



*Unsere Klassiker, vieles darunter weitergereicht von Hans, Aurikel und Nora (inklusive die mehrbändige, mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Lesarten von Carl Georg von Maassen und mit Bildbeigaben und Faksimile versehene historisch-kritische Ausgabe von E. T. A Hoffmann).*

I do like how well E.T.A. Hoffmann depicts the peculiarly ambiguous feelings about crime -- grief if one is its victim, fear if one may be its victim, the rise of a mob mentality against the perpetrators, pity and horror, and on the other hand a certain callous sensationalist interest. But, as far as I remember, he doesn't describe the sensationalist interest. I, as the reader, do experience it, not about the murders so much as about the resolution of the identity of the murderer. Yet I wasn't callous enough not to be quite uncomfortable when the Mademoiselle remarked, à propos of the men who feared being murdered as they brought jewels to their mistresses, "A lover who fears thieves is not worthy of love." (The whole situation seems so absurd anyway. I'd say that a mistress who cannot do without jewellery, or a lover who believes that he must supply her with it, even

at the threat of his life, is a very stupid person indeed. The sensible thing would have been to give other presents, like paintings, flowers, or good books -- if the lady could read.)

The author's views on crime and justice appeal to me very much in general. He particularly stresses that one must not use excessive and indiscriminate force against crime. At the same time he makes one feel the gravity of crime unusually clearly, without a trace of ghoulish interest or prying. I think that one major flaw of murder mysteries is that the enormity of murder is not portrayed clearly enough. This doesn't mean that I want to see or read about sobbing family members. Not only is that extremely insensitive, I also think that it doesn't accurately convey their situation anyway. As I understand it, the effects of bereavement often go beyond sorrow; the loss of a friend or family member can severely change the bereaved person's relations to other people, ability to live his normal life, and even his character in general. What I do mean is that, even if the deceased was unpleasant, his death should still be shown to be a horrid event, not through dramatic depictions of it so much as through a sober tone. As for humour, it may be a coping mechanism, but if one is only reading about a crime and not experiencing it, there is nothing to cope with, so the mechanism is, in my view, superfluous.

*Edith, from "Tales of Felons ..." in: Hermitologies, 19 August 2007*

## Against Savagery

In these days of September the German Parliament is discussing how to proceed with its military engagement in Afghanistan. A remark of Dan Milner should be brought up. It is hidden in "A Bonnie Bunch of Roses - Songs of England, Ireland & Scotland",