

E. T. A. HOFFMANN'S RECEPTION IN RUSSIA. By *Norman W. Ingham*.
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 lands, N. J. 07716.

This contribution to the literature on Hoffmann in Russia is the revision of a Harvard doctoral dissertation originally entitled "E. T. A. Hoffmann in Russia, 1822–1845." The original thesis title is much more descriptive of the character of the work, which is essentially an annotated documentation of the translations from Hoffmann and the critical articles devoted to him in Russia during the years between his death in 1822 and the arbitrary date of 1845. A brief supplementary note (p. 243) is included on work appearing after that date. This twenty-three-year period is divided (p. 12) into four phases: (1) first translations, 1822–29; (2) intense interest in Hoffmann, 1830–35; (3) Hoffmann seen as a serious artist, 1836–40; and (4) declining reputation, 1841–45. (The puzzling division of the thirties into two equal parts by descriptions that are hardly mutually exclusive is somewhat clarified in the corresponding chapters that follow, entitled respectively "The Emergence of Fantasy, 1830–1835" and "Hoffmann Reappraised, 1836–1840.") An appendix lists complete bibliographies of the Russian translations of Hoffmann and of the critical articles about him appearing in Russia in these years.

The volume is a useful catalog for the specialist, but there is some question about who else would be interested in reading it. The author, in his introduction, expresses a caution against "the excesses of the comparative method" (p. 12), and in this spirit he confines himself largely to accounts of published works, to detailed textual comparisons of translations, and to recapitulations of critical commentaries. For a reader to follow such a discussion with interest, he should come armed with, at minimum, a good and recent knowledge of Hoffmann's works. The author's summary retelling of stories is a largely futile, although perhaps unavoidable, effort.

Even more discouraging is the inclusion of very minor Russian authors, of interest here only because their work bears some relation to Hoffmann. For example, the section on Mel'gunov (1804–67) includes such statements as: "Mel'gunov was born in the provinces in 1804, . . ." (p. 153); and "[his] literary production has very little inherent value" (p. 164). When the discussion arrives at major Russian authors there are further disappointments. The connection between *Pikovaia dama* and Hoffmann turns out to be rather tenuous, an illustration of the larger fact that "the German's influence on Aleksandr Puškin did not extend far into the realm of ideas" (p. 140). Polevoi, although an admirer of Hoffmann, and Odoevskii, who has been called the "Russian Hoffmann," also offer largely negative or at least doubtful results in the hunt for important literary relationships. Even for Gogol, the author draws the cautious conclusion that he "was one of the few Russian writers of his period whose poetic vision actually seems to have been affected for a time by contact with E. T. A. Hoffmann" (p. 175). The final chapter, entitled "Lermontov," is devoted to the prose fragment of a projected novel, *Shtoss*, because "there is almost no trace of Hoffmann" (p. 251) in Lermontov's main work.

HERBERT E. BOWMAN
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