Traumes, die Ihr da schaut. Sollte auch vielleicht noch etwas mehr dahinter stecken, so ist es wohl jetzt nicht an der Zeit, das weiter zu untersuchen« (389). That is, it is not the time for Peregrinus, but via the undeciphered dream images, the reader is ready to confirm their suspicion that

Famagusta, as a mythical world, now represents a Romantic understanding of dream as the key to hidden aspects of our personalities. We never find out what, if anything, *happens* in Gamaheh's dream, unlike Peregrinus's later on. But its imagery furnishes us with an interpretive context nonetheless.

Dörtje's dream exhibits both the characteristics of the Romantic dream experience identified by Manfred Engel. One is a »longing for total fusion and complete dissolution of the self« brought on by the regression into a pre-conscious state and allowing dreamers to remember »what we were before our consciousness developed«; this generally reveals a unity between humankind and nature. The second is the soul's total immersion in itself and corresponding freedom from the external demands of everyday life, which allows the dreamer's longing for fusion with the eternal to emerge unfettered.³² As she drifts out of consciousness, she murmurs her mythical name »Gamaheh«, not Dörtje, a sign that the dream restores her original self, and she retreats entirely from her Frankfurt life. The dream's content, presented with very little detail, is a kaleidoscopic image of people transforming into plants, stones, and metals, and strange animals who speak »wunderbare Sprachen« as they endlessly metamorphose (389). By the 1820s these were stock Romantic tropes which Hoffmann's contemporary readers could be expected to recognise. They are reminiscent of Novalis's *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (1797-1800) which opens by linking together all aspects of organic and inorganic nature as part of a »Chifferschrift«.³³ These elements initially seem so fragmented that the soundscape of Gamaheh's dream is a »brustzerreißende Wehmut«, until »eben diese Dissonanz verherrlichte nur noch mehr die tiefe Grundharmonie, die siegend hervorbrach, und alles, was entzweit geschienen, vereinigte zu ewiger namenloser Lust« (MF 389). Hoffmann does not present a differentiated dream experience – there are neither insights about Gamaheh, nor specifics about Famagusta's flora and fauna, described simply as »Blumen« and »seltsame Tiere« (389). The dream represents Romanticism's longing for restored harmony, and, although incomprehensible to Peregrinus, the code of its images is easy for the reader to crack. Its description is so generic as to be almost parodic – at least Atlantis, eight years earlier, had some distinguishing features, not least the golden pot. The main challenge is not really to unravel the dream's mystery but to ascertain how such visions can bridge the divide between a once harmonious collective existence and a modern

³² M. Engel (note 3), 10-11.

³³ Novalis, *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. In: id, *Schriften: Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. Ed. by Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, vol. I, 1977), 79.

individual life. This insight comes only in Peregrinus's dream, which is much more specific to his circumstances but, as we have seen, retains the Famagusta link.

Dreams in *Meister Floh* thus open up a common frame of reference in which we are invited to link together the fragmented parts of the story. As it reaches its conclusion, Peregrinus shows the potential to do this when he intuitively begins to understand that Dörtje is not his fated bride. This insight is accompanied by a feeling of unease when he hears the rustling of her taffeta dress. His instinctive connection of two seemingly unrelated things - taffeta and uneasiness – is implicitly praised by the narrator as the kind of intuitive understanding afforded by dreams, which follow associative rather than rational logic:

\$\$warum er gerade den Zindel bedrohlich fand, wußte er selbst nicht, aber die Gedanken von Zindel und unheimlicher Wirtschaft verbanden sich von selbst miteinander, so wie ein Traum des Heterogenste vereint, und man alles für aberwitzig erklärt, dessen tiefen Zusammenhang man nicht einzusehen vermag.\$\$ (MF 443)

This intuitive understanding spreads beyond his individual experience. Peregrinus's bride, Röschen, speaks the words that will propel him towards self-understanding. Noticing Peregrinus's melancholy mood, which resulted from his passing temptation to spy on her, Röschen reassures him of their lasting commitment to one another: »unsre Liebe ist der Talisman, vor dem die nächtigen Gestalten fliehen« (MF, 455). Since Röschen is unaware of the scientists' search for the missing talisman that would reanimate Gamaheh, her word choice is on one level merely coincidental; for Peregrinus and the reader, however, it makes clear the fundamental connection between Famagusta and Frankfurt or, more specifically, as subsequently revealed in the final dream, between Sekakis and Peregrinus. Röschen inadvertently solves the mystery of how to revive Gamaheh and accordingly, in the psychological sense, how to revive Peregrinus: through love. At this stage the reader, who has just witnessed a long discussion between Leuwenhöck and Peregrinus about the talisman, is primed to take up the clue subsequently and definitively decoded in the dream.

Röschen, then, unknowingly becomes part of the chain linking the myth of Famagusta to the real world, but she also intuitively understands it all without needing to go through the same process as Peregrinus. This is clear from her reaction to the dead tulip and thistle found in Peregrinus's garden the morning after the double wedding. These dead plants represent Dörtje's and George's Romantic death, occasioned by their transformation into their higher spiritual selves, Gamaheh and Zeherit. Peregrinus senses what has happened even before this

discovery, again when he is most probably in a semi-delirious state. At midnight, »Peregrinus erwachte aus dem Schlaf, er glaubte tief klagende Melodien einer hoffnungslosen Sehnsucht zu vernehmen« (465). Even the gardener, who appears for the first and last time in the final pages, shares the dream revelation. As it becomes clear that Dörtje and George are missing, the gardener

\$\$kam in diesem Augenblick ganz außer sich herbei und rief: er wisse gar nicht, was er davon denken solle, aber ein seltsames Wunder sei im Garten aufgegangen. Die ganze Nacht habe er vom blühenden *Cactus grandiflorus* geträumt und nun erst die Ursache davon erfahren. Man solle nur kommen und schauen.\$\$ (MF 465)

The wonder is the magnificent thistle, the *cactus grandiflorus*, and the tulip entwined round it. Peregrinus now voices his and Röschen's symbolic relation to Gamaheh and Zeherit, claiming that the midnight premonition is now fulfilled:

\$\$Der Strahl des Karfunkels, der mich zum höchsten Leben entzündete, gab dir den Tod, du durch seltsame Verschlingungen eines geheimnisvolles Zwiespalts dunkler Mächte verbundenes Paar.\$\$ (466)

Peregrinus understands his relation to the dream characters Gamaheh and Zeherit as analogous, if differently resolved: while Sekakis, embodying love, returned him to life, Gamaheh and Zeherit achieved the mythical Romantic death-in-love. Röschen, however, needs no further explanation: »auch Röschen schien die Bedeutung des Wunders zu ahnen« (MF 466). The insights of Peregrinus's dream experience, by the end of the story, are intuitively available to those who have not directly shared in it – even, albeit obliquely, to the gardener, who has no bearing whatsoever on the plot. This suggests Peregrinus's new position in a Romantically inflected frame of reference that unites him with others: his dream world is no longer his space of retreat but one of essential connection.

5. Conclusion

Meister Floh bears a close relationship to the earlier fairy-tale *Der goldene Topf* (1814), in which the increasing integration of the fantasy world Atlantis and the real-life city Dresden results in an awkward but likeable hero's poetic development. An additional intertextual pointer uniting these two »Märchen aus der neuen Zeit« comes when Leuwenhöck tells George that »der Archivarius Lindhorst« (MF 339) is the best authority on the thistle Zeherit;

in *Der goldene Topf*, the same Lindhorst had patiently awaited the night-time blooming of his »schön[er] Cactus« in a garden full of wonders.³⁴ But whereas Anselmus disappears into Atlantis, never again to walk the streets of Dresden, Peregrinus wakes from his dream and applies what he has learned to the life he continues living in modern Germany. It is significant that Peregrinus's relation to Famagusta is given the most sustained attention in a dream. This is a state of consciousness rooted in everyday human experience: it is not a Romantic flight of fancy, nor does Peregrinus indulge in the melancholic longing for a distant state of being that can be identified in other Hoffmann predecessors, especially in Anselmus. It is rather the case that the dream, as part of an empirically real life, sheds new light on that life and so enables the hero finally to overcome the psychological stasis that followed his bereavement.

Additionally, dreaming provides a thread via which the reader can follow the story's twists and turns, especially because the movement from daydreaming to immersion in dream happens step-by step. Each stage on the scale: daydream - dreamlike reality - waking dream - night-dream represents a progressively closer union of dream and real life. With regard to literary dreams, Steinlein writes: »Die Bild-(Real-) Ding-Beziehung wird [...] zur Generierung einer in sich stimmigen Handlungsfolge genutzt, die nicht allein subjektbezogen entschlüsselbar sein kann (wie die Bilderwelt des je individuellen Nachttraumes), sondern deren imaginäres Substrat einer intersubjektiv nachvollziehbaren Symbolik gehorcht.«³⁵ *Meister Floh* here serves as an exemplary model. For absolute subjectivity hinders Peregrinus's development, and he must progress to an understanding of the world and of himself that, while personally relevant, must nonetheless share points of reference with others. This common framework is offered by a Romantic dreamscape already familiar to Hoffmann's readers, who can thus apply its symbolic meaning to the specifics of the hero's life. In this way collective dream images and subjective ones are mutually enlightening: the former provide the narrative context for interpretation, while the latter enable a differentiated interpretation of dreams in accordance with individual circumstances.

³⁴ Hoffmann, »Der goldene Topf« (note 30), 270.

³⁵ R. Steinlein (note 6), 75.