



Journal of European Periodical Studies

an online journal by ESPRit, European Society for Periodical Research

Review of Volker Mergenthaler, *Garderobenwechsel:
'Das Fräulein von Scuderi' in Taschenbuch,
Lieferungswerk und Journal (1819–1871)* (2018)

Charlotte D'Eer

Journal of European Periodical Studies, 5.2 (Winter 2020)

ISSN 2506-6587

Content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Licence

The *Journal of European Periodical Studies* is hosted by Ghent University

Website: ojs.ugent.be/jeps

To cite this article: Charlotte D'Eer, 'Review of Volker Mergenthaler, *Garderobenwechsel:
'Das Fräulein von Scuderi' in Taschenbuch, Lieferungswerk und Journal (1819–1871)*
(2018)', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 5.2 (Winter 2020), 95–97

Reviews

Volker Mergenthaler, *Garderobenwechsel: 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi' in Taschenbuch, Lieferungswerk und Journal (1819–1871)*, vol. 2 of *Das Pfennig-Magazin zur Journalliteratur* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2018). 76 pp. ISBN 9783865256430

Mergenthaler's study is the second volume of *Das Pfennig-Magazin*, a series of publications connected to the research group 'Journalliteratur' [Periodical Literature] at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in Germany, which explores German-language periodical and book literature of the long nineteenth century, with a specific focus on intertextuality and an international approach. The entire series refers to the publication of *Das Pfennig-Magazin*, which was the first weekly German-language penny magazine and ran from 1833 to 1855. The rationale for this title is twofold. First, the publishers hint at an overarching theme as *Das Pfennig-Magazin* was the first German-language periodical to combine text and image. By doing so, they foreground a material philological approach as the entire series is dedicated to the way in which materiality and text inform, shape, and change the periodical publication and with it our reading experiences. Second, the cover is an indication of the time frame in which to situate the periodical research. All studies consider stories or novellas within the periodical context of the long nineteenth century.

This particular study is part of a subproject entitled 'Optische Auftritte: *mise en page* in Journal- versus Buchliteratur' [Optical Appearances: *Mise en Page* in Periodical versus Book Literature] and brings together contributions on different media formats, the importance of visual design, and the reception history of publications. Mergenthaler's study focuses on the different publication formats of E. T. A. Hofmann's famous novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* [*Mademoiselle de Scudéri*]. Originally published in 1819 in

Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1820. Der Liebe und Freundschaft gewidmet [Yearbook for 1820. Dedicated to Love and Friendship], the story was reprinted seventeen times between 1819 and 1871.

As Mergenthaler observes in the introduction, previous scholarship on Hofmann's story is primarily interested in its first publication, thereby not taking into account the different remediations of the text. In contrast, Mergenthaler traces the publication history of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* while paying attention to different media formats. More specifically, Mergenthaler discusses the publication process of the story as it was printed in book format, in anthologies, and in different periodicals and newspapers. As a result, the reader gains valuable insight into the circulation, dissemination, and distribution of the text as it was printed and reprinted throughout the nineteenth century.

The study is divided into nine short chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter engages with a different media format and explores different research questions aligned to the format. Whereas Chapter Three on book form discusses the aesthetic value of the printed story, Chapter Four, for instance, focuses on the serialized publication of the story in the Viennese newspaper *Der Sammler*. Moreover, Mergenthaler's study includes a useful appendix containing detailed chronological information on every publication format of *Fräulein von Scuderi* between 1819 and 1871 in a German-language context. This reveals Mergenthaler's inclusive approach as he also discusses *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* in Viennese and Prague newspapers, thereby

including the Habsburg Monarchy. In addition, a brief mention of a French translation of *Fräulein von Scuderi* in Chapter Eight raises new questions on the international dissemination of Hofmann's tale across language boundaries and the impact of publication processes in a European context.

Mergenthaler's study sheds new light on the readers' experience, an underexplored subject in the field of periodical studies. Throughout the detailed account of Hofmann's novella, Mergenthaler asks more general questions, such as: What does it entail to read a story in book form in one sitting versus reading it as it is in instalments printed among many different stories? How does a reading of Goethe's *Die neue Melusine*, for example, printed in the same periodical issue affect our experience of reading *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*? Furthermore, the author discusses how the aesthetic aspects of a periodical can attract the reader's attention. For example, the inclusion of copper engravings in a publication is seen as an editorial strategy that is meant to boost sales.

The emphasis on the reception history of the story is mirrored by the design of the *Pfennig-Magazin* series. Beautifully printed by Wehrhahn Verlag as small booklets with the look and feel of a periodical, the reader experiences the impact of materiality first-hand. As a result, the strength of Mergenthaler's study is not just in the analysis itself, it is also in the publication format. The volume also offers various illustrations of the different media formats, including various photographs of illustrations, periodicals, journals, and books. This makes Mergenthaler's conclusions on reading experience more tangible and poignant. More concretely, he explores not only how different media formats result in different reading experiences, but also invites the reader to reflect critically on materiality. Furthermore, he argues that 'Medienkomparatistik' [a media-comparative approach] enhances the

aesthetic, educational, literary-political, or nationalistic perspectives on the text. He also discusses the effects of the smallest details such as run-through pages or the quality of printing paper.

This study also considers the relation between Hofmann's novella and the context in which it was printed. Mergenthaler shows that it matters where, when, and how a text is printed and he uncovers the different reading spaces in German areas, including Berlin cafés and Viennese coffee houses as well as the way in which a theatre performance of the story is perceived by journals. Furthermore, Mergenthaler includes information on the different printing and publishing professions such as the complex but important task of bookbinders and the negotiations and conversations between publishers, printers, and editors. In addition, this study reflects on the interrelation of content and the printing process. Mergenthaler skilfully investigates how the storyline of one of the protagonists, Cadillac, a goldsmith who reflects on the careful selection of gemstones, is metaphorically transferred onto the editorial selection process of the publisher of *Taschenbuch*. It is in such details that the study shows the importance of paratextual aspects such as the lay-out and formatting of serialized or other publications.

Although Mergenthaler's study presupposes knowledge on Hofmann's novella as part of the collective memory of German culture, the analysis is valuable beyond a German-speaking academic audience familiar with *Fräulein von Scuderi*. His analysis can be useful for master students as well, and function as an educational tool in media studies, periodical studies, or general courses on literary studies interested in the publication history of Hofmann's story or the importance of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* as a material object. In line with recent scholarship in periodical studies, which increasingly explores the material form of serialized publications, Mergenthaler's main achievement lies in a detailed

REVIEWS

analysis of the publication process of E. T. A. Hofmann's novella. This meticulous and richly documented study shows how one story can raise a myriad of questions on the material form, without underestimating the importance of detail.

Charlotte D'Eer
Ghent University