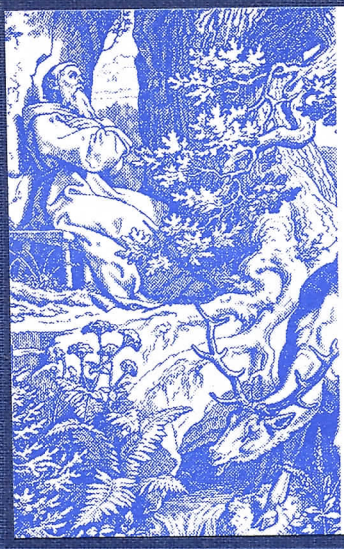

E.T.A. HOFFMANN AND THE SERAPIONTIC PRINCIPLE

Critique and Creativity

HILDA MELDRUM BROWN

E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Serapiontic Principle

Critics have long sought to elucidate the multilayered texts of E. T. A. Hoffmann by applying to them a particular set of theories and ideas that Hoffmann himself subsumed under the heading of the "Serapiontic Principle." This principle, which Hoffmann expounded in his collection of tales *Die Serapionsbrüder*, involves a complex intersection of the artist's faculties of imagination and perception. However, Hoffmann's mode of presenting his theory presents an unusual problem: rather than the usual form of an essay or treatise, he adopts a fictional framework, complete with a set of "characters"; this in turn sets up a number of perspectives on the theory itself. This combination of literary and theoretical elements presents a severe challenge to critics, and not surprisingly there has been little agreement about what the "principle" actually entails or its wider relevance. With the principle as prime focus, this book provides detailed analysis of a broadly based selection of Hoffmann's texts, both theoretical and literary. It offers new perspectives on his narrative invention and the range of his theoretical interests, thus redefining his place at the forefront of German Romanticism.

Hilda Meldrum Brown is professor of German at St Hilda's College, University of Oxford.

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Serapiontic Principle

Critique and Creativity

Hilda Meldrum Brown

CAMDEN HOUSE

First published 2006
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN: 1–57113–348–8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brown, H. M. (Hilda Meldrum)
E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Serapiontic principle: critique and creativity / Hilda Meldrum Brown.
p. cm. — (Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1–57113–348–8 (hardcover: alk. paper)
1. Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus), 1776–1822. Serapions–Brüder 2. Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus), 1776–1822 — Technique. 3. Frame-stories — History and criticism. I. Title. Series.
PT2360.S5B76 2006
833′.6–dc22

2006020518

Cover illustration: *Einsiedler's Gedanken*, woodcut by Kaspar Oertel of original drawing by Joseph Ritter von Führich. By kind permission of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

For ABZ

Contents

Illustrations

Preface

THIS STUDY OFFERS A NEW ANGLE on the works of the great Romantic writer, composer, and eminent judge, E. T. A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann's status — especially in the Anglo-Saxon world — has been overdetermined by images emanating from such sources as operetta and ballet. He has been regarded mainly as a quaint eccentric with a penchant for paranoid "gothic" characters and spooky, sensationalist scenarios. Conversely, in his native country Hoffmann has been hailed as a leading practitioner of postmodernist theory. The writers of numerous highly technical monographs have strayed ever further away from their starting point in his fiction and failed to demonstrate his breadth and skill as a writer and thinker.

By focusing attention on the collection entitled *Die Serapionsbrüder* I have two aims in mind: first, I wish to demonstrate the coherence and consistency with which Hoffmann puts forward a series of interconnected ideas about the creative process and its reception that add up to a highly individual, if unorthodox, "Poetics." It is amazing to find how dismissive (or blind) many commentators have been about this important aspect of Hoffmann's *oeuvre* and how this lack of awareness has often distorted readings of the Tales. Hoffmann was a leading spirit in German Romanticism, which, as a powerful literary movement, was unique within the European context for its close connection to contemporary philosophical ideas, and which strongly influenced English literature (for example, Coleridge). Hoffmann adapts the "symphilosophizing" tendencies of Novalis and the Schlegel brothers (many of whose ideas he shares), which he transforms into a more relaxed, less intense, but nevertheless seriously informed preoccupation with the implications of idealist philosophy for artistic creativity. Second, such an emphasis on Hoffmann's theoretical interests and developing "Poetics" sheds new light on many of his Tales that have tended to be ignored. I have focused attention on the *Serapionsbrüder* collection, not only because this provides the main exposition of these ideas, but because it contains a number of fine but often neglected works that benefit conspicuously from being associated with Hoffmann's theories and with the frame narrative. These include *Die Fermate, Doge und Dogaresse, Meister Martin der Küfner, Das fremde Kind*, and *Die Königsbraut*.

Acknowledgments

IT IS A PLEASURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE my debt of gratitude to several colleagues. Foremost among these is Professor Jeremy Adler (King's College, University of London) who has supported this venture throughout and generously shared his extensive knowledge of the philosophical background in German idealism, which I believe to have underpinned much of Hoffmann's thinking about aesthetics. His suggestions for the chapter entitled "Der Einsiedler Serapion" were invaluable. I have also profited from the expertise of Professor Reinhard Strohm (Oxford), who read the two chapters on Hoffmann and music and made valuable suggestions. A special word of thanks is due to librarian colleagues in Bamberg, Berlin, and Oxford: Prof. Dr. Bernhard Schemmel (Head Librarian, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg and President of the E. T. A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft) put his unrivaled knowledge of Hoffmann bibliography and iconography at my disposal, and Frau Irmgard Hoffmann of the Staatsbibliothek Bamberg was unstinting in her practical advice and help during my visits to the Hoffmann-Arbeitszimmer in the Staatsbibliothek. My thanks are also due to Frau Dr. Jutta Weber (Department of Manuscripts, Staatsbibliothek Berlin) and to Dr. Jörg Petzel (Berlin) for helpful discussions. At the Oxford end, Ms. Jill Hughes of the Taylorian Library was indefatigable in pursuing obscure references and answering bibliographical queries.

I am grateful to the AHRB for funding that enabled me to take an extra term's research leave, and to St. Hilda's College and the Faculty of Modern Languages, University of Oxford, for assisting me with travel grants.

Hilda Meldrum Brown
Oxford, January 2006

Abbreviations

AMZ *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. Leipzig [Oct. 1798–28 Dec. 1848].

DVjS *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. Stuttgart, 1927–.

ETAHJb *E. T. A. Hoffmann-Jahrbuch* (Mitteilungen der E. T. A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft New Series). Ed. Hartmut Steinecke, et al. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1993–.

HSW E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke in sechs Bänden* (in 7 volumes). Ed. Hartmut Steinecke and Wulf Segebrecht (with Gerhard Allroggen, Friedhelm Auhuber, Hartmut Mangold, and Ursula Segebrecht). Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2004.

Includes the following volumes cited with abbreviations:

HSW/FP *Frühe Prose, Werke 1794–1813*. Vol. 1 (2003).

HSW/FS *Fantasiestücke, Werke 1814*. Vol. 2/1 (1993).

HSW/E *Die Elixiere des Teufels, Werke 1814–1816*. Vol. 2/2 (1988).

HSW/NS-B *Nachstücke, Klein Zaches, Prinzessin Brambilla, Werke 1816–1820*. Vol. 3 (1985).

HSW/SB *Die Serapionsbrüder*. Vol. 4 (2001).

HSW/KM *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr, Werke 1820–1821*. Vol. 5 (1992).

HSW/SW *Späte Prosa, Briefe, Tagebücher, Werke, Aufzeichnungen, Juristische Schriften 1814–1822*. Vol. 6 (2004).

KSA *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler et al. Paderborn, Zurich: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1958–.

MHG *Mitteilungen der E. T. A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft e. V.* (1955–1992) Old Series.

RD *Romantik in Deutschland*, Sonderband to *DVjS* (1978). Ed. Richard Brinkmann.

Introduction: Approaches to the Serapiontic Principle

THE SERAPIONTIC PRINCIPLE is a term much bandied about in Hoffmann criticism. However, as a concept or critical tool it has not found wide-spread acclaim nor been deemed to have much application to Hoffmann's literary works, let alone much relevance outside these. Even when it is invoked, there is little agreement about its precise meaning, nor have there been serious attempts to unravel its multifaceted exposition. Some are disposed to deny its importance altogether and complain of muddled presentation on Hoffmann's part;[1] others[2] are skeptical about the meaningfulness of terms such as "inneres" or "wirkliches Schauen." Few, if any, seem to wish to extend its scope beyond the literary to fields like the visual arts and music. It is my intention in this book to clarify Hoffmann's theory and to show its relevance to a large portion of his creative output. Because for Hoffmann the process of reception is, as we shall see, closely linked to the creative process itself, this scrutiny may produce some new insights into the narrative works and the seriousness of Hoffmann's purpose as a contributor to the Romantic program.

There are good reasons for the neglect and misunderstanding with which the Serapiontic Principle has been received. Hoffmann's was one of the most acute, perceptive, and wide-ranging critical minds of his generation, not only in the realm of prose fiction and narrative but also in that of musical criticism, in which he was a pioneer, writing regular reviews of compositions by the leading composers of the day in the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. His most celebrated review — of Beethoven's Symphony No.5 in C Minor — is still referred to admiringly by musicologists. Both this and other reviews, such as that of the Overture and Incidental Music to Goethe's *Egmont*, achieve a level of musical analysis that was technically advanced for its day, combining detailed harmonic analysis with general observations on the process of reception and the effects on the listener produced by great works of art.[3] Likewise, the discussions in *Die Serapionsbrüder* (1819–21) that address particular examples of prose narrative open up at many points a range of analytical perspectives not only on contemporary literature but on the connecting links between the different art forms. As we shall see, it is the Serapiontic Principle that gives focus and depth to these speculations. But in his attempt to follow the debate on such matters that accompanies the tales in *Die Serapionsbrüder*, the reader is confronted with a major difficulty, not

normally encountered in critical writing about the arts. For Hoffmann situates the discussions themselves within a fictional context by developing an extremely elaborate frame, complete with a set of characters, all equipped with their own distinctive personalities and perspectives, to the point where, on a superficial reading, these might seem to verge on the contradictory.[4] The reader is in fact being challenged to develop a new way of assimilating and appraising multi-stranded discursive arguments that accompany the tales themselves.

If he had chosen, Hoffmann could have presented his highly illuminating and continually developing insights into the creative process and narrative art by means of a more traditional form, say the essay format or even series of aphorisms, a form of presentation that had been brought to a high point by theorists and philosophers such as Lichtenberg, but had also been favored by the early Romantics Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, with whose works he was familiar. In this format one can imagine that Hoffmann's "Poetology" might have possibly acquired a more clearly defined and respectable status among theorists, and his reputation as an original thinker on aesthetic matters and his considerable contribution to the Romantic debate might have been more appreciated — or noticed. As it is, however, Hoffmann abjured all traditional or formal modes of presenting theoretical ideas on literature. Following the tradition of the second generation of Romantics, to which he (loosely) belongs, he opted for a more informal presentation. Insofar as other members of this group produced aesthetic theories at all (and they were much less inclined to do so than their predecessors) they favored the dialogue form as a vehicle for the presentation of ideas, an especially interesting example of this being the much favored "gallery dialogue" (see below, p. 136). This form can be regarded as an extension of the philosophical dialogue (most familiar to us, perhaps, in the format used by Plato), but it had also been used occasionally by the Jena Romantics, notably the Schlegels and Tieck, mainly for satirical purposes, alongside other forms of presentation, and in Romantic hands it branches out into a less formal, more interactive, chatty, and relaxed kind of discussion. This is a variant that, as we shall see, Hoffmann himself adapts as a sub-form within the larger-scale device of the frame narrative in *Die Serapionsbrüder* to become a rather more serious and elaborate mode of discussion of aesthetic topics (for example, *Der Dichter und der Komponist*). The all-embracing frame itself, which Hoffmann adapts from the model of Tieck's *Phantasus*, could be regarded as a further large-scale development of the dialogue. This form, which Hoffmann expands to unprecedented proportions, and which acquires a distinctive fictionality, is deployed with considerable originality and provides him, as we shall see, with a flexible vehicle for communicating his most important statements about the arts.

The following study attempts to develop ways of teasing out those neglected ideas on creativity and the arts that are central to Hoffmann's

oeuvre, but that are deeply embedded in his artistic presentation. Its principal focus will be the Serapiontic Principle, which I regard as the key element for elucidating both the theoretical and the practical sides of Hoffmann's creative mission.

There is an interesting recent parallel case of another great prose writer who has mixed theoretical and fictional elements in her work, and who is herself a Hoffmann aficionado: Christa Wolf.[5] In Wolf's case, additionally, biography and autobiography intermingle, this being a function of Wolf's distinctively twentieth-century interest in the problem of identity and the difficulty of saying "I." But the process of writing, essentially the major focus of the biographical process for Wolf — as for Hoffmann — is thematized within the creative work itself (see *Nachdenken über Christa T.* [1968] and *Kindheitsmuster* [1977] *inter alia*). For his part Hoffmann has recourse to his huge framework structure in *Die Serapionsbrüder* to satisfy and explore from as many angles as possible what almost appears to be a personal quest for illumination about the artistic process. Wolf adopts the expedient of including prefaces and long accounts of the genesis of her works (see *Kassandra — Voraussetzungen zu einer Geschichte*, 1983), and Hoffmann too favors the preface form in many of his other prose works. But, drawing on new possibilities offered in the media age, Wolf goes further when she even insists that interviews and evidence that would normally be regarded as having purely documentary status should be considered as part of the evidence of the fictional works themselves. Pursuing the parallel further, while by no means echoing Hoffmann's Serapiontic Principle in its terms of reference, Christa Wolf's equally wide-ranging theory of "subjective authenticity," a portmanteau term that has proved difficult to pin down to one simple formula, serves a similar function of artistic self-analysis within her *oeuvre*. Like Wolf's aesthetic, the principle is a nexus of closely interconnected ideas about narrative, and about the creative arts in general, and many varied shoots issue from it.[6] Once more like Wolf's theory, it reflects on the part of the author a high degree of self-consciousness and an almost obsessive insistence on the need to explain the mechanics of the writer's craft instead of letting this speak for itself. Hoffmann (and Wolf) share the earnest wish to explain their aims in writing — either because they sense special problems in its reception by contemporary readers (Wolf, of course, has a political agenda) and wish to forestall misunderstanding or criticism, or simply for enlightenment about their own creative processes. But in the case of *Die Serapionsbrüder* these efforts were foiled and for long ill-understood and unappreciated. Thoughtless or penny-pinching editors presented generations of readers with individual tales divorced entirely from the context of the frame narrative, and this undoubtedly led to distorted readings and contributed further to the general misunderstanding of the range and subtlety of Hoffmann's presentation of particular themes, especially the

Supernatural.[7] Quite apart from highlighting the intrinsic significance of the theoretical content of the frame discussions, a switch of focus to this part of Hoffmann's work lays down a challenge to the reader to examine its relationship to the individual texts, one that has been almost completely neglected.

The common ground evident in the composition of Wolf's and Hoffmann's respective methodologies to which I have briefly drawn attention also highlights a feature of Hoffmann's work that has become much more fully recognized in the wake of the critical theory debates during the latter part of the twentieth century, namely its striking self-consciousness and anticipation of modernist narrative techniques and complexities. It has been helpful to find that narratology has released Hoffmann from the charge of peddling "Unterhaltungsliteratur" (for example, *Nußknacker und Mausekönig*), or "Spukgeschichten" (for example, *Der Sandmann*). Indeed, along with other Romantic writers, Hoffmann has now been drawn into the net of poststructuralist and deconstructionist criticism, a position that is at the opposite end from earlier biographical approaches but to which, it is argued by their supporters, his works lend themselves particularly well.

According to the leading exponent of this approach among Hoffmann scholars, Detlev Kremer,[8] Hoffmann may *seem* to be communicating meaning to his readers ("sinnzentrierte Lektüren") by his favored use of allegory, for instance (see *Der goldene Topf*), but this is deceptive. Instead, his fondness for intertextuality, multi-stranded ("polyphonic") narrative perspectives (see *Die Serapionsbrüder*), and his ironic detachment, to single out only a few features, signify a lack of any closure or resolution in the narratives (even in the *Märchen*) and make multiple, indeterminate meanings and readings not just possible but inevitable. Following the now familiar pattern of analysis established by Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, a Hoffmann text can be expected, according to Kremer, to demonstrate the author's (or more accurately the reader's, since the term "author" as such no longer carries meaning) response to what he sees as a series of (inconclusive and self-contradictory) reflections on the structures and conditions of Romantic literature ("eine durchgängige Selbstreflexivität"). This kind of approach has been summarized as an "endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single centre, essence or meaning."[9]

An alternative response to the complexities of Hoffmann's narratological strategies, however, might start from an assumption that a "polyphonic" perspectivism does not in itself spell *dis*harmony.[10] Equally, the ubiquitous presence of irony in Hoffmann's works — like that of paradox in the works of other writers of this period — may not be a crazy, "ludic" response that stems from a despair about meaning, but rather an expression of awareness and acceptance of the contradictions with which human

beings (and especially authors) are confronted, and a recognition that there are nonetheless meaningful patterns to be discerned. These might be, in Hoffmann's case for example, the polarities of thought and "principles" that he (and his fellow Romantics) had inherited and absorbed from the immensely influential philosophies of their day (such as those of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling). It is clearly awkward for Kremer and others of his persuasion to acknowledge such "außertextuelle" possibilities or to wish to clarify the relationship between transcendental philosophy and literature in the early nineteenth-century German tradition, and it is therefore no surprise to find that the possibility that these discourses might play an important part in defining Hoffmann's way of looking at the world — one that goes beyond the level of an intertextual game — has been disallowed and discredited.[11]

Although the "Serapiontic Principle" as outlined, expounded, debated, and exemplified in countless different ways within *Die Serapionsbrüder* might seem to apply exclusively to the tales in that collection, it is much more far-ranging in scope and can be applied to virtually all of Hoffmann's prose writings. It is an ever-evolving, self-proliferating phenomenon almost akin to a biological process. The analogy of biological growth and development could certainly be applied to the procedures used in *Die Serapionsbrüder* itself, which represents the culmination as well as the most thoroughgoing presentation of Hoffmann's theories, but additional phases in the evolutionary process can be observed in other works too, both those preceding and those following that collection. The first seeds are clearly observable in the preface ("Jacques Callot") to the *Fantasiestücke*, while Hoffmann's last thoughts on the matter are to be detected in the posthumous tale *Des Vetters Eckfenster* (1822), which could be regarded as a kind of last will and testament. These two examples provide what one could call a prologue and an epilogue to the mainstream exposition presented in *Die Serapionsbrüder* and can be usefully considered from that perspective. But that does not mean to say that, tucked away in various fictional crannies, there are not many other strands that link up with the main lines of this process. Epigrammatic, often satirical and amusing chapter headings are a feature of certain types of Hoffmann's narrative both within and without *Die Serapionsbrüder*; authorial interpolations, addresses to the reader, and many other devices invite a critical response and create a highly interactive relationship between the two.[12] Conversely, there is often an appeal for openness of mind on the part of the reader, by which is implied an ability on his or her part to grapple with a number of different approaches and perspectives simultaneously and to exercise critical judgment in evaluating this "polyphonic" approach to themes and issues.

Of course this is not to deny the element of play and manipulation, which is undeniably a central feature of Hoffmann's art. In this respect the diagnosis of postmodernist theory — but not necessarily the consequences

that it draws — might be accepted. The reader is being invited to participate in a seemingly open-ended process of inquiry and discovery and, as it were, to make his own contribution to the debate. In a sense it might even seem that Hoffmann is setting out deliberately to develop his readers' critical faculties by presenting alternative ways in which to approach a text. The question has been raised (see Uwe Japp[13]) as to whether in expounding the so-called "principle" one of Hoffmann's aims might be to produce guidelines for budding authors or, alternatively, to present his readers and critics with the "correct" kind of critical tools (what Japp calls a "Kriterium der schulgerechten Literaturkritik") for the purposes of literary analysis. Both would seem unlikely, unless this educational process is intended to open the reader's mind to critical debate rather than follow one particular line.[14] It seems more probable that Hoffmann wishes either to disarm criticism of his work, sometimes even incorporating points raised in reviews,[15] or (more positively) to promote a deeper understanding of the implications of critical analysis. Such a program, if indeed Hoffmann was setting out with it in mind, has until recently stood little chance of success with his readership, who have been following quite different cues. Now that the manipulative aspect in all Hoffmann's narrative fiction, and most especially in *Die Serapionsbrüder*, is more clearly understood, the playful side of his narrative art can be fully addressed within the wider context of Hoffmann's ever-evolving program, that is, as a necessary adjunct or counterbalance to the dark and disturbing vision ("Ernst") presented in many of the tales. For, as we shall see, the Serapiontic Principle is designed to embrace both ends of the artistic spectrum, "Ernst und Scherz," the serious and the light-hearted, either in juxtaposition or in combination. This paradoxical principle and the ironic narrative stance with which it is associated are principal manifestations of the Serapiontic. They act as a ground bass running through Hoffmann's entire fiction, but come most clearly and explicitly to the fore in *Die Serapionsbrüder*. By focusing attention on the Serapiontic Principle, one can more easily judge the nature and function of Hoffmann's irony, an area in which confusion still reigns, but which, since it represents the point of intersection between the substance and the style of his fiction, is of central importance. The coexistence in Hoffmann's practice of irony with enthusiasm and commitment to the creative impulse is a highly interesting paradox, and one that he shares with Friedrich Schlegel.[16] A detailed analysis of its operation in theory and practice will give the lie to the reductive view of Hoffmann as not much more than a clever manipulator of texts.

It has sometimes been argued that the framework discussion in *Die Serapionsbrüder* was purely a matter of convenience, forced upon Hoffmann by his publisher, who wished to have the tales he had already published and completed linked together by a unifying thread. Because the great majority of tales had indeed been published separately in various

journals and thus predated the creation of the framework,[17] it was assumed that the latter was merely grafted on and had no structural or thematic significance. This approach is at last losing currency,[18] though traces still remain in some popular editions and anthologies.[19] Typically, under pressure of this kind from a publisher, Hoffmann's genius was activated. He was not satisfied to provide a flimsy wrapping in which to accommodate his tales, one that could be easily discarded. Hoffmann was put in mind of the model of Ludwig Tieck's highly successful *Phantasus* (published in 1812), which he mentions appreciatively in the foreword to the *Die Serapionsbrüder*, in which, however, the narrative frame had only been loosely presented, leaving much scope for development. He regarded his publisher's directive as an artistic challenge and seized on the opportunity of developing in much greater detail the ideas about narrative and the creative process that had been gradually taking shape, probably starting in his Bamberg days (that is, from 1808), and had been clarifying in his mind into the germ of a "Poetics" after the highly successful publication in 1814 of his first major collection of tales, the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*; at that stage he had expressed his thoughts succinctly in a brief preface ("Jacques Callot," see chapter 1 in this volume). In the *Fantasiestücke* there are already signs of Hoffmann's leanings towards the frame narrative, though necessarily at this point only in a rudimentary form, through the introduction of a fictitious narrator in the persona of the "reisender Enthusiast" in *Don Juan*. Another (anonymous) highly intrusive writer-narrator, in *Der goldene Topf*, cannot resist commenting on the artist's dilemma as his own in the closing epilogue. Further developments are evident in the ambitious novel, *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815–16), in the extended role accorded to the manipulative fictitious editor at the beginning (especially in the "Vorwort") and at various stages in the novel thereafter, when he spells out for the reader's benefit the salient features in the forthcoming narrative: "das Schauerliche, Entsetzliche, Tolle, Possenhafte."[20] The characteristic programmatic emphasis on the mixture of the horrific, the absurd, and the comic by Hoffmann's fictitious editor is here set before the reader as a paradoxical antithesis or conundrum from the outset. But within the given formats of these various works, some of them freestanding, Hoffmann had little opportunity other than by stealth or brief allusion to give expression to his growing and compelling urge to analyze alongside creating, and to providing a critical commentary to accompany the tales. However, as we shall see, in late works written after the *Die Serapionsbrüder* (for example, *Prinzessin Brambilla* [1821] and *Des Vetters Eckfenster*) he would develop new strategies of internal analysis to replace the more disjoined format of the frame narrative.

Hoffmann's erratic path to becoming a famous literary writer may be recalled at this point. Although he had written for publication in various journals one or two pieces (including "Ritter Gluck") in his Bamberg

years, his career as a writer only began in earnest — *faute de mieux* — in 1813, when it became clear that the political uncertainties during the final stages of the Wars of Liberation that had forced him away from Bamberg and Dresden offered little hope that he would ever be able to earn a living in his preferred role as a composer, or even "Kapellmeister." Reluctantly he returned to Berlin and eventually to a prestigious position in the state judiciary, and this return to a legal career could, it seems, or perhaps had to, coexist with Hoffmann's belated debut as a popular writer and (soon) local celebrity in Berlin. A hectic program of writing in his spare time went hand in hand with professional responsibilities that became ever greater as Hoffmann's outstanding legal ability was recognized officially and he was rewarded with important assignments;[21] these twin roles were combined at a level of intensity and excellence that is truly remarkable. Hoffmann was catching up rapidly in the art of writing and he must have been almost surprised at the ease with which he so quickly attained success. Having during his Bamberg period already combined practical and creative musical activities with critical analysis of new compositions through his contributions to the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, it is not surprising that now that he had focused on a new artistic métier as a writer (albeit part-time) he should experiment with combining the critical and the creative sides of his own writings.

However, one cannot infer that the decision to create a link between his tales, most of which, as mentioned above, had already been published separately, had been in his mind from the outset. It was more a question of opportunities and a happy conjunction of events that took place in Hoffmann's personal life in Berlin around 1818. For his fascination with the creative process and the art of narrative was by no means a closet pursuit. It found expression in his gregarious leanings, his sociability, and constant desire to interact with fellow writers and other kindred spirits, sharing his ideas and receiving from others stimulus and encouragement. The cliché image of the alcohol-driven writer holding forth among his friends in wine-houses and hostelries so assiduously peddled and trivialized by Jacques Offenbach in *The Tales of Hoffmann* has been hard to dispel. But it creates an impression of over-indulgence or loss of control that is highly misleading. Rather, the evidence suggests that in Hoffmann's case, the twofold stimulus of wine and companionship unleashed a spate of brilliant conversation, tale-telling, and discussion of artistic matters.[22] Armed with his publisher's generous advance towards the publication of *Die Serapionsbrüder* and seizing the opportunity of the return to Berlin after a three-year journey round the world of his friend, the botanist and writer Adalbert von Chamisso, Hoffmann decided in November 1818 to reinstate a literary club, the "Seraphinenorden," which he had founded a few years earlier but which had lapsed in 1815 on the departure of Chamisso for foreign parts.[23]