Men in Love with Artificial Women: E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman," Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives,* and their Film Adaptations

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This paper provides a new reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's romantic novella "Der Sandmann" and of Ira Levin's postmodernist SF thriller novel The Stepford Wives in the context of their film adaptations. The phenomenon of Pygmalionism and agalmatophilia has been traced from the Greek antiquity up to now and has been used as a net of significant analogies with literary works. Additionally, the occurrence of male attraction to artificial, non-responding female surrogates has been interpreted in the context of the diagnoses of Asperger's syndrome and narcissism. New insights about Hoffmann's novella could be gained in multiple intertextual, intermedial comparative procedures whereas Levin's novel has been critically put into relationship with another literary work for the first time. The comparison has shown interesting similarities between the two literary works, alerted to the intensification of sexual alienation problems in the course of time up to now, and has warned of disagreeable consequences of certain uncanny tendencies if reality-based and digital agalmatophilia continues.

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Men's tendencies to project their own expectations and images of 'perfect' female qualities on women surrounding them can be considered a universal patriarchal behavior pattern demanding from women to accept a redesign after the male masters' scheme. Possibly as a result of disappointment through encounters with unchanging female individuals who have been ready to rebel and defend postulates of feminism, male projections were replaced with a Pygmalion complex of inventing (or acquiring otherwise) substitute, artificial, non-responding female creatures (nowadays preferably made of platinum-based silicone). In case of celibate males (interested not in Eros, but only in agape), statues of Virgin Mary (having partly

the same status as Venus or Aphrodite, the "heavenly woman" of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Greek antiquity) could possibly provide harmony and contentment. If we review this phenomenon from the beginnings in the Greek myth and Ovid's tale up to so many examples in works of literature, theater, film, television, painting, ballet and opera up to now – we deal here with (predominantly) male technosexuals, "iDollators"[1] and lovers of sex robots (sexbots) – then we must come to the conclusion that this motif has proved to be a constant obsession in different art periods, style typologies, genres and media. The Pygmalionism (love for a self-created object) and agalmatophilia (sexual attraction to statues, dolls and similar figures in general) become thus eccentric (and socially still not widely accepted) variants of the general topic of man-to-woman love in general. Two authors and their recent book publications seem to be very relevant for the topic: George L. Hersey and Anthony Ferguson.

Hersey deals in his book *Falling in Love with Statues* (2009) with a history of the human beings' competition with God as the Great Life Architect to produce copies of creatures like themselves, to be used in religion, in everyday life, in arts, only for sex etc. According to him, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) contains the "perhaps the most famous of living statues" (3) – the Commendatore. Our present-day love of statues has its roots in the antiquity. Admetus promised his wife Alcestis to cherish the statue of her after her death (5). In the ancient Greece, the statues were "bathed, given change of clothes, and otherwise cared for as if they were living beings." (13) Moreover, the statues can "move, smile, weep, bleed, and so on, they usually do these things when their votaries have broken the rules. The statues' manifestations of life are intended to chastise." (15) Further, the ancient times were rather liberal with respect to bonding human beings and statues: "In short, real people could marry statues, statues could marry each other, and real people and statues could both be sacrificed." (86) Incredibly, according to Hersey, the "Enlightenment also believed that just Ovid's sort of physical transformation was scientifically possible." (90) Because it believed that the human body was a statue or a machine of clay (Descartes, La Mettrie, Diderot). In addition, we know

[1] Julie Beck (2013) reports about the "iDollator" called Davecat who defends his 'synthetic love' also in comparison with traumatic experiences of divorced men: "A friend of mine just got divorced after 17 years of marriage. That's an enormous investment of time, money, and emotion, and I'm not interested in having someone in my life who may bait at any time, or who transforms into someone unpleasant. Ultimately, getting romantically involved with an organic woman doesn't seem worth it to me." Similarly, Anthony Ferguson quotes a Paris doctor producing sex dolls in the beginning of the 20th century: "With my dolls there is never any blackmail, or jealousy, argument or illness… They are always ready, always compliant." (18)

that E. T. A. Hoffmann's Nathanael intended to put the wedding ring on Olimpia's finger[2] – but this is exactly what Hersey defines as statue marriage: "Pygmalion even puts a wedding ring on the statue's finger – yet another act of statue marriage." (117)

Ferguson's book *The Sex Doll* (2010) reminds the reader of the long history of the common man's interest in having sex with objects imitating human female: French and Spanish sailors of the 17th century with their artificial "dames de voyage" are just one example. The Japanese have always called the sex dolls "Dutch wives" because the Dutch East India Company sold them leather dolls "for the comfort of the crew." (27) It seems that even Rene Descartes traveled once to Sweden with a puppet called Francine (16). Indeed, already in "ancient literature and mythology, men wrote of the creation of artificial beings which would fulfill the role of sexual slaves." (14) Besides, dildos and various kinds of orifices have been used for millennia – we might say as simplest pars-pro-toto partners of lonely women and men in general. Further, Ferguson mentions Oskar Kokoschka who had a puppet copy of Alma Mahler: "For Kokoschka, the doll was not only a surrogate for Mahler, but she was, to his mind, a considerable improvement of the original. … Undoubtedly the creation of the doll was Kokoschka's response to his perceived emasculation at the hand of the real Alma Mahler." (20–21)

But there is also a psychoanalytic approach to the problem of men (constructing and) adoring (their own) artificial erections of female body. Various fictitious and reality-based Pygmalions could be regarded as introvert, "drooling geeks" who suffer from extreme isolation from normal social interactions. It is possible to draw significant parallels between two literary characters with similar symptoms (based on findings in relevant research publications up to now): E. T. A. Hoffmann's Nathanael and George Bernard Shaw's Henry Higgins. David Plant diagnosed narcissism in Shaw's world-famous character (one of the most distinguished Pygmalions of the world literature, indeed) along with the problem of the missing father (55) – which is similar, to say it in advance before a thorough interpretation in this paper, to E. T. A. Hoffmann's figure of Nathanael: "During the day, except at lunch, my brothers and sisters and I saw little of our father. He was no doubt heavily occupied with his duties." (Hoffmann 86) According to Plant, the character of Higgins is

[2] Of course, Nathanael is not conscious of the fact that Olimpia is no real girl for marriage. Only unconsciously and with the ironic knowledge of the reader, he is eager to enter into the statue marriage: "He looked for the ring which his mother had given him on his departure, so that he might present it to Olimpia as a symbol of his devotion and of the newly budding and blossoming life that he owed to her." (Hoffmann 113)

"choked by his narcissistic core" (56), it is "as if he has taken solace in the oral stage of development." (57) Further, he mentions "identity diffusion" and "lack of psychic solidity at the core of his personality." (57) On the other hand, Naomi Beeman detects in Hoffmann's Nathanael the symptom of "mad laughter:" "Nathanael opens his account by warning us that his narrating voice has been contaminated, and is no longer the index of a single, discrete object; he introduces himself as a kind of narrating puppet animated by mad laughter that exceeds him." (38) However, Shaw's Higgins shares this symptom in certain situations as well. At the end of the play, after being rejected by both his mother and Eliza, he roars with laughter. According to Rodelle Weintraub, "[u]proarious laughter is hardly an appropriate response to rejection but a very appropriate response to a successful experiment in which the feelings of the subject cannot be understood or appreciated." (391) Weintraub detects in Shaw's Higgins symptoms of a classic adult Aspergen: "[A]n Aspergen has difficulties in social interaction, lacks empathy, or has difficulties with it, has trouble with social role-taking and has unusual responses to the environment similar to those in autism." (389) Finally, both Shaw's Higgins and Hoffmann's Nathanael share asexual nature. Errol Durbach concludes that "Shaw's Pygmalion is asexual to the point of having nothing better to offer his Galatea than a strictly celibate form of female bachelorhood in his domestic employ." (24) Terence Dawson has similar conclusions about Hoffmann's Nathanael: "His eros is passive … He has a somewhat immature image of women." (50) Nathanael's sublimation of the libido brings him to esoteric 'higher principles,' but also to the state of inflation in the sense of C. G. Jung and he "acts as if he were a religious fundamentalist." (48) Nathanael's object of love seems to be not some Other, but he himself – due to the self-projection on the screen of the Other.[3]

The aim of this paper is to give new insights, interpretations and synthesis of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman* in relationship with Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* – and in the context of Eckhard Schmidt's film adaptation *Der Sandmann* (1992) as well of Bryan Forbes's 1975 and Frank Oz's 2004 film adaptations *The Stepford Wives*. There is a rich intertextual, intermedial field connecting the two pieces of literature and their film adaptations. In the first step, we concentrate solely on E. T. A. Hoffmann's novella *The Sandman*. In the second step, Ira Levin's novel *The Stepford Wives* will be analyzed, interpreted and compared with Hoffmann's work. German Romanticism and American postmodernism will show us here remarkable correspondences. In the third step, the comparison will be

[3] Cf. similar cases in Bethea (296, 299) and Salama (229–230, footnote 18).

expanded by condensed treatments of the film adaptations. Finally, the paper reaches concluding remarks based on the eye motif in the both literary pieces and their film adaptations.

On E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman"

Producing a female automaton can be a devilish endeavor, indeed. The (male) victims of infatuation with such an automaton seem to experience no happy ending, too. E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous novella depicts the fatal case of the student Nathanael who seems after several vacillations between the good and the evil to reach a finale in madness, attempt at murder and eventually suicide. He had the freedom of choice between a real, prosaic woman called Clara and the poetic, artificial, mechanical seduction called Olimpia. But his family inheritance – his father participated allegedly in alchemistic experiments conducted by a sinister advocate called Coppelius and was killed by an accident in the end – determines the final position of his life pointer in the field of what could be called in the old-fashioned way perdition.

The metaphysical context of producing a mechanical copy of a woman has been depicted in the novella approximately as a black mass in a private family house, to be more precise, in the father's study, starting after nine o'clock in the evening. Several ingredients merge to a frightful complex: the fictitious go-to-bed threat figure Sandman of Nathanael's childhood coinciding furthermore with the appearance of the advocate Coppelius – father's Mephistophelian master in numerous sinister nocturnal experiments – the Piedmontese barometer-seller and mechanic Giuseppe Coppola and finally the Cagliostro resembling Professor of Physics Spalanzani from Nathanael's study days. The character of Coppelius has an enormous attraction power. Nathanael's father used to metamorphose to a second Coppelius during the weird operations at night:

> My father, silent and frowning, took off his dressing-gown, and the two of them donned long black smocks. … All manner of strange instruments were standing around. Merciful heavens! As my old father bent down to the fire, he looked quite different. A horrible, agonizing convulsion seemed to have contorted his gentle, honest face into the hideous, repulsive mask of a fiend. He looked like Coppelius. (Hoffmann 90)

Nathanael's father was in "alliance with the devilish Coppelius." (92) Eventually, the author Hoffmann unites the Coppelius character with the Coppola character: "The voices howling and raving in such confusion

were those of Spalanzani and the horrible Coppelius. … The Professor had seized a female figure by the shoulders, while the Italian Coppola was holding it by the feet, and both were rugging at it for dear life." (113) Thus, the Association of Experimenting Men[4] in Hoffmann's novella has the following real (and non-real) members: Nathanael's father, the threat fiction called Sandman, the advocate Coppelius, the barometer-seller Coppola and Professor Spalanzani. This 'club' of odd fellows is led by Coppelius whose abominable physical appearance is described as follows:

> Imagine a big, broad-shouldered man with a massive, misshapen head, a pair of piercing, greenish, cat-like eyes sparking from under bushy grey eyebrows, and a large beaky nose hanging over his upper lip. His crooked mouth was often distorted in a malicious smile, and then a couple of dark red spots appeared on his cheeks, and a strange hissing sound proceeded from between his clenched teeth. Coppelius was always seen wearing an ash-grey coat of old-fashioned cut … His entire appearance was repellant and disgusting … He was a hateful, spectral monster, bringing misery, hardship, and perdition, both temporal and eternal, wherever he went. (Hoffmann 88–89)

The advocate Coppelius as the principal of all uncanny nocturnal experimentation projects combines two horrifying elements of his craft: firstly, reshaping the mechanism of human hands and feet by dislocating them and trying to put them into various sockets.[5] Nathanael reports about the most terrifying experience as follows: "[A] sudden convulsion shot through my nerves and my frame, and I felt nothing more." (91) According to Val Scullion, "[v]iolent movement and physical violation

[4] J. Wolff (56) mentions an anti-Christian secret society in the Francesco section of Hoffmann's novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels*. Francesco is a painter interested in the story of Pygmalion who paints St. Rosalia after the statue of Venus and feels afterwards uncontrollable passion for her. Francesco leads the secret society based on the principles of the Greek antiquity. The Stepford Men's Association of the 2004 film adaptation functions clearly as a secret society. Professor Spalanzani's explicite Cagliostro-looks move Hoffmann's men's association only indirectly into the category of conspiring men. The interest in alchemy and possibly producing a homunculus during nocturnal experiments seem to include the advocate Coppelius in this category as well. The chain of associations here could be concluded by mentioning Casanova, his contacts with secret societies and Donald Sutherland's acting in *Fellini's Casanova* (1976) where Casanova's character dances and has a sexual intercourse with the mechanical doll Rosalba at the Württemberg court (see the scene 2:06:29–2:13:06). He meets the doll Rosalba again at the end of the film.

[5] Ritchie Robertson focuses also on this detail and concludes that "Coppelius and Spalanzani represent the scientific attempt to usurp supreme authority by rivaling the Creator." (xx) After 'checking' Nathanael's joints, Coppelius has to admit that God ("The Old Man") made an excellent job in Creation. By contrast, Mr. Wellington – the Coppelius of *The Stepford Wives* (2004) – declares explicitly and atheistically: "We decided to become gods."

are often associated with miscreation, or creativity that is out of joint in Hoffmann's work." (10) Secondly, Coppelius seems to manipulate and extricate human eyes, both in strange apparitions and in reality of his ghastly experiments. Nathanael remembers this moment as follows: "It seemed to me that human faces were visible on all sides, but without eyes, and with ghastly, deep, black cavities instead." (Hoffmann 90) The eye motif extends on his relation with the realistic Clara, too. His dreams of standing at the altar with her are destroyed by Coppelius who "appears and touches Clara's lovely eyes, which leap into Nathanael's breast, burning and singeing him." (102) However, this scene is just another engineered optical artifice. Clara reveals him the truth: "[I]t wasn't my eyes that burned in your breast, but red-hot drops of your own heart's blood." (102) Here, the symbolisms of blood as the essential life liquid, of heart as life providing pump and of eyes as windows to the soul of every human being are blended. Nathanael is going to lose them all – and gain madness and death. After the automaton lover Olimpia has been destroyed by its brawling constructors Spalanzani and Coppola/Coppelius, its artificial eyes remain on the floor: "Spalanzani picked them up with his unscathed hand and threw them on Nathanael, so that they struck him on the chest. Madness seized him with its red-hot claws and entered his heart, tearing his mind to pieces." (114)

If Coppelius is a deceitful Mephistopheles changing appearances, then Nathanael is more Marlowe's Faust who experiences through his suicide the final Descent into Hell. Like his father, he is a victim of his obsession "with the delusive longing for higher wisdom." (94) He remained accessible to the influence of the "visible manifestation of a devilish power" (101) and to the instruments of optical deception – leading to misperception and misjudgment. Coppola – Coppelius's *doppelgänger* – was trying to sell him lorgnettes, spectacles, and finally small spyglasses while presenting them on the table:

> Innumerable eyes flickered and winked and goggled at Nathanael; but he could not look away from the table, and Coppola put more and more spectacles on it, and their flaming eyes sprang to and fro ever more wildly, darting their blood-red rays into Nathanael's breast … and produced from the side-pocket of his coat a number of large and small spyglasses. … He picked up a small, beautifully made pocket spyglass and tested it by looking out of the window. Never before in his life had he come across a spyglass that brought objects before one's eyes with such clarity, sharpness, and distinctness. (Hoffmann 105–106)

The Romantic irony veils here the fact that the sophisticated optical instrument functions more as a remote controller in the hands of the diabolic, malicious Coppelius than as an aid device for the amorous observer. Even

after he realized that he was in love with a female automaton Olimpia, the usage of the fatal spyglass in the company of his true love Clara reactivates mental disturbances and aggression toward Clara. Moreover, it triggers off the lethal abracadabra "Fiery circle, spin! Fiery circle, spin!" (118) for the last time – and "the gigantic figure of the advocate Coppelius" (ibid.) commands him subconsciously to jump over the parapet on the tower to the pavement.

Against the background of the interpretation up to now, it is obvious that Nathanael did not want to be in love with a female automaton. It was a consequence of his self-deception, his availability to dangerous metaphysical powers and due to external optical manipulation. What normal, 'prosaic' people perceived as abnormality, Nathanael misperceived as a beauty. But the beauty was not in the eye in the beholder, but in the lens of the disfiguring pocket telescope which transformed his state of mind into a complete lunacy. From the angle of optical falsification, the machine girl Olimpia appeared in Nathanael's eyes in the majority of moments more natural than all other women. He had certain doubts as well, uncanny feelings about her. Her eyes seemed to be dead, and her hand was "ice-cold: a shudder went through him like a hideous, deadly frost." (109) She danced in time to the music with too regular rhythmic time beats. Nevertheless, his positive impressions about her outward form outweighed the suspicions: "[A] tall, very slim woman, beautifully proportioned and magnificently dressed" (96–97), "he had never seen a more shapely woman." (105)

Nathanael's gaze through the magic small telescope transforms Olimpia's eyes to Romantic moonshine: "[H]e thought he saw moist moonbeams shining from Olimpia's eyes. … [H]er eyes seemed to sparkle more and more vividly." (106) Her appearances become magnetic and obsessive: "Olimpia's shape hovered in the air in front of him, stepped forth from the bushes, and looked at him with great radiant eyes from the clear water of the brook." (107) Moreover, Olimpia's looks pierce "his heart and set it afire" (108) and her singing causes the feeling "as though red-hot arms had suddenly seized him." (ibid.) She hypnotizes his mind and penetrates his soul – although she is merely a piano playing, shrill singing, 'oh! oh!'-repeating, fixedly staring, self-winding automaton. Nathanael projects his own exaggerated ideals about women onto this machine with "beautifully moulded features." (108) His Pygmalionesque situation comes to light when he stares "into Olimpia's eyes, which beamed at him full of love and yearning, and at that moment a pulse seemed to begin beating in her cold hand and her life's blood to flow in a glowing stream." (109)

His kiss "seemed to bring warmth and life to her lips." (110)[6] Basically, Nathanael projects his own quasi-artistic, falsely enthusiastic monologues onto Olimpia's silence: "[H]e felt as though Olimpia had voiced his own thoughts about his works and about his poetic gift in general; indeed, her voice seemed to come from within himself. This must indeed have been the case, for the only words Olimpia ever spoke were those that have just been mentioned." (112) Nathanael seems to be an autistic, narcissistic hermetic poet (more an epigone than an original writer) hovering in heavenly realms lacking the ability to differentiate between human beings and lifeless but convincing imitations of human beings, i.e. dolls – although his first impression about Olimpia was right: "[T]he beautiful statue: that was all." (105) He animated this moving statue in his own brain by intentionally accepting the optics of the magically negatively charged Coppola's telescope – and at the same time by intentionally rejecting the caring love of the real, 'prosaic' woman Clara whom he absurdly and reversely accuses of being "accursed lifeless automaton." (103)

E. T. A. Hoffmann's portrait of Clara appears to be the model of an unromantic, natural, down-to-earth woman who blocks any irrational, obscure, insane, mystical matters from approaching her mind. She could not stop Nathanael's infatuation with what turned out to be a mobile wax doll. She could not prevent his self-destruction. Therefore, the author Hoffmann signals the reader whom to identify with by concluding his novella with a *biedermeier*-fairy-tale happy ending for Clara:

> It is reported that several years later, in a distant part of the country, Clara was seen sitting hand in hand with an affectionate husband outside the door of a handsome country dwelling, with two merry boys playing in front of her. This would seem to suggest that Clara succeeded in finding the quiet domestic happiness which suited her cheerful, sunny disposition … (118)

Hoffmann's idyllic picture of family life in the countryside provokes a comparison of his work with Ira Levin's postmodernist thriller novel on male bonding groups' revenge on organized feminism – leading to the establishment of an elite high-tech association producing very good robotic copies of the association members' wives. Despite many differences, there are many interesting similarities, too.

[6] Cf. e.g. Douglas F. Bauer (12) who concentrates on the same process between Pygmalion and the nameless statue in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

From E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" to Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*

The fictitious town Stepford in Connecticut is the only place where the misogynistic, high-tech husbands take their wives to from metropolitan centers like New York City – with the holy grail to make adaptable, improved, more erotic, more hausfrau-like, almost perfect robotic copies of their too feministic wives who are afterwards being discarded without forensic traces and legal punishment whatsoever. In Ira Levin's 1972 novel the reader is deprived of the attitude of men from Hoffmann's novella *The Sandman*, in which the Olimpia automaton affaire produced an anti-machine revolt – and consequently a test procedure:

> In order to make sure that they were not in love with wooden dolls, several lovers demanded that their beloved should fail to keep time in singing and dancing, and that, when being read aloud to, she should sew, knit, or play with her pug-dog; above all, the beloved was required not merely to listen, but also, from time to time, to speak in a manner that revealed genuine thought and feeling. (Hoffmann 115)

E. T. A. Hoffmann's demonic, Sandman-like experimental scientists' group – Nathanael's father, Coppelius and his double Coppola, and Professor Spalanzani – has been expanded in Levin's anti-feminist dystopia with the Stepford Men's Association led by the character Dale Coba. It might be possible that his family name shares the same etymology of the Italian word 'coppo' ('eye-socket') with Hoffmann's characters Coppelius and Coppola. In addition, Dale Coba shares green eyes as a distinctive feature with Hoffmann's advocate Coppelius. He scrutinizes Joanna Eberhart, Levin's unfortunate Clara, in most sexist and cold-blooded way: "The tall black-haired one, laxly arrogant … He smiled at her with green eyes that disparaged her." (Levin 29) The green color of the eyes is nuanced and expanded by jade (bluish-green to yellowish-green): "Very cool in his jade turtleneck (matching his eyes, of course) and slate-grey corduroy suit. He smiled at her and said, 'I like to watch women doing little domestic chores.'" (35) In Levin's novel, there is no more a clear, distinct, modernist division between good and evil. Postmodernist characters wear the mask of benevolence and hide their inner malevolence. The victims of the postmodernist age seem to have no more a premonition of what has been camouflaged behind the disguise: "Coba looked at her – disparagingly. 'How little you know,' he said." (36) The veil of Christian pose seems to be especially hard to be seen through: "Joanna saw Dale Coba looking at her from a distance. He stood with a lamb in his arms, by a group of

men setting up a crèche near the Historical Society cottage. She nodded at him, and he, holding the live-looking lamb, nodded and smiled." (85) Joanna, who is going to be eventually exchanged for a new, patriarchally and erotically adjusted Stepford Olimpia automaton, learns in the newspaper archive that Coba had a great career in the Disneyland complex: "For the past six years he worked in 'audioanimatronics' at Disneyland, helping to create the moving and talking presidential figures featured in the August number of *National Geographic*." (112) Coba's Stepford Men's Association is a corporation proclaiming a false display of cause: "'The purpose of the association, Mr Coba says, is strictly social – poker, man-talk, and the pooling of information on crafts and hobbies.'" (111) The association is situated in a big house with a "great big fence." It has elite members, men who have high-level jobs and pool resources to succeed in exchanging their real feministic wives for robots adapted to patriarchal, neo-con consumerism. It is a robot factory. But who would expect it from looking at it: "But the Men's Association house, up on the hill, had a surprisingly comic look to it: a square old nineteenth-century house, solid and symmetrical, tipsily parasolled by a glistening TV antenna." (51) The men of the society pretend to undertake humanitarian actions e.g. in their Christmas-Toys project, and Joanna's husband Walter gives a bogus target group: "'The toys were for kids in the city, ghetto kids and kids in hospitals." (90) But to produce children's toys, no sophisticated facilities are needed like "[a]ll those fancy plants on Route Nine – electronics, computers, aerospace junk." (63) Behind the façade of relatively rich men watching sports, drinking beer and eating sandwiches, there is a very active misogynist conspiracy equipped with the latest robotic technology, owing a series of high-tech companies and sometimes polluting the air with an "odd medicinal smell." (50)

The robot-loving male society uses slow, cultured, likable procedures, which turn out to be fatal traps although initially seeming to be clumsy and innocent. The first phase consists in taking visual copies of a wife, and the second phase includes taking elaborate audio recordings of a selected list of words from the dictionary. For the occasion of taking visual details of eyes, face and the body figure of Joanna Eberhart, her husband Walter invited selected members of the association to his family house where there was a forced conversation conducted with the aim that draughtsman Ike Mazzard (possibly an allusion on Albert Vargas, pin-up artist) completes his sketches of the victim. But the whole process of visual duplication had an erotic undertone as well: "She felt suddenly as if she were naked, as if Mazzard were drawing her in obscene poses." (33) In the next step, Claude Axhelm appears to tape-record words and syllables, pretending it

to be a hobby for the purpose of determining geographical origin and mobility of newcomers to Stepford, with possible area of application in police work. Axhelm seems to suggest vaguely that recorded samples could be split into elementary items that could be manipulated for creating new 'recordings' that have nothing to do with the recorded original, which are then auditory simulacra produced technically:

> I'm going to feed everything into a computer eventually, each tape with its geographical data. With enough samples I'll be able to feed in a tape *without* data … maybe even a very *short* tape, a few words or a sentence – and the computer'll be able to give a geographical rundown on the person, where he was born and where he's lived. Sort of an electronic Henry Higgins.' (71)

In Ira Levin's novel there is no complete description of the production of robotic copies of wives after the stages of visual and acoustic duplication. However, Joanna's final realization that this could be a lucrative business based on perfect murder crimes makes the reader shudder: "What's the going price for a stay-in-the-kitchen wife with big boobs and no demands? A fortune, I'll bet. Or do they do it dirt cheap, out of that good old Men's Association spirit? And what happens to the real ones? The incinerator? Stepford Pond?" (120) The perfect crime is being committed when real wives are destroyed and replaced with artificial wife robots. The wife-to-robot-exchange operation takes place on free weekends to "rediscover each other" (58), weekends called "second-honeymoon time" (79), or "our weekend alone." (119) Stepford men kill their wives after they have copied major outward characteristics, and added desired new ones to have perfect sexy hausfrau robots. They are conspirators united for committing perfect murders and for the production of perfect surrogate dolls. Joanna Eberhart's murder occurs in the lights of Christmas twinkles, surrounded by "[s]hapes darker than the darkness" (126) lying sarcastically about their true intentions: "'My gosh,' the short man said, 'we don't want *robots* for wives. We want real women.'" (127) Her husband Walter is a lying lawyer – leading away from truth, with the pretence of talking sensibly, acting on two levels: pretending good intentions and actually performing crimes. Joanna's cognizance comes actually too late: "'You've been lying to me ever since I took my first picture.'" (119) He is calling Dale Coba to "tell him she was there. Proceed with plans. All systems go … not sure I can handle her myself…'" (122) In the Christmas culture with crèches, nobody notices victims in the shadows of the holidays.

Joanna realized the whole plot too late. She allowed to be brainwashed by false good intentions of her destroyers: "She was wrong, she knew it. She was wrong and frozen and wet and tired and hungry, and pulled eigh-

teen ways by conflicting demands." (130) She was eliminated under the protection of noisy, louder and louder rock music: "Frank hipped from side to side with the beat of the loud rock music." (134) She was deceived by the smiling copy of her deceased friend Bobby – "Beautiful bosomy Bobby." (132)

However, who cares? The majority can be hypnotized with dance trance, with messages to enjoy sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. Joanna's corpse could be annihilated by using anyone of numerous high-tech body dissolution techniques. By having committed perfect serial killers' crime, the members of the Stepford Men's Association seem to have achieved their aim of perfection – ideally designed female robots – who, in addition, are unrivalled super-orgasmic sexual partners, which was humorously accomplished in both film adaptations of *The Stepford Wives* (1975 and 2004). Hoffmann's Olimpia's sighing "oh, oh!" has been updated and expanded by shouting compliments for tremendous love making of their 'husbands.' Anything they want to hear.[7]

In part Three of Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* we finally meet Joanna's immaculate robot copy haufrau: "[L]ooking terrific in tightly belted pale blue coat. She had a fine figure …, her dark hair gleaming in graceful drawn-back wings … [and she had] thick-lashed brown eyes. … Her bow lips were red, her complexion pale rose and perfect." (136) Thus, she joined the Stepford Club of Artificial Women constructed upon real models who disappeared without a trace. She is one of the smiling hausfraus with "fantastic boobs," robots that can drive cars, "so real-looking that the kids wouldn't notice." (127) The Joanna robot becomes what Joanna Eberhart diagnosed months ago about all of the Stepford wives: they are like "actresses in commercials, pleased with detergents and floor wax, with cleaners, shampoos, and deodorants. Pretty actresses, big in the bosom but small in the talent, playing suburban housewives unconvincingly, too nicey-nice to be real." (49) They are robots having problems with acquiring complete vocabulary. They do not think and do not talk the same like their originals. Stepford metamorphoses to a Zombieville (65), a town with general blandness and entropy, a place inhabited with female machines, children and ghastly Pygmalionesque husbands. Children are preoccupied with Sony devices, Disneyland broadcasts and animated figures of celebrities in various programs. If their mothers have become robots, it

[7] In *The Stepford Wives* (1975) we hear the following erotic moanings of the robot surrogate Cornell: "Nobody ever touched me the way you touch me. Oh, you're the best, Frank. Oh, you are the champion, Frank! Oh, you're the master!" In *The Stepford Wives* (2004) the nano-chip-modified Sarah Sunderson enjoys lovemaking with her husband and groans similarly: "Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, make me beg! Yeah. Oh, I'm so lucky. Uh-huh. Oh… oh!"

is no problem for them: then they can serve them and please them as well. In 1972, when Ira Levin published his novel, the dangers were not on the same level as today. Anthony Ferguson claims that we are living "in an increasingly narcissistic society, driven by new technologies." (58) Cybersex, teledildonics, technosexuality, CGI design and digital pornography could possibly have grave consequences on new generations of lonely introverts chained to their desks and bureau chairs.

Der Sandmann and two versions of *The Stepford Wives* as film adaptations

In Ira Levin's novel there is a reality test proposed by Joanna's abductors who use it as a trap to lead her to the place were she was to be killed – at the place of her perished friend Bobby and now the place of her robot copy. The test consists in cutting a person on the finger and checking if the person bleeds. The 1975 film adaptation of *The Stepford Wives* does not use this idea. Instead, the 1975 Joanna character stabs the Bobby robot at the abdomen – causing it damage with the consequence that the Bobby robot starts moving around uncontrollably and repeats the following sentences: "How could you do a thing like that? When I was just going to give you coffee. I thought we were friends." (01:38:45 – 01:39:47) Similarly, the 2004 Bobby robot character in the same situation does not feel pain while burning its fingers at the cooker gas fire. The nano-chip-modified copy became heat-resistant.

However, Eckhart Schmidt uses Ira Levin's idea in his adaptation of E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman." The Olimpia character does not bleed. It seems that a white powder is being released upon cutting her finger. Let us here summarize the film story. Schmidt's Nathanael has been renamed as Daniel, and he travels with his girlfriend Clara first to Gardone Riviera in the Province of Brescia (Lombardy), then to Venice and to Rome. Schmidt changed Hoffmann's story: during the nocturnal experiments the perfect gynoid Olimpia was created, but Coppola was killed in the accident, and Daniel's father survived the experiment – but has lived with the identity of Coppola. Daniel is no introvert, but an extrovert who enjoys lovemaking. His personality has no traces of narcissism or Asperger's syndrome. The whole affair there serves as an opportunity to finally meet his father and to achieve reconciliation with him – although he hurts him fatally in a fight. The unique robot gynoid Olimpia enjoys sex with Daniel proving that all of her "body" parts function well. Only Olimpia's wounding on the staircase provokes Daniel's doubts – because his lover appar-

ently does not bleed. Daniel is shocked and becomes paranoid: he believes that Olimpia is a surveillance machine. However, Olimpia shows readiness to sacrifice her life to prove Daniel her love: she destructs parts of her leg, and Daniel continues with ruining her innards and finally takes her heart out of the mechanical body. Olimpia could show love, she could breathe, but she could not feel pain which could have signaled Daniel to stop with the destruction. Olimpia's eyes were like stars, and now she lies dead like a saint on the bier. Afterwards, the pensive Daniel joins Clara in Venice on St. Mark's square full of doves, accompanied by appropriately solemn, emotional film music. The good, lovable Olimpia, who preached tolerance and mutual acceptance of different creatures, has deserved such a corona, indeed.

The aggressiveness of an extremist kind of feminism, like it is the case in the 2004 adaptation of *The Stepford Wives*, could be a reason for the exaggerated (though fictitious in this case) rebellious male conspiracy. Here the men produce perfectly passive (and sexually submissive) copies of their 'castrating' spouses. The Walter character warns the Joanna character here not to wear black: "Only high-powered, neurotic, castrating Manhattan career bitches wear black. Is that what you wanna be?" The only reason why this film adaptation has a happy ending is the readiness of the couple Walter and Joanna to reconcile, to admit mutually one's own faults ("Maybe I've become the wrong kind of woman."), and to unite in subversion of the "Stepford program." Unlike in the 1975 film adaptation, where real women are exchanged for robots, here the independent, successful feminist shrews are being exposed to a most sophisticated, radio-controlled, nano-chips enabled brain and body changes in the "Female Improvement System." Walter pretends to be part of the male conspiracy – and ruins the program designed by Mrs. Wellington – "the world's foremost brain surgeon and genetic engineer," the Frankensteinian scientist of the film who designed her perfect male robot! – causing the restoration of original personality of all nano-chip-modified, perfect women. This film adaptation suggests that in the man-to-woman relations it is not about perfection, but about readiness to be tolerant, to discuss problems and to make compromises. The aim should not be to make robotic or silicone copies of partners having problematic characteristics – except in rare cases just as temporary jokes.

Problems with the eyes of the artificial lovers – and some concluding remarks

E. T. A. Hoffmann's Clara is a character with excellent features. The narrating instance of Hoffmann's novella cannot ignore her "lovely smile." (Hoffmann 99) And adds that poets and musicians were filled with admiration: "How can we look at the girl without perceiving wondrous, heavenly sounds and songs radiating from her gaze and penetrating and vivifying our very hearts?" The beauty of her soul radiated through her eyes and then warmed all good people. By contrast, Hoffmann's Olimpia was eventually reduced to a lifeless doll. Nathanael "had perceived only too clearly that Olimpia's deathly pale wax face had no eyes, just black caverns where eyes should be." (114) She was a form of punishment for his behavior and for his wrong decisions. Nathanael had fears that Coppelius might pluck his eyes. Sigmund Freud interpreted it in his famous essay on the uncanny as fear of castration. However, Scullion allows the reading that the loss of eyes is "also suggestive of a dysfunctional body, which could be taken as a potent motif for a struggling writer." (2) He is hypnotized by experimenters with mesmeric powers who seek to destroy him in the end – and this includes even taking his soul and Descent into Hell. Theologically speaking, losing the eyes might include the meaning of losing of the 'soul' as well.

In the final scene of Bryan Forbes' 1975 film adaptation, Joanna Eberhart approaches her robotic copy having no normal human eyes at all. The 'replicant' approaches the original and strangles Joanna, which we must assume from what the artificial creature holds in her hands. The completed robotic copy doll – ex-Joanna – is then seen in the supermarket having at least a good copy of normal human eyes. The Stepford Men's Association seems to have been forced to pluck the eyes and make some kind of functional copies of them for the sex doll hausfraus. Ira Levin did not have this idea in his book. Bryan Forbes' film team created a genial addition in this film adaptation. In one film scene, Frank Oz also played with the idea of dead, artificial black eyes in the copy of the female body with its strange eye-sockets, but this could be considered a mistake – since in his adaptation all women underwent a metamorphosis due to a nanochip, radio-controlled intervention to their brain, without making physical duplicates of female victims.

To conclude, the present investigation has shown that Pygmalionism and agalmatophilia are 'eternal' phenomena (and, at the same time, deviations) in the human kind. To produce copies of woman and/or to be attracted to them Platonically or erotically constitutes an uncanny situation.

Moreover, this process might seem to be an offence to the first, divine Creator – or, in other words, an act of Mephistophelian challenge. The (unconscious) agalmatophilia of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Nathanael has been realized as a consequence of a metaphysical and optical deception within the framework of the Romantic irony. On the other hand, the commercialized, robotic Pygmalionism of Ira Levin's male characters gives the impression of a horrible intensification of the behavior aberration on a massive scale.

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Moški, zaljubljeni v umetne ženske: »Peščeni mož« E. T. A. Hoffmanna, *Stepfordske ženske* Ire Levina in njune filmske priredbe

Ključne besede: literatura in film / ljubezen / pigmalionizem / agalmatofilija / Hoffmann, E. T. A: »Peščeni mož« / Levin, Ira: *Stepfordske ženske* / filmske priredbe

Hoffmannova novela in Levinov roman zelo podobno ustvarjata grozljive okoliščine, v katerih moški, povezani v sovražni zaroti, proizvajajo nadomestke žensk. Avtor v uvodu na kratko predstavi pojava pigmalionizem in agalmatofilija od časov antične Grčije do danes. Sklicuje se tudi na deli Georga Herseya *Falling in Love with Statues* (2009) in Anthonyja Fergusona *The Sex Doll* (2010). Uvodni del sklene s primerjavo med Henryjem Higginsom G. B. Shawa in Hoffmannovim Nathanaelom v kontekstu relevantnih psihoanalitičnih teorij. Interpretacija Hoffmannove novele poudarja ambivalentnost in metafizični determinizem glavnega junaka, ki je dovzeten za zapeljevanje mračnih, mefistovskih sil. Umetna ženska Olimpia se izkaže kot usodna Galateja. Interpretacija Levinovega romana izpostavi podobnosti s Hoffmannovim besedilom. Pigmalionizem je tu mogočno, kruto visoko tehnološko tržišče za izbrane moške, ki ne dopušča možnosti za upor. Avtor v tretjem delu članka obravnava filmske priredbe omenjenih literarnih del. Eckhard Schmidt je v svoji priredbi Hoffmannove novele uporabil idejo krvnega testa iz Levinovega romana in ustvaril novo, mirno in spravljivo (morda trivialno) inačico zgodbe. Bryan Forbes je s svojo priredbo ustvaril primer razmeroma zveste intermedialne transformacije s posrečenimi dodatki, ki intenzivirajo Levinovo distopijo. Frank Oz pa s svojo priredbo ustvarja komično različico izvirnika. Motiv oči je prisoten v obeh literarnih delih in v vseh filmskih priredbah. Sijoče, prijazne človeške oči so v kontrastu z umetnimi nadomestki v praznih, temnih očesnih votlinah.