ELEMENTS OF SHAMANIC MYTHOLOGY IN E. T. A. HOFFMANN'S ROMANTIC CONCEPTION OF MUSIC

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

by

Harry A. W. Miller, B. A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1993
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The musicians in E. T. A. Hoffmann's tales and essays demonstrate traits remarkably similar to those of shamans. Hoffmann uses the same imagery to describe the journey of the composer into the "realm of dreams," where he receives inspiration, as the shaman uses to describe the spirit world to which he journeys via music.

Hoffmann was a major force in changing the 18th-century view of music as an "innocent luxury" to the 19th-century idea of music as a higher art. As a German Romantic author, he subscribed to the idea championed by the Schlegels that true poetry is based on myth. In this thesis, Hoffmann's writings are compared with shamanic mythology to demonstrate a similarity beyond mere coincidence, without drawing conclusions about influence.
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INTRODUCTION

The early years of the nineteenth century are marked by a major shift in the conception of music. Before the German Romantics insisted that music was as great an object of beauty as the plastic and poetic arts, and thus deserving of attention, music was considered merely pleasant background noise. Instrumental music in particular was thought to be music for practice or to accompany other forms of recreation.¹ Such writers as Ludwig Tieck, W. H. Wackenroder, Novalis, Jean Paul, and E. T. A. Hoffmann popularized the idea that music was a higher form of art than representational ones because it communicated the infinite.

In the 1780s, Karl Philipp Moritz wrote a series of articles on beauty in art. He wrote that, because art and beauty are self-contained and require nothing but themselves, they are perfect and therefore capable of elevating mankind through contemplation of them.² Though Moritz was referring primarily to the other arts, his ideas were also influential among musicians and those concerned with music. Before the Romantics took up music's banner,

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2. Ibid., 5.
however, instrumental music was considered imperfect because it was understood that music could have no effect without words. This idea can be traced back to Plato’s definition of music as consisting of harmonia, rhythmos, and logos, which meant that language or words were an essential part of music, as important as melody and rhythm. Even early defense of instrumental music was rather condescending, as when Johann Mattheson wrote in 1739 that instrumental music could be thought of as vocal music without words, or could be imagined as a type of pantomime discourse.

When Tieck, Wackenroder, Novalis, and Jean Paul began to write about music in the years just prior to 1800, their concept of the effect of instrumental music was different enough from the view that had prevailed since the earliest writings that Carl Dahlhaus has called it a paradigm shift in musical thinking. Although over the last two hundred years it has become commonplace to think of music as self-contained, with words being an optional addition, at the time the idea only became widely circulated through the writings of the Romantics.

The Romantic metaphysics of music first appeared in the work of Tieck and Wackenroder. These two friends wrote

3. Ibid., 8.
4. Ibid., 6.
5. Ibid., 7.
about music as transcendent and inspirational in essays on
the arts and in their stories. Jean Paul's aesthetic
writings included Romantic effusions on the ability of
poetry and music to allow the human spirit to transcend the
quotidian and the mundane, an idea that also pervaded the
work of Novalis. But however important the idea of music
and its effects was to these authors, none of them worked
out as cohesive and influential a conception of music as did
E. T. A. Hoffmann.

Hoffmann's widespread influence is due in large part to
his position as music reviewer for the Allgemeine
musikalische Zeitung, which published a great number of his
reviews and essays on music. He was also a popular author
of tales and stories, many of which incorporated his
thoughts on music into the narrative. His background as a
composer and conductor allowed him to write knowledgeably
about the more technical aspects of music, though as a
champion of Romanticism he gave equal weight to the
emotional side. It was this combination of technical
erudition and emotive appreciation that set his work apart
from other writers of the time.

E. T. A. Hoffmann has been called "a key figure in the

6. See especially Tieck's essay "Symphonien" in the
collection Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der
Kunst (1799) and Wackenroder's fictional musician Joseph
Berglinger in his Herzensergiessungen eines
kunstliebenden Klosterbruders (1799).
aesthetics and theory (and composition) of music in those years [the Romantic period],"7 "the special herald of the Romantic era,"8 and "one of the most influential figures in the history of modern musical thought."9 Carl Dahlhaus noted that "Hoffmann's outline of a romantic aesthetic of music heralded a new era in the history of musical thought"10 and that "Hoffmann's Beethoven review . . . set the 'tone' of musical discourse for an entire century."11 Scott Burnham elaborated Dahlhaus' opinion of the Beethoven review when he wrote that "the infiltration of romantic aesthetics into the theoretical understanding of music created what is surely one of the most tenacious and influential paradigms in Western musical thought: the organic conception of musical coherence, most cogently exemplified by the thematic development of Beethoven's


11. Ibid.
heroic style."\textsuperscript{12}

It is obvious that Hoffmann's ideas had a tremendous hold on the Romantic imagination that is not immediately obvious to one looking from a late twentieth-century viewpoint. His relative obscurity today, especially in the United States and Britain, is in no way indicative of his popularity in the last century. During his lifetime he was a best-selling author who could not keep up with the requests for his work, and he was reviewed even outside of the continent by such literary men as Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle.\textsuperscript{13} In the years following his death, Hoffmann's name and influence appeared in the works and letters of such luminaries as Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire, Balzac, Dostoevsky, Heinrich Heine, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Richard Wagner.\textsuperscript{14}

Even if Hoffmann had not written music criticism or composed, his literary endeavors would have assured him of a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Burnham, \textit{op. cit.}, 294.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} James McGlathery, \textit{Mysticism and Sexuality: E. T. A. Hoffmann} (Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1981), 15.
\end{itemize}
place in the history of music. Hoffmann's strongest musical character, Kappellmeister Johannes Kreisler, provided a mouthpiece for Hoffmann's thoughts on music in the setting of his stories. Kreisler has been called "the most influential fictional hero of his time." Schumann's composition "Kreisleriana" was based on Hoffmann's creation, and Brahms kept a notebook wherein he noted down his favorite sayings on music, which he called "Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein;" Brahms often called himself the "young Kreisler." Wagner took several libretto ideas from Hoffmann's tales.

It has been pointed out many times that Hoffmann's idea of the transcendent quality and effects of music had shown up previously in the works of Tieck, Wackenroder, and Novalis. However, none of these writers had developed such a coherent mythology of music in which to center their ideas as had Hoffmann, and they did not include the technical aspects that attracted musicians of the time to Hoffmann's writings. The philosophies of Schubert, Schelling,


16. Ibid.

17. Novalis had certainly formed a coherent mythology in which he worked, but it was based on Christian and Indian ideas that held music as important but peripheral. See Burton Feldman and Robert Richardson, The Rise of Modern Mythology: 1680-1860 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1972), 333ff.
August and Friedrich Schlegel, and Schiller also contained many of the ideas used by Hoffmann. It is not in the purpose of this thesis to trace these influences, however, all of which have been covered elsewhere.  

This thesis will examine a side of German Romantic thought that has not previously been addressed in detail; that is, the presence of shamanic elements, collected and spread throughout Europe by explorers in the eighteenth century and assimilated by influential thinkers like E. T. A. Hoffmann. In spite of the enormous popularity of reports of tribal societies and their shamans, as evidenced by the number of newspaper reports, novels, plays, travelogues, and other exotic entertainments that dealt with the subject, the effect upon European thinking of tribal beliefs is a subject that has undergone little research. The subject is touched on insofar as it relates to English Romanticism by Anya Taylor, who notes that one of the sources of magical motifs for British poets was "the possessed ecstasies of the savages as reported to them by missionaries and settlers;" Coleridge even included a verse about "the


Greenland Wizard in strange trance" in one of his poems.  

Gloria Flaherty points out several reasons for the lack of historical surveys of the reception of shamanism in Europe in her book *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*; these include the idea that shamanism is irrational and unscientific, and its study is therefore not useful or belongs only in the domain of anthropology or religion, and the Euro-centric idea that shamanism exists in and influences only cultures not as "advanced" as Western Europe.  

The world in which E. T. A. Hoffmann set his tales and writings, especially when music is involved, shows a great deal of similarity to the shaman's mythic universe. If it can be shown that these two conceptions of music's effects are related closely enough, questions can then be addressed such as: are the images that are used by different peoples in various cultures in such similar ways connected to universal archetypes aroused by music in the human brain? Or is there evidence of direct influence of shamanic ideology on Hoffmann, such that his writings would be inconceivable without such influence? The purpose of this thesis, however, is simply to take the first step; that is,  

20. Ibid., 107; the poem is "The Destiny of Nations," especially lines 98-112.  

to demonstrate that a similarity exists between the imagery of shamanism and that of E. T. A. Hoffmann sufficient to raise doubts about the possibility of mere coincidence. I shall do this by comparing the general traits of shamanism as identified by anthropologists and religious scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Andreas Lommel, and Joan Halifax to the characteristics of Hoffmann's musicians. Since Hoffmann contributed so much to the Romantic conception of music, such an approach will help to indicate new ways of understanding how Romanticism was shaped, and perhaps what it meant at the time and what it means today.
Chapter I
E. T. A. HOFFMANN

Hoffmann's Life

In order to cultivate an understanding of Hoffmann and his achievements, it is necessary to know something of his life and times. He was born Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann in 1776, in the city of Königsberg. His father, Christoph Ludwig Hoffmann, left home with Ernst's older brother, Karl, before Ernst was three years old. This left Ernst's mother (Luise Albertine Hoffmann, born Doerffer), grandmother, aunt Sophie, and uncle Otto to raise the boy. The grandmother was a recluse, never leaving her room even for meals, and Hoffmann's mother soon retired to her own room to stay as well. This left the boy in the care of Sophie and Otto, who were not congenial company for a lad such as Hoffmann.

Otto was a lover of orderliness and discipline, though he himself had given up his law career after but one case. Sophie was kind but ineffectual as a guiding influence for a young boy. There was, however, music in the household when friends of Otto and Sophie would come by to play through string and piano ensembles. Despite the amateurish

renditions of the music, whose performances Hoffmann was loathe to sit through, young Ernst took to music and became something of a prodigy on the piano and violin by age twelve. His disregard for the musical approval of the others showed itself when he would be asked to play for guests: he would sit and improvise at the piano, becoming wrapped up in his music and taking no heed of whether his audience stayed or left.² It has been said that Hoffmann's contempt for the philistine that shows up in so many of his tales stems from this early exposure to the uncultivated musical tastes of his relatives.³

Hoffmann's need for sociable companionship was finally met when, in 1787, Theodor Gottlieb Hippel began attending the same school as young Ernst. Because of his greater aptitude for scholastic pursuits, Hippel was engaged to help Hoffmann study. It soon happened that, despite differences in temperament, their similar ages and interests in fantasy led to life-long friendship. During their study times, they often found occasion to plunder Uncle Otto's library, where they found such works as Rousseau's Confessions, which became a favorite diversion.⁴

Hoffmann started law school at the University of

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2. Ibid., 10-11.
Königsberg in 1792. He did very well at his studies, in spite of his avowed hatred of the profession; Hoffmann longed to be an artist and a musician. It was only the pressure from his family that made him endure the study of jurisprudence, and he spent a good deal of time engaged in his own study of art and music, and taught music lessons. After graduating with honors, Hoffmann passed the qualifying exams for Prussian legal officials. He was assigned to a post in Posen in 1797.

Posen

While in Posen, Hoffmann found plenty of time and an audience for his music. He composed a cantata for December 31st, 1800, and a singspiel, Scherz, List, und Rache, both of which were performed several times to local approbation.\(^5\) If Hoffmann had stuck to music, he might have enjoyed himself in Posen for some time; but Hoffmann was an avid caricaturist, and he was rather thoughtless about choosing subjects for his attacks. At a ball in 1802, several of Hoffmann's cartoons of repressive and corrupt upper-level army officials were circulated while the officials were in attendance, and his caricature style was well know in the region. Because of Hoffmann's exemplary legal work, his upcoming promotion was not denied, but he was immediately transferred to a small border town named Plock.

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5. Ibid., 25-27.
Plock

Plock was a muddy little town with little in the way of culture or nightlife. While this vexed Hoffmann considerably, it allowed plenty of time for him to work on music and art. He painted some, studied music theory and composition, and wrote masses and sonatas. Also in Plock, Hoffmann began to write essays and a play for submission to a drama-writing contest.\(^6\) On 10/1/1803 Hoffmann started a diary, which he kept up until 1815 and which provides insight into his private thoughts. It was also in Plock that he met and married Michalina Rohrer in 1802.

Warsaw

Finally Hoffmann was transferred to Warsaw, where he took his post in April and began spending serious time at music with a decent group of musicians. Soon after he arrived, Hoffmann became involved in setting up an Academy of Music, where he conducted the orchestra (including works of Mozart, Gluck, and Beethoven) and painted murals on the walls of the building.\(^7\) The occupation of Warsaw by Napoleon in 1806 did not interfere with Hoffmann’s artistic activities; it merely relieved him of official duties and allowed him to devote more time to composition. In a letter to his friend Hitzig, dated 20 April 1807, Hoffmann wrote:

\(^6\) Ibid., 29-32.

\(^7\) Ibid., 35.
"Since I began to compose I often forget my care, in fact the whole world, for the world created from a thousand harmonies on my piano and in my room is not compatible with any world on the outside." The music he wrote included overtures, sonatas, motets, canzonets, a harp quintet and a piano quintet; Hoffmann even had leave to keep conducting the orchestra, for which he composed his own "First Symphony in E Major." Napoleon of course was not content to let Prussian nationals remain for long as civil servants. Eventually all were required to swear allegiance to Napoleon or leave the country; Hoffmann preferred the latter, and in June of 1807 he went to Berlin.

Berlin: I

In Berlin, Hoffmann was in dire poverty. No one in that war-torn land was thinking of taking music lessons, Hoffmann's usual source of secondary income. During the fourteen months he was there, in spite of hunger and penury, Hoffmann managed to compose a Requiem and six songs for the church. Three canzonets were actually published and received favorable reviews.10

Hoffmann began to think seriously of making a living


10. Ibid., 42.
solely from music. He sent out letters and placed advertisements in newspapers announcing his availability for a musical post. Eventually he received an offer to act as Kappellmeister and theatrical producer from a company in Bamberg, which he accepted.

Bamberg

When Hoffmann arrived in Bamberg in September of 1808, his happiness at finally having music as his primary source of income was tempered by the poor quality of the orchestra and by problems with some of the other staff. It was not long before Hoffmann began spending less time conducting and more time teaching lessons and composing. One of the students he started tutoring was to have a great effect on his life; her name was Julia Marc, and Hoffmann fell desperately in love with her.

Despite the difference in their ages (he was thirty-five, she was fifteen), Hoffmann could not force himself to stop thinking of Julia; even years later she would resurface in his stories as the ideal of womanhood. He made entries in his diary about her constantly, hiding the fact from any spying his wife may have been doing by writing in Latin, French, and Italian, and by using Greek letters to spell German words. He also had a system of cryptograms to represent ideas and activities, not only for his thoughts about Julia, but also for his nightly sessions at the local
Hoffmann's compositions during this period brought him local acclaim, and inspired him to change his middle name from Wilhelm to Amadeus, in honor of Mozart. Among his Bamberg works are two operas, incidental music for six stage plays, marches, choruses, chorales, arias, songs, prologues, and waltzes for some eleven stage productions and several festivals, a ballet, a miserere, a piano sonata and trio, twelve canzonets, and six Italian duets. Some of these works were published. In 1812, Hoffmann was taken with the short story Undine by Baron de la Motte Fouqué, and he determined to make it into an opera. To do this, he secured the help of the author himself to fashion the libretto. It was the work of several years to complete the opera, but it became his most lasting contribution to Romantic music.

Not long after his arrival in Bamberg, Hoffmann began to contribute articles and music reviews to the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung. It was in this publication that his first major short story appeared, Ritter Gluck (1809), and also the first parts of what was to become the Kreisleriana. During his three and one-half years in Bamberg, Hoffmann contributed around one hundred reviews and articles to the

11. Ibid., 33.
12. Ibid., 60.
Despite regional renown for his musical and literary work, Hoffmann lived mainly in poverty in Bamberg. At one point he was forced to sell his coat to buy food. In 1813, Hoffmann decided it was time to leave and began the search for a new post, this time finding one in Dresden as music director for Joseph Seconda’s opera troupe.

Dresden and Leipzig

Only a few weeks after Hoffmann’s arrival in Dresden, Napoleon’s army came to devil him again. Frequent battles raged in the streets of the town, during which Hoffmann would creep to some precarious vantage point to watch the action. He was even wounded once (or at least his boot was) by ricocheting shrapnel. The opera troupe was forced to relocate to Leipzig by the military intrusion, and over the next several months they moved back and forth between the two cities as the fortunes of war dictated.

At first Hoffmann was quite happy with his position with the company despite the war going on around him, but soon differences with Seconda began to take away his pleasure. Hoffmann turned more and more to the writing he was doing for the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, and even came to see his work with the orchestra as an interruption of his writing. It is ironic that at this time of his most

13. Ibid., 61.
successful musical endeavors, literature should arise as his principal art. Perhaps it was occasioned by the unending conflicts he endured with his musical colleagues, and his comparative ease of acceptance into the world of letters.

The Dresden/Leipzig period saw the production of Hoffmann’s stories Der goldene Topf, Die Automate, Der Magnetiseur, Der Dichter und der Komponist, and Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier, volumes one and two.¹⁴ Hoffman had not given up his dream of making his mark on the musical world, however. When his first book was published, the Fantasiestücke, he insisted on it appearing anonymously because he wanted his fame to come from musical composition, not any other way.¹⁵

Musical composition, though, was receiving less and less attention. After completing Undine, Hoffmann finished only a few incidental works and a battle symphony for the battle of Dresden, which he released under a pseudonym.¹⁶ It did not take long for Hoffmann to lose his patience with Seconda altogether and desire a way to leave. His friend Hippel told him of an opening in the Kammergericht, or Highest Court of Appeals in Berlin, for an assistant. In spite of his adverse feelings towards a return to a career

¹⁴. Ibid., 70.


in law, Hoffmann secured the post and in September of 1814 he moved back to Berlin.

Berlin: II

Already known as a man of letters, Hoffmann soon took his place in the Berlin literary circle. Writers like Tieck, Fouqué, Franz Horn, Chamisso, Bernhardi, and later Clemens Brentano, all representatives of the last phase of Romanticism, lived and met together in Berlin. They welcomed the author of Der goldene Topf as one of their own.  

Hoffmann also became active in Berlin musical life, and his opera Undine was performed for the King's birthday in August of 1816. It subsequently played fourteen times in one year and was reviewed favorably by Carl Maria von Weber. It may have gone on to greater success and a larger part in musical history as the first German Romantic opera, but a fire in July of 1817 destroyed the music, costumes, and scenery, much of which had been designed by Hoffmann specially for the novel effects he wanted in the opera. The prohibitive expense of these materials prevented the resurrection of the work.  

Ironically, it was Weber's Der Freischütz, which incorporated many of the same Romantic gestures, that re-opened the restored theater four years later.

17. Ibid., 78.
18. Ibid., 88.
later and usurped the historical accolades.

As an artist, Hoffmann found an outlet for his talent at caricature by illustrating his stories. His depictions of Johannes Kreisler and his milieu make an interesting study in musical performance and reception of the time. He also decorated the walls of his home with "humorous or grotesque fantasies" of cavorting figures.\(^{19}\)

Hoffmann remained in Berlin, writing and serving on the court of appeals until the slow onset of paralysis led to his death in June of 1822. His musical legacy numbered about eighty-five works, including nine Singspiele and operas, twenty-two other works for the stage, eleven sacred vocal works and twenty-four secular ones, two orchestral works, thirteen piano pieces, and three chamber works.\(^{20}\) Although many were performed in Hoffmann's lifetime, only four were published.\(^{21}\)

**Hoffmann's Interests**

**Literature**

An avid reader, Hoffmann often mentioned the books that currently interested him in letters to his friends and in


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 9.
his stories. Of course, the Romantic writers Tieck, Jean Paul, Novalis, and Fouqué were among his favorites, as well as older authors who could be seen as Romantic such as Gozzi and Shakespeare. Hoffmann was also fascinated by Diderot's book _Le neveu de Rameau_, which he read in Bamberg in Goethe's German translation soon after it appeared in 1805. He remarked on the work in several letters to his fiends.22

But Hoffmann's interests were not confined to fiction. In a letter to Hitzig from Bamberg in April of 1812, Hoffmann noted with enthusiasm that his friend Kunz, a leading wine merchant who later took up publishing, was forming a lending library that was "to contain only what is good in aesthetic literature and scientific works."23 He also mentioned that Kunz had introduced him to several scientists, including a Director Marcus and Professor Klein.24

_Philosophy_

Several philosophers and their works appear frequently as Hoffmann's favorites. Judging from the books he is known to have read, perhaps Schelling was first on the list.25

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22. Hewett-Thayer, _op. cit._, 346.
23. Hoffmann, _op. cit._, 166.
24. Ibid.
Schelling's philosophy was based largely on the importance of myth in human experience; he is "the high point of myth as philosophy in the nineteenth century."\(^{26}\) The Romantic preoccupation with myth was strong in Hoffmann, and he was doubtless intrigued by Schelling's philosophy, which saw myth as "a primal expression of art on one side, and as its ultimate culmination on the other."\(^{27}\)

Another of Hoffmann's favorites was G. H. Schubert. His works, such as *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften* (1808) and *Symbolik des Traums* (1814), dealt with nature philosophy and incorporated Schelling's idea of the Weltseele. Hoffmann got his copy of the *Ansichten* from Kunz and remarked in a letter to him from Dresden in August of 1813 that he was "curious about everything this brilliant man has written and is writing. His explanation of the clairvoyance of somnambulists is more sagacious than poetic."\(^{28}\)

**Alternate States of Consciousness and the Occult**

The interest in "dreams, trancelike and ecstatic states" that Hoffmann demonstrated was symptomatic of the Romantic period, especially that side of it commonly called

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27. Ibid., 315.

the Schauerromantik, but Hoffmann seemed to be more serious about it than most.29 He became a friend of the above-mentioned Dr. Adalbert Marcus, director of medical services in Bamberg, who was a specialist in mental illnesses.30 Hoffmann often visited the asylum and watched the treatments given to the patients.31 While with Seconda's opera in Dresden and Leipzig, he studied hypnotism with the official troupe physician, Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge, author of Versuch einer Darstellung des animalischen Magnetismus als Heilmittel.32

The effect of Hoffmann's associations with these men was profound. One of his biographers, Ronald Taylor, assures us that, though others were also intrigued by these phenomena,

no other German writer has absorbed so fully, and re-lived so intensely, the psychological facts of schizophrenia, of hypnotism, of telepathy, and of other irregular and irrational conditions of the mind. Above all, no other German author has pursued so relentlessly the conviction that in such conditions of the mind, when the forces of the unconscious hold sway, certain truths are made evident whose significance is denied to 'normal' men, truths of revelation with a power to explain what cold,


31. Ibid., 70.

32. Ibid., 74.
Hoffmann's preoccupation with unusual mental states and occult ideas manifested itself in other sorts of reading matter as well. Paul Sucher identified three major sources for occult motifs in Hoffmann's work: Schubert, the physician Kluge, and Abbé de Montfaucon de Villars, a seventeenth-century French writer. Although these may have been the most influential, we know that he had examined "countless books that dealt with the occult and the mysterious."  

Hoffmann's involvement in the mysterious was more personal than mere literary influences, however, as we know from his associations with doctors and mesmerists. Again, Ronald Taylor went so far as to say that Hoffmann was "possessed . . . by a faith in the apocalyptic power of the irrational and the supernatural." In a letter to Kunz from Leipzig in March of 1814, Hoffmann made this note about his activities one evening: "After [reading a play by Kanne] I immersed myself in science, the secret one, that

33. Taylor, op. cit., 71.
35. Hewett-Thayer, op. cit., 168.
36. Taylor, op. cit., 47.
Supernatural motifs appear frequently in Hoffmann's stories, as we shall see in the next chapter. Hoffmann was a child of Romanticism, and he heeded Friedrich Schlegel's call for a New Mythology upon which to base true Romantic poetic works. In doing so, he delved into Schelling's writings on myth and Schubert's *Naturwissenschaft*, as well as the new scientific researches on hypnotism and mental illness. Into this basic mixture he infused his own occult and supernatural ideas to come up with a unique but unified worldview in which to set his tales, stories, and musical essays.

Chapter II
HOFFMANN'S WRITINGS

The New Mythology

The dreary rationalism of the Enlightenment provided a poor source for poetic inspiration. So when Kant posited that reality exists in the form our mind fashions it, Fichte and Schelling were ready to deduce that then, logically, our dreams are just as real as anything else because they are also experienced in the human mind (part of what Durant called their "magnificent spider-webs of metaphysics").¹ This was wonderful news for the Romantics. It legitimized and demanded a new philosophical system of organization that would take shape in their writing.

The central organizing principle that characterized most Romantic philosophy and thought was an interest in myth. Friedrich and August Schlegel, Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schelling emphasized the importance of mythology and used it to reconcile Romantic dualities, especially in the years between 1795 and 1810.² In 1800, Friedrich Schlegel's essay "Rede über die Mythology" appeared in his


collection *Gespräch über die Poesie*, outlining the need for a New Mythology upon which to base Romantic literature. In this essay, Schlegel encouraged using the newly-explored field of mythology from the Orient and India, rather than the more familiar Greek and Roman, to enrich poetic writing.¹ As we noted in the previous chapter, Schelling, perhaps the most outspoken proponent of the idea, was among E. T. A. Hoffmann’s favorite authors. The mythic atmosphere suited Hoffmann perfectly, and he created one of the most consistent mythological worldviews of the Romantics.⁴

Part of Hoffmann’s ideology comes from Schubert’s *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften*, which contains an exposition of history as being divided into three eras: original harmony and unity, present discord and dualism, and a golden age of re-unification.⁵ The divided nature of the present age is central to Hoffmann’s stories about those who have experienced a higher realm vs. the philistines, who never will. For many Romantics in the early nineteenth century, myth had a religious quality; it was “a way of redeeming modern man and restoring him to his early simplicity -- his original and primeval union with God

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4. Ibid., 19.

and nature." For Hoffmann, however, myth was an organizing background; the redeeming factor was art.

**Hoffmann’s Cosmology**

In Hoffmann’s view of Romanticism, it is clear that "through the poet’s inspired dreams the wonder of another world is mingled with our every-day." The visions of the artist, musician, and poet are needed to transcend the present separation of worlds and enter the realm of the divine. Care must be taken, though, for another realm exists where one may end up if one cannot control the forces of inspiration: the demonic. This division of Hoffmann’s world into three levels, whose "basic features include vistas of beauty and of nature animated by friendly spirits together with visions of horror and a demonic world," is a widely noted aspect of his cosmology, which we shall examine presently.


Although Hoffmann never outlined his mythic setting explicitly (the idea of doing so would have struck a Romantic author as absurd), the fullest exposition of his general mythology can be found in the story Der goldene Topf [The Golden Pot], widely considered to be Hoffmann's best tale. The Golden Pot is the story of Anselmus, a student caught in conflict between his desire for a secure living and respectable position in society, and the siren call of poetic expression. During his adventures, Anselmus shifts between the workaday world and the higher, artistic realm of Atlantis, though the demonic forces that plague him threaten to pull him into their realm, and into insanity. Hoffmann fleshes out his mythical setting with a story of the creation of the world, but the central idea is the existence of separate and incompatible worlds for the artist and the bourgeoisie, reflected in Anselmus' dilemma. The conflict between the two lifestyles, and the inability to reconcile them, leads to the threat of downfall. This multi-level reality is the basis of Hoffmann's literary worldview.

The artist in Hoffmann's world has been characterized as one "who has as almost prophetic faith in art's ability to heal man, [and] has retained a childlike belief in his visions of an enchanted world." 10 However, since artists live in a society that views art primarily as a pleasant

10. Daemmrich, op. cit., 27.
diversion and relatively unimportant, they must either give up their ideals or live in a dream world.\textsuperscript{11} This existential dilemma has been attributed to a "grand design" that unifies Hoffmann's work, in which the protagonist must make a choice between his "yearning for innocence" and his fascination with evil.\textsuperscript{12} However, this view leaves out the central importance of artistic vision and crisis in the greater part of the stories.

Another theory of Hoffmann's "other worlds" explains that the dream world of Atlantis, the demonic imagery, and the visions seen by musicians carried away by melody are metaphors for the hero's panic when confronted with sexuality, or a symptom of the hero's channeling of his unacknowledged sexual dilemma into the idea of "living for a higher art."\textsuperscript{13} What this theory does not attempt to cover, and what shall be dealt with shortly, is how that imagery achieved the form it did, and why Hoffmann chose those specific images.

Aubrey Garlington raises the point that Hoffmann did not rely heavily on popular German folklore in his writings

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11} Ibid., 28.
\bibitem{12} Ibid., 27.
\end{thebibliography}
as a model for the spirit realm.\textsuperscript{14} There are few actual ghosts in his stories; more often, Hoffmann uses fictionalized accounts of scientific discoveries and theories.\textsuperscript{15} We know that "for many of his stories he studied works of curious old medical lore or the numerous contemporary books on mesmerism and related phenomena."\textsuperscript{16}

The stories generally take place in the Germany of Hoffmann's day, particularly those stories that involve music as a primary factor. Hoffmann set his narratives in the everyday world of his audience, which was already full of mysterious phenomena, in order to increase the effect of the intrusion of the unexplained. Europe in the early nineteenth century was inundated by mesmerists, mechanical chess players, automatons, clairvoyants, mediums, and other exotic novelties, so that there was no need for Hoffmann to use far-off lands to create a feeling of disorientation as many of his contemporaries did.

The mythical other-worlds of E. T. A. Hoffmann are best represented in the assorted vignettes of his famous tragic

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hero Johannes Kreisler and in two of his longer essays: *Ritter Gluck* [Ritter Gluck] and *Beethovens Instrumentalmusik* ([Beethoven's Instrumental Music]). It is no coincidence that in both of these essays, the transcendental realms are reached through the art of music; music was Hoffmann’s ideal art. "It is the most romantic of all the arts--one might almost say, the only genuinely romantic one--for its sole subject is the infinite" he wrote, and his stories generally convey full mythic status only to the musicians.¹⁷

**Johannes Kreisler**

One such musician, Hoffmann’s most fully developed one, was Johannes Kreisler. Kreisler was probably the most influential fictional character in forming the Romantic conception of the mad musical genius.¹⁸ Although he was Hoffmann’s supreme musician, his uncongenial environment¹⁹

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and lack of Besonnenheit, or intellectual control, kept him from fully reaching the realm of Gluck and Beethoven.  

Kreisler epitomizes the artist who lacks the ability to formalize his ideal visions, and falls prey to the dangerous side of creativity; he stops working and rages when he is frustrated, and may have ended up in a madhouse or a monastery. The threat of insanity is always present in Hoffmann's works for those who have seen the ideal but cannot realize it in this world. Kreisler has seen it; in one of his last stories before he disappeared, Kreislers musikalisch-poetischer Klub [Kreisler's Musical-Poetical Club], he describes his visions as he plays the piano, and his descent into the dark realm is frighteningly portrayed.

In this story, Kreisler and a group of friends are having a meeting of their Musical-Poetical club. The meetings usually began with music; however, while checking to see if a broken hammer on one of the keys had been repaired, one of the members dropped the candle shears into the piano and broke all the treble strings. Undaunted, Kreisler declared that he would improvise on just the bass


21. Hoffmann died before completing the last volume of Kater Murr, which contained Kreisler's life story. Despite hints in various other of Hoffmann's writings that mention Kreisler, his ultimate fate remains a mystery.

22. Daemmrich, op. cit., 35.
notes. He had the lights extinguished and sat down at the piano in complete darkness. Beginning softly, he played a series of chords, each accompanied by a spoken commentary. The first few incorporate images of the divine realm:

What is it that rustles so miraculously, so strangely around me? Invisible wings glide up and down. I am swimming in an ethereal fragrance. But the fragrance shines in flaming circles, mysteriously intertwining. They are tender spirits, moving their golden wings in magnificently voluminous tones and chords.

Ah, they are carrying me to the land of unending desire... Be steadfast my heart; do not break at the touch of the burning ray that has penetrated my breast! Be refreshed my gallant spirit! Rise and move in the element which has given you birth and which is your home!  

But into this transcendent scene soon enters an ominous note: "They have offered me a magnificent crown! But those diamonds sparkling in it are in reality the thousand tears which I have shed, and in its gold shine the flames which have consumed me." Kreisler describes an idyllic setting, but he cannot remain happy there:

How joyful are the meadows and forests in spring! All the flutes and panflutes, which during the winter lay frozen in dusty corners, are awake and are recalling their favorite melodies... A mild west wind arises like a mournful secret in muffled grief and as it passes the fir and birch trees whisper: 'Why has our friend become so sad? Do you harken to him


24. Ibid.
lovely shepherdess?"  

Portents of evil begin to appear in hints over several more chords as Kreisler speaks of love, music, and nature, building in intensity: "But let us dance with furious frenzy over the open graves. Let us rejoice! They cannot hear down there. Hurrah! Hurrah! Dancing and rejoicing! The devil is coming with trumpets and drums!" Finally he seems to succumb completely to the demonic realm that he fears is overtaking him:

Don't you know him? Don't you know him? Look, he clutches after my heart with his fiery claw. He grimaces, masquerading himself as a quack doctor, a corporation director, a concert master. He throws candle shears on the piano strings so that I cannot play. Kreisler! Kreisler! Pull yourself together! Can you see him lurking, this pale ghost with the gleaming red eyes, a claw-like bony fist stretching out of this torn coat? . . . It's madness! Johannes, be brave! Mad! Mad! Phantom, why do you ensnare me? Let me go! I curse the singing and the music, only release me from this pain."

A friend quickly lights the lamps, but the hopes of the club for a jovial evening are dampened by the mood Kreisler has evoked. They finally decide to go home.

Hoffmann shows that it is not easy to enter the other world, from where inspiration comes only to those who can

25. Ibid., 147.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
control their fantasy and master the dark forces. Kreisler, in this story, is very close to falling prey completely to the dangers of the realm of dreams. Though he glimpsed the heavenly sphere, he could not overcome the demons.

**Beethoven's Instrumental Music**

The true master of the realm of dreams for E. T. A. Hoffmann was Ludwig van Beethoven. Beethoven's music demonstrates the power of emotion brought under control by Besonnenheit and captured in music. The music of Haydn and Mozart, although they are magnificent composers who stir the sensibilities, do not awaken in Hoffmann the passion that Beethoven's music does.

This is not to say that the music of Beethoven is representative of certain emotions. Hoffmann maintains that pure music should not represent any specific thing, "for its sole subject is the infinite." As stated earlier, the Romantics held instrumental music to be superior to music with words, because words represent definite subjects and do not invite the infinite longing that pure instrumental music does.

In the essay *Beethoven's Instrumental Music* Hoffmann, writing as Kapellmeister Kreisler, describes the other world that is disclosed to him by the music of each of the three

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masters, and gives final shape to the Romantic metaphysics of music. The importance of this essay in popularizing the new attitude towards music is considerable. Carl Dahlhaus called it "one of the charters of romantic music esthetics [sic]."²⁹, and it has recently been added that "[Hoffmann's] review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is unquestionably one of the most important embodiments of the Romantic music aesthetic."³⁰

In Hoffmann's description, Haydn's music shows one a happy paradise of "vast green woodlands," where youths, maidens, and laughing children live "a life of love, of bliss, as before the Fall," that recalls the first era of the three-part history described by Schlegel.³¹ Mozart's music "leads us into the heart of the spirit realm" where fear grips us, but without tormenting us, so that it is more a presentiment of the infinite. Love and melancholy resound with beautiful spirit voices . . . we are drawn with indescribable longing towards the shapes that beckon us to fly through the clouds to their ranks and join the eternal dance of the


spheres.\textsuperscript{32}

Beethoven's music takes us much farther. It "opens to us the realm of the colossal and the immeasurable. Glowing beams of light shoot through the deep night of this realm and we perceive giant shadows surging back and forth."\textsuperscript{33} Kreisler describes himself as destroyed by these shadows, except for the pain of endless longing that lives on and allows him to see the realm. One must assume that Beethoven, unlike Kreisler, managed to overcome the shadows in order to bring back his music. A true artist may see intimations of the other world by playing this music, and he may call to life all the enchanting pictures and shapes the composer has sealed into his work with magic power, that they may surround mankind in luminous sparkling circles, and, enkindling our imagination and innermost soul, may carry us off in rapid flight to the faraway spirit realm of sound.\textsuperscript{34}

An outline of the mythical realm of dreams begins to form in the descriptions made by Kreisler in the \textit{Musical-Poetical Club} and \textit{Beethoven's Instrumental Music}. There is a woodland where people live in paradise, as they did in the Golden Age. Some are content to remain in that happy

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 89.
domain, but others know that there is more, in the "heart of
the spirit realm," though there is also fear. The spirit is
free to soar through the clouds with those that dwell in the
heartland; the fear comes, not from this sphere of lovely
spirit voices, but from intimations of what lies beyond.
Kreisler can visit this level, but he is not happy there
because he knows of the "realm of the colossal and the
immeasurable," where one can be destroyed but from where the
greatest inspiration comes. Kreisler, however, cannot
master the shadows, and he is overcome by demons.

Ritter Gluck

Greater detail is added to the realm of dreams in
Hoffmann's tale Ritter Gluck. Here it is not Kreisler who
visits the spirit world, but a musician calling himself
Gluck. Since the story takes place in the year 1809, it is
generally consented that he is not the composer Christoph
Willibald Gluck, who died in 1787. But the Gluck of this
tale knows all of the actual composer's music, is a composer
himself, and knows intimately the realm of spirits. His
description of that place very closely matches Kreisler's.

Ritter Gluck is one of Hoffmann's best-known tales.
Much has been written about the motivation of the title
character. Gluck has been seen as the (partly
autobiographical) story of an artist who becomes so deeply
involved in art that he loses touch with life,35 or of one who had achieved transcendence and received divine inspiration, but could not frame his experience artistically, and therefore took the identity of the composer Gluck as the one who had most closely approximated it.36 Another critic found the story to be about the dilemma of an artist facing the challenge of developing a new, individual style of art in the wake of the geniuses who came before him, and failing to go beyond them.37 In any event, it is a tale about another musician who may or may not be mad, like Kreisler, and it also helped to establish the popular idea of the eccentric artist in the nineteenth century.

The tale is told as a recollection by an unknown Travelling Enthusiast, a device that Hoffmann often employed in his musical narratives. The Enthusiast has stopped into a Berlin tavern one evening for a drink. Having a well-developed ear for music, he is appalled at the poor quality of the small orchestra playing in the corner and remarks aloud on the bad effect of the parallel octaves they are playing. A bystander of singular appearance overhears and


they begin a conversation on music, interrupted from time to
time by odd musical interludes from the stranger.
Eventually the stranger reveals that he is a composer, and
gives the following description of "the thousand ways in
which one can be led to composition:" 38

It is like a broad highway full of people bustling
about rejoicing and crying 'We are the chosen; we
have reached the goal!' Through the Ivory Gate one
enters the land of dreams. Few even notice the gate,
fewer still pass through! What an adventure! Behind
the Gate intoxicating shapes sway back and forth . . .
Once entered it is difficult to leave this realm,
for just as monsters blocked the way to Alzinen's
castle, the shapes whirl about threateningly. Many
are those who dream away the dream of this dream-
world--dissolving into dreams. No longer do they
cast a shadow, or they would be aware of it by
the ray that passes through this realm. Only a few
awake from this dream to pass through the dream-world
and advance on high to the moment of truth, the
highest moment there is, contact with the eternal,
the inexpressible! Look at the sun! It is the triad
from which the chords of the stars shower down at our
feet to wrap us in their threads of crystallized fire!
A chrysalis in flames, we await Psyche to carry us on
high to the sun! 39

After stopping for a drink, the stranger continues to
tell of the "thousand fears and pains" that tormented him,
of the monsters that "dragged me one moment into the abyss
of the sea and the next raised me on high," 40 about how
"rays of light came through the night, and the rays of light

38. E. T. A. Hoffmann, Ritter Gluck, trans. and cited
in Schafer, op. cit., 34.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid, 35.
were tones, "41 and about a great, clear eye which stared into an organ; and as it stared, tones arose and wound themselves into more shimmering and majestical chords than I had ever thought possible. Melodies poured up and down and I swam in their current and wanted to drown. Then the eye looked at me and raised me up over the raging waves. It was night again. At length two giants stepped up to me in shining armour; the Tonic and the Dominant. They bore me on high with them and the giant eye smiled. "I know the reason for the longing which fills thy breast. It is the longing for the Third, that tender youth, who now steps up between the two giants. May you hear his sweet voice and until we meet again, may all my melodies be thine." 42

After the speaker had been many years in the kingdom of dreams, the eye reappeared inside a sunflower. The sunflower was in a "marvelous valley" where the stranger had been listening to the singing of flowers. The sunflower opened, revealing the eye, and "tones, like beams of light, flowed from my head to the flowers, which eagerly absorbed them. The sunflower's leaves grew larger and larger . . . the eye had disappeared and I was the bloom!" 43 At this point in the narrative the stranger jumps up and runs away.

On his way home, the Enthusiast sees the stranger and approaches him. They converse a bit further on Berlin musical life, which the strange composer disdains. Finally the Enthusiast mentions that, in Berlin, at least Gluck's

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
works are well promoted, and the stranger, smiling bitterly, once again vanishes.

Several months go by before the stranger again appears, this time by the window of a theater where Gluck's *Armida* is being performed. The Enthusiast grabs him by the arm and drags him toward his house, but the stranger claims that he cannot go to the home of another, and that they shall go and hear *Armida*. He leads the Enthusiast down a back alley and into a dark house. After the stranger lights a lamp, an old-fashioned room is revealed, with a piano, some old, yellowed, blank music paper, a cobweb-covered inkstand, and a cupboard containing Gluck's complete works in beautiful bindings.

The stranger grabs the copy of *Armida* and opens it at the piano, where the Enthusiast can see that all the pages are blank. Unmindful of this, the stranger plays the overture with some intriguing variants on the original, while the Enthusiast turns the empty pages. "All this, Sir, I have written as I came out of the realm of dreams" begins the stranger when he has finished playing,

But I betrayed the sacred to the profane and an ice-cold hand laid hold of my heart. It wouldn't break and thus I was damned to walk among the condemned, a solitary soul, formless, unrecognized by all, until the sunflower again bears me up to the eternal."^4^

The stranger then plays the final scene with tremendous expression, even adding to the original while still keeping in proper form, until the Enthusiast cries out "Who are you?" The stranger pauses, then disappears with the light, leaving the other in darkness for nearly a quarter of an hour. Finally he returns in old-fashioned court dress and announces "I am Ritter Gluck!"  

The other-world of Ritter Gluck contains many of the same images as that of Kreisler, and also some new details. The crowded world of musical dilettantes is depicted as a wide highway, where the people are happy because they are self-satisfied and blind to the Ivory Gate. This level is not a part of the realm of dreams; that hallowed place lies through the gate, a gate which is difficult to see and even more difficult to pass beyond.

The realm on the other side of the gate bears a close resemblance to Kreisler's description of the spirit realm in Beethoven's Instrumental Music. Here the bizarre figures move about chaotically, and beams of light pierce the darkness. Monsters lurk here to defeat the unworthy, as they defeated Kreisler. But in Gluck's adventure, the figures were not quite so immense, the monsters terrifying but not overwhelming. He was able to rouse himself from the dream, shake off the demons, and continue to the highest

45. Ibid.
level: that of the truth, the eternal, in the symbol of the sun.

Inspiration did not come immediately to Gluck. After his first contact with the sun and with the great eye, he remained in the realm of dreams for years. Those years were not all spent in the chaotic land of absurd figures. He was in a valley filled with singing flowers when he saw the eye again, in a land quite similar to the paradise of Kreisler's world. This time the eye was associated with a sunflower, rather than the sun itself. He was finally enlightened when the sunflower opened, and the singing flowers stopped singing to drink in Gluck's music instead, which flowed from his head like the rays of light in the center of the realm of dreams.

With the inspiration he received from the other world, Gluck returned and wrote his music. After his betrayal of the sacred (meaning the music of truth) to the profane, the monsters appeared and Gluck was powerless against them. He lost his ability to compose and was doomed to wander among the condemned (apparently referring to the Berliners) as his punishment. In this separation, we can see the second era of Schlegel's historical outline, the Fall from grace, represented as Gluck waits for reunification with the realm of truth.

These stories present the basic form of Hoffmann's mythological worldview. A few more details come out in
other stories, and they shall be examined in a later chapter. Hoffmann maintained this mythology in connection with music consistently throughout his writing career, in tales and in critical essays. As was noted earlier, his other-world was not based on popular folklore, but still was mature and fully-formed even from his earliest writings.\footnote{Pauline Watts, Music: The Medium of the Metaphysical in E. T. A. Hoffmann (Amsterdam: RODOPT NV, 1972), 25.} Hoffmann obviously drew on the other Romantics for inspiration, but their mythical settings were either not as consistent as Hoffmann's, or they were based on Christian, Greek, and Indian ideas and cannot be compared with Hoffmann's literary universe. Where, then, did Hoffmann find the model for his mythology?

The answer is to be found in the writings of the scientific explorers of the late eighteenth century, which influenced those writers who sought a New Mythology upon which to base their work apart from the classical myths. The reports sent back to Europe from the numerous expeditions to lands occupied by tribal peoples, and discussed extensively in scientific and popular publications, contained new beliefs and new myths. The content of those reports is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter III

SHAMANISM

Shamanism is a widespread phenomenon, aspects of which have been found in many of the world's cultures, especially throughout Asia and the Americas. It is extremely old, with evidence for its existence dating back as far as 13,000 B.C.\(^1\) It was part of the Indo-European way of life, practiced by both men and women, and it spread through the continent with the various tribes as they dispersed across the European countries, the middle east, and Asia.\(^2\)

This is not to say that shamanism has a single, invariable structure that has remained unchanged since the early days of man; far from it. Shamans have developed and adapted their practices to the needs of their communities and to social changes throughout history, and they still do. But certain defining or ubiquitous traits, in various proportions, are central to its manifestations and it shall be these that form our frame of reference. Therefore, no single culture will be represented, and the "pure" form of

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shamanism presented as the archetype will not be an accurate depiction of any particular practice. However, the central characteristics that will be examined comprise a distilled form of the most common shamanic motifs as examined by Mircea Eliade, Andreas Lommel, Joan Halifax, and other anthropologists and specialists in religion and mythology.

Characteristics of the Shaman

Trance and Flight

One of the defining traits of the shaman is his or her use of trance to enable him to enter the world of spirits. Other users of trance, who might be called sorcerers, medicine men, fakirs, or magicians, need to be distinguished from shamans, as do others who traffic with spirits, such as mediums, channellers, and necromancers. This can be done by discovering the purpose of the trance. Other trance-users and spiritists enter an alternate state of consciousness in order to be visited by those they wish to contact or to more readily receive information; the shaman enters his in order to travel. "The central technique of shamanism . . . is the use of a religious 'flight' to the world beyond, which is induced by means of music: drumming and singing."3 This flight is one of the shaman’s distinguishing traits.

The fact that the flight can be religious does not mean

that the shaman is mainly a priestly figure. Joseph Campbell separated the shaman and the priest as religious mediators by the nature of the roles they filled: the priest is heir to a set position with recognized, stable functions that is held in a very similar way by a succession of believers, while the shaman is an individual who gained his powers on his own, often in a non-ritualized setting, with spirit helpers that he has found and that reflect his individuality. Lommel advances this idea a little further when he notes that "shamanism is not, as is often supposed, a religion, but a psychological technique which, theoretically, could appear within the framework of any religion." Eliade points out that shamanism accompanies many forms of religion as a technique of the elite "and represents, as it were, the mysticism of the particular religion."

But mysticism and shamanism are not interchangeable as terms. Evelyn Underhill identifies two sides of transcendence: the "way of magic" and the "way of mysticism." The way of mysticism involves the surrender of

the ego into the universe without ulterior motive, simply in a desire for union with the infinite; mystics in her sense do not concern themselves with altering the visible world. Mystics may have visions, but there is no coherent organization to them, and they need not happen every time the mystic achieves union. Shamans, on the other hand, follow the way of magic. They seek to change the world in some fashion and have consistent visions.

The state of consciousness that the shaman enters to engage in her flight goes by several names: ecstasy, trance, crisis, fit, and so on. However, in the interest of clarity, Gilbert Rouget has attempted to provide narrower definitions of these terms to better differentiate what might actually be separate experiences of consciousness, and this thesis will follow his divisions. Thus, although the term "ecstasy" is often used to denote the shaman's alternate condition, as in Eliade's seminal book *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, historical usage generally reserves this term for those states reached through understimulation of the senses. This state is typified by the ecstasies of St. Teresa, who usually achieved her more mystical mode of being in silent meditation. The technique

used by shamans is just the opposite; it incorporates music, dancing, and general overstimulation; Rouget designates the alternate state arrived at through these means as trance.\textsuperscript{11} The terms shall be similarly employed in this thesis.

Rouget also makes useful distinctions between types of trance: shamanic trance and possession trance. Possession is passive; the possessed person is visited by spirits or is used by spirits for riding or communicating. Possession trance is also generally involuntary.\textsuperscript{12} Shamanism is active: the shaman goes out and visits spirits, and she uses spirits as her helpers. Shamanic trance is usually voluntary.\textsuperscript{13} Possession generally occurs while the person is listening to music; that is, while being \textit{played to} rather than \textit{playing} the music. Rouget refers to this as being "musicated."\textsuperscript{14} The shaman plays his own music, or is the "musicant."\textsuperscript{15} This distinction is also useful and shall be followed here.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[12.] \textit{Ibid.}, 18-23.
\item[13.] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[14.] \textit{Ibid.}, 125ff.
\item[15.] \textit{Ibid.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Social Status

While the shaman’s journeys to the spirit world are not specifically priestly activities, they are religious, as noted earlier, in the sense that they confirm the religious beliefs of the community in a tangible way. The spirit world encountered during the shamanic flight is the mythological ideology of the people brought to life and visited by one of their number. The shaman speaks with gods and spirits face-to-face, often bargaining for better hunting for the people or the end to some natural catastrophe. He is the only one who can directly intercede between the worlds.

The ability to do this, though, obviously marks the shamans as powerful and "different" sorts of people. Often they will be held somewhat in awe or feared, "separated from the rest of the community by the intensity of their own religious experience."16 This is not to say that they are cast out or shunned, but that they are not generally considered to be the same as other members of the community; a shaman has a foot in both the human and the spirit worlds. Shamans may or may not hold any political power in the society, they may or may not be the central religious figures, but they are generally the dominant ones when they wish to exercise their power or when their services are

Initiation

The shaman usually gains his powers during initiation. A person who has received the call to shamanize is generally initiated in two ways: by an elder shaman in a public or private rite, or by an individual experience that is tantamount to an initiation rite, such as a highly unusual accident, very strong dreams, or a severe sickness that can only be cured by shamanizing. Sometimes both methods occur together. The most characteristic call to the shaman’s profession, though, is the crisis or sickness accompanied by vivid dreams. It is so common that it is often referred to as the “initiatory sickness,” and the dreams usually conform to an archetypal pattern of initiation.

In the initiatory sickness, the shaman often goes on the first of many journeys into the spirit world. Sometimes she is given a tour of the spirit world by a guide (that may turn out to be her helping spirit) before or after the dream-rite; sometimes the shaman goes directly to the rite. The initiation rite involves dying to the old human

17. Ibid., 4.

condition in order to be reborn as a shaman. Typically this takes the form of dismemberment of the candidate; the spirits of illness will scrape the flesh from the bones of the initiate, boil it, and eat it. Only the illnesses that partake of her flesh will be subject to the shaman’s control in the world of her people. The bones are rearranged or replaced, covered with new flesh and organs, and the candidate is reborn, recovered from her sickness and ready to cure others.

Healing Songs

Almost always, the shaman is reborn with a song of healing that either comes to him spontaneously or is given to him by his spirit helper. It is with this song, symbolic of his own recovery, that the shaman heals others. Joseph Campbell wrote succinctly that “the healing of the shaman is achieved through art: i.e., mythology and song.” Often this musical recovery is quite dramatic, as in the case of a Kwakiutl Indian named Lebi’d, who had been sick for a long time before he finally died one winter. Snowstorms prevented his burial from taking place at the usual time:

Again and again the people had to postpone the burial ceremony. Suddenly [Lebi’d] was heard singing a song, and the wolves that began to gather around his corpse were howling with him. Then the people knew that

19. Ibid.

Lebi'd had become a shaman.\(^{21}\)

Another Kwakiutl, who had once helped a wolf by removing a deer bone that had lodged in its jaw, one day found the spirit of the wolf before him. The wolf gave the Indian all its magical power and taught him four sacred songs to shamanize with.\(^{22}\)

The songs that the shamans acquire also help in performing what is probably their chief function in society: healing the other members of the community. Since sickness is often attributed to the loss of one of a person's several souls, the shaman can track down and retrieve the soul during an entranced journey and replace it in the patient's body, thereby healing the sufferer. The power of the shaman to heal others begins with his own recovery from illness and the powerful songs learned at that time.

The dream initiations are generally considered to be as effective as public ones because shamans often do not think it important to differentiate the dream world from the everyday world.\(^{23}\) It is not that they cannot, or that they do not know when they are dreaming; they simply have a different view of what we may call "reality," that is


\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Lommel, *op. cit.*, 39.
organized by another hierarchy of importance than that of the West. The spirit world is real because they live with its effects. The shamans have seen it with their own eyes, and their descriptions show a good deal of uniformity.

Cosmology

The universe of the shaman is usually ordered into three main areas: the world in which the people live day-to-day, an upper world of the sky, and a lower world under the earth; these three realms are connected through the center by the axis mundi, often pictured as a Cosmic Tree with its roots in the lower world and its top in the upper world. The shaman’s drum is made of wood from the Cosmic Tree, so that its music allows travel between the levels.  

The three-tiered universe is a widespread myth that is not always connected with shamanism, but shamans are the only ones who have first-hand knowledge of its configuration. There is a great deal of difference of opinion between cultures as to the inclinations of the spirits that inhabit these planes, however. Some see the upper world as good, the lower as evil. Others believe that it is only a matter of different powers or abilities


25. Eliade, Shamanism, 265.

26. Ibid., 184ff.
between the two, with the upper realm populated by creative and powerful but passive spirits uninterested in human affairs, and the lower realm housing mainly lesser spirits who will take a hand in terrestrial activities.\textsuperscript{27}

The details of the other worlds vary according to culture, but certain aspects are similar in almost every mythology. Some of them are revealed in a South American Warao creation story, in which the first shaman (a four-year-old boy) wished to visit the East. He fasted for four days, then lit a fire under a hammock and laid down in it. His spirit ascended and a voice told him to follow:

Soon the boy found himself on a bridge made of thick white ropes of tobacco smoke. He followed the invisible spirit guide until, a short distance from the center of the celestial dome, he reached a point where marvelous flowers began meandering alongside the bridge in a rainbow of brilliant colors . . . from a distance he already perceived the chanting of the bahanarao [those who blow smoke]. The bridge led right to the door of the House of Smoke in the East. The boy arrived there, listened to the beautiful music, and became so elated that he desired nothing more than to enter at once.\textsuperscript{28}

The motifs of the bridge, the spirit guide, the location of the house in the center of the dome, the door, and the music are all shamanic images of importance. The colors and the flowers also appear in descriptions of the

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 186-187.

other world, as in the ones collected by Holger Kalweit as part of his "geography of death:" "Now the dying person enters a world of radiant colors and golden light. He finds himself in a landscape filled with beautiful flowers."\(^{29}\)

The Center. Eliade discusses the importance of the "center" to religious man. The center is often thought of as the highest point on earth, and therefore the closest to heaven. The center is also the place where communication can occur between the worlds; as we have seen, the轴 mundi is situated there. It is the "navel of the world," the place where creation started, and it is always a holy place.\(^{30}\)

The Axis Mundi. Since the holy place of the center is the location of the World Tree as well as of temples, cities, houses, and other sacred locations, and the center is often conceived of as the highest point on earth, the轴 mundi is sometimes pictured as a mountain rather than a tree. In various other conditions it takes on other forms as well, such as fire or smoke, ropes, vines, a rainbow, or a sunbeam, and so on; whatever might serve as a path for a shaman.\(^{31}\) An African of the !Kung people named Old K"xau climbed the "thread of the sky" on his initiatory journey,

\(^{29}\) Kalweit, op. cit., 5.

\(^{30}\) Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 36ff.

\(^{31}\) Eliade, Shamanism, 490.
up to where the spirits were singing for him so that he could dance.\textsuperscript{32} Here the thread took over the role of the connection between the worlds.

\textbf{The Difficult Crossing.} Two pathways are represented in the Warao story: a bridge and a door. The bridge, made of smoke, filled the role of \textit{axis mundi} and served as the path to the other world. The door is part of shamanic symbolism of the "strait gate" whose "crossing is difficult; in other words, it is sown with obstacles and not all souls succeed in traversing it; demons and monsters seeking to devour the soul must be faced . . . only the 'good,' and especially the \textit{initiates}, cross the bridge easily."\textsuperscript{33}

Other manifestations of the "strait gate" are the bridge that becomes as narrow as a hair when one tries to cross it, the passage that opens only for an instant, a pair of clashing rocks, and the jaws of a monster, among others.\textsuperscript{34}

These obstacles serve to keep the unworthy from entering the spirit world. In the Warao myth, the young shaman was questioned before he was allowed to open the door; he was admitted to the House of Smoke only because he was "pure and free of women."\textsuperscript{35} He had to show that he was one of the

\begin{itemize}
\item 32. Halifax, \textit{op. cit.}, 56.
\item 33. Eliade, \textit{Shamanism}, 483.
\item 34. \textit{Ibid.}, 485-486.
\item 35. Halifax, \textit{op. cit.}, 230.
\end{itemize}
Spirit Wives or Husbands. Shamans do not always have to abstain from the company of the opposite sex. Many are married on the terrestrial level and have a "celestial spouse" from the spirit world as well. This spirit wife or husband acts as a guide in the other world, often revealing esoteric knowledge to the shaman. The Eskimo Igjugarjuk was put in initiatory isolation for thirty days, when he was finally visited by a "lovely and beautiful helping spirit," a woman. In Siberia, a man of the Gol’d people was sick in bed when a beautiful woman spirit came to him and said that she was the helping spirit of his ancestors, who were shamans. "I taught them shamaning," she told him, "now I am going to teach you." The spirit-marriage is another sign that the shaman is a part of the other world as much as of the everyday one.

Helping Spirits. Other, less intimate, spirit helpers are often found in the form of animals or strange, grotesquely-shaped figures. Like the wolf spirits of the Kwakiutl Indians, the familiar will often give power to the shaman and teach him songs. Sometimes, however, a spirit will appear to a shaman that is too terrible to be taken as

38. Ibid., 121.
a helper. One such spirit, a large beast with long, bristly fur and gigantic teeth rose from a hole in the ice while an Eskimo shaman was hunting seals. The man was so frightened he ran home immediately, too afraid to take the creature for a familiar. Generally, though, an animal spirit such as a wolf, bear, eagle, or horse will come to the initiate, and will submit to his control. These spirits help the shaman by accompanying him on journeys to the beyond, and the shaman will often ride his helpers over difficult parts of the way. Generally, the more spirit helpers a shaman can control, the more power he is credited with.

Music and the Drum. In addition to riding the spirit animals, the shaman is often said to ride his or her drum to the other world. This is partly because the drum is made from the wood of the Cosmic Tree and is therefore a direct link to the three levels of the universe, and partly because of the importance of music in the onset of the shaman's trance. Rouget states that "as a general rule, possession fit or trance is accompanied by music, and music is almost always regarded as being more or less responsible for its onset." The same applies to shamanic trance. Many varieties of music are employed to this end by shamans; the most common is a combination of voice and instruments, but

40. Rouget, op. cit., 73.
sometimes the voice will be used alone, or any number of a multitude of possible instruments can be used without the voice.\textsuperscript{41}

The Apache chief and holy man Geronimo once said: "As I sing, I go through the air to a holy place where Yusun [the Supreme Being] will give me power to do wonderful things. I am surrounded by little clouds, and as I go through the air I change, becoming spirit only."\textsuperscript{42} Prem Das, on his first spirit voyage during training as a Huichol shaman in Mexico, flew among various kinds of light and forms . . . the cloud forms were singing, and I was riding on their song. Each song lifted me still higher toward a warm, blissful, and radiant light. As I came closer to the great brilliant sphere, time was slowing to a stop . . . this knowing self I knew myself to be was ancient, existing in all time, for his residence was in the eternal, in a star, the sun, at the center of my universe.\textsuperscript{43}

In both of these narratives, music is seen as the force that propels the entranced journeyer. This association of music and flight is important in shamanic lore. In Prem Das' experience, the music carried him to the "center" amidst "radiant light;" the images overlap but have the same importance as in the earlier narratives. Structuralists

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} In Natalie Curtis, \textit{The Indian's Book} (New York: Harper & Row, 1907), 324, cited in Halifax, \textit{op. cit.}, 32.

\textsuperscript{43} Prem Das, personal communication with Joan Halifax, cited in Halifax, \textit{op. cit.}, 240.
like Claude Lévi-Strauss point out that it is not as important what order the elements fall into, but rather what the relationships are between the elements that is important in examining myths.  

**Shamanism in European Mythology**

Many of the images that have been examined also appear in the myths of races that no longer have practicing shamans, as remnants of an earlier shamanic lifestyle. For example, the Indo-Europeans that spread into Western Europe used shamanism, but eventually the shamans were stamped out as the culture became more agriculturally oriented. Eliade mentions that “such vestiges [of shamanism] remain among almost all the European peoples.” Old Germanic myths provide an especially clear picture of shamanism, with Odin as the “shaman-god of the Norse pantheon.”

44. See Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Structural Anthropology* for a discussion of his method.

45. Joseph Campbell finds that myth systems in the stable, agricultural cultures were designed to suppress individualism in favor of group and society archetypes of behavior. As the Indo-Europeans changed from roving bands of hunter/gatherers (that emphasized individual power and personal achievement) to farmers, they began to see the shamans as threats to the new order. Shamanism survived in some places but was driven underground. See Campbell, *op. cit.*, 240.


displayed many of the traits of shamanism: he hung from Yggdrasil, the Cosmic Tree of the Germanic people, in a way similar to that found in initiation rites of Siberian shamans; his horse Sleipnir was eight-hoofed, like the steeds of shamans in Siberia, Muria and elsewhere; his two crows behaved as animal spirit-helpers; and he journeyed to Hel on Sleipnir to speak with a dead prophetess, a journey that was also undertaken by a hero named Hermóðhr.\textsuperscript{48}

Shamanism also shows up in the myths of classical antiquity. The travels of Odysseus have been likened to a shamanic journey.\textsuperscript{49} At one point, Odysseus even visits the underworld. Shamanic motifs also appear in the Greek stories of Abaris, Aristeas, Hermotimos, Epimenides, and the Thracians.\textsuperscript{50} The most obvious parallels, though, are found in the story of Orpheus. His music, his descent to Hades for Eurydice, and his healing and divinatory powers have all been associated with shamanic practice.\textsuperscript{51} Eliade also finds a great many parallels between shamanism and rites and symbols of India.\textsuperscript{52}

Of course, this overview of shamanism is barely a

\textsuperscript{48} Eliade, \textit{Shamanism}, 380ff.
\textsuperscript{49} Lommel, \textit{op. cit.}, 105.
\textsuperscript{50} Eliade, \textit{Shamanism}, 388ff.
\textsuperscript{51} Lommel, \textit{op. cit.}, 105, Eliade, \textit{Ibid.}, 391, and Rouget, \textit{op. cit.}, 239.
\textsuperscript{52} Eliade, \textit{Shamanism}, 403ff.
sketch of even the archetypal form of shamanism. It simply highlights those aspects that are important to this thesis, while trying not to leave out any definitive characteristics of shamanic imagery. Some may object that the role of the shaman as healer, which is generally considered to be a primary function of the shaman, is not given enough emphasis. This is a fair criticism, but for this thesis the side of shamanism that is immediately germane is the imagery associated with the shaman's entranced journey and her method of travel; because of this, her social position and function have been given less priority.

The Rediscovery of Shamanism in Europe

"The second half of the eighteenth century is known as the era of academic expeditions" writes Gloria Flaherty. These expeditions were sent to Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European monarchs who were interested in finding new people and resources for producing and consuming the goods of the European countries. Explorers were sent out to compile information on native people's lifestyles, agriculture, medicine, and entertainment, as well as to gather specimens of indigenous plants and cultural artifacts such as costumes, weapons, musical instruments, and the

Judging by the reports that were sent back to Europe, explorers devoted a great deal of attention to trance states and shamanic ritual and costume. These reports were published in scientific journals, and subsequently filtered through newspapers, books, and dictionaries. The number of professors, adventurers, and other visitors to Siberia and North America was so great, and the manners of the explorers were so poor, that eventually the shamans would hide so as not to have to perform, only to be mocked and insulted. Many shamans had their sacred clothing and equipment taken away by the Europeans, causing them to lose their powers. Because shamanism was generally considered to be a manifestation of mental illness, many early travellers did not feel any compunction in behaving toward shamans the way they might behave toward a patient in an eighteenth-century asylum.

Catherine the Great financed many such expeditions to explore the Russias in the 1760s and 70s, using mainly German scientists. She wanted to populate her entire realm with Europeans, and so sought to get rid of the shamanism that was so prevalent there, which she saw as uncontrollable
and anarchistic. In the later 1780s Catherine published comedies she had written that were intended to ridicule shamans and those who were caught up in the current fascination with shamanism. But apparently this tactic did not work, for she wrote to a friend complaining that no one would read her plays because shamanism was too fashionable a subject, especially among the German princes.

Gloria Flaherty maintains that the latest accounts of the explorers were well known to all literate eighteenth-century Europeans: "Such publications were the talk of the cafés, the themes of articles in the moral weeklies, the sources for the latest dress fashions, and the subjects of new operas." Not just the average person was taken with the topic; great thinkers and artists also studied the phenomenon. Immanuel Kant included shamanism in his lectures at the University of Königsberg. Denis Diderot studied shamanism and depicted it in his Le neveu de Rameau. The philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder singled out shamans as cultural focal points in his published collections of folk songs, and claimed that all

57. Ibid., 118.
58. Ibid., 119.
59. Ibid., 11.
60. Ibid., 12.
61. Ibid., 117.
societies had shamans, naming Orpheus and the troubadours as examples. Goethe regularly borrowed books dealing with shamanism from the libraries in Weimar, and probably discussed them with his friend Herder.

The idea of shamanism was in the air during the early years of E. T. A. Hoffmann's life. It was written about and discussed; some of the greatest minds of the age took an interest in it. It was in Kant's lectures in Königsberg, possibly even while Hoffmann was a student there. Hoffmann read widely, especially on occult subjects and such alternate states of consciousness as mesmerism. How this affected Hoffmann's writing we shall now explore.

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62. Ibid., 132-142.

63. Ibid., 172.
Chapter IV
ELEMENTS OF SHAMANISM IN HOFFMANN’S WORK

As Harvey Hewett-Thayer wrote (and as was noted earlier), in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s work one can see that "through the poet’s inspired dreams the wonder of another world is mingled with our every-day." If one were to substitute the word "shaman" for "poet," the epigram would still hold true. The artist of Hoffmann’s world and the shaman of this one behave in similar ways, and the other-world from which the artist receives his inspiration is the twin of the one wherein the shaman meets his gods.

We have seen that Hoffmann was fascinated by alternative states of consciousness, manifested in his interest in mental illness and hypnotism. We have found that he grew up in a society "bursting to the brim with explorer’s reports about shamans, enchanters, and medicine men." It remains to be shown just how this interest was incorporated into his writings on music, by holding up side-by-side the templates of the shamanic worldview and of Hoffmann’s mythology and finding where they match.


Religion

A good starting point would be to note the similar functions of shamans and of Hoffmann’s artists: both act as adjuncts to and mediators of religion. This is not to say Christianity. It has been said that the Romantic idea of being propelled upwards by music had its roots in the Christian notion of ascent into heaven, explaining why so many stories dealt with music in the church.3 However, in Hoffmann one finds this reaction more often, and more forcefully, in the concert and opera hall. The religion that the artists devoted themselves to was introduced in 1799 by Schleiermacher when he wrote of the new Kunstreligion, an idea soon expounded upon by Tieck and Wackenroder.4 Dahlhaus wrote that Hoffmann combined historical and aesthetic viewpoints into a “religious consciousness in which religion is art, and art religion.”5 The Romantic conception of the “art religion” is also detailed by Georg von Dadelsen, who has noted the many

3. R. Murray Schafer, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Music (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 97. Examples would be Wackenroder’s musician Joseph Berglinger and the extensions added for publication by Tieck, as well as Hoffmann’s essay Ancient and Modern Church Music.


5. Ibid., 100.
relationships between the artist’s world and the church.⁶

As discussed previously, shamans are not necessarily priests, and shamanism is not a religion in itself but rather an adjunct to a religion, rather like the great mystics are to Christianity; they form an elite sub-group. Shamans appear in many religions, not just in tribal societies: evidence for their existence has been found in ancient Greece, India, and among the Indo-Europeans. That shamanism should show up in the Romantic Kunstreligion is not too surprising. And despite the references that abound in the work of the Romantics to the sublime nature of church music, the imagery they use to describe its effect has little to do with the Christian tradition of mysticism, and more to do with the mystic’s soul-voyaging and magical cousins.

Why, then, the references to Christianity in Hoffmann’s work, notably in his essay Alte und neue Kirchenmusik [Ancient and Modern Church Music], and why do his artist characters often associate themselves with a monastery at some time or other? Hoffmann had a certain faith and belief in God, but he was not a practicing Catholic or Protestant. He had his own mythology worked out for the artists in his stories to interact with; he did not need to use the

biblical cosmology. However, part of being a creative artist is encoding your vision and expressing it to the world. Language is notoriously poor at containing many experiences, especially the sublime ones; this is part of the function of symbols and other non-verbal means of expression, such as music and the plastic arts. But the Enlightenment that preceded the time of most of Hoffmann's stories had succeeded in wiping out the greater part of the symbol systems that had previously been used for denoting the mystical and super-mundane among the populace, i.e. alchemy, magic, witchcraft, and mythology. The only coherent set of symbols left with which one could frame transcendent experience in a way comprehensible to the people was that belonging to the church.

But this lack of symbolism is exactly what Schlegel was trying to rectify with his call for a New Mythology. Unfortunately for the Romantics, at the time they were writing most people were not interested in a mythological re-orientation of their lives. They were quite happy with society and their new cure-all, science. So when Hoffmann's artists tried to explain the supernatural power of music using the imagery of the other world, the philistines were

7. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, for the inadequacies of language for conveying subjective experience, and Bruce Kapferer, "Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience" and A Celebration of Demons for the way in which art encapsulates and subjectively expresses experience.
unable to understand it and incapable of comprehending why anyone should make the attempt in the first place.

The advantage that shamans have is the fact that their society has a mythology with symbols that can express the shaman's vision. These mythic symbols "function as a kind of mythological vocabulary. Through this vocabulary the individual may better understand and relate to his own experiences, and also transmit their import to others." Shamans can formulate their bizarre and frightening visions of the spirit world in a way that allows them to deal with the visions from a personal standpoint. They can then share their experiences in a socially valid and even admired way, as healers and diviners.

The artists of eighteenth-century Europe had to create their own mythological vocabulary, or else find one that was already formed and incorporate that. The disadvantage of the first method was that it fulfilled only half of the function of communication: it allowed the artist to formulate his ideas in a unified fashion, but those ideas could not be understood by the intended audience, unless the audience was composed of initiates into the artist's world. Of course, those who were not initiates were philistines, and it is futile to try to communicate with philistines through the medium of art.

The second method is easier, but still lacks communicative ability unless the system that is used is widely known. Therefore one must find a large group already in place with strong symbols and use their images to frame mystical experience. In eighteenth-century Europe this would be primarily the Christians, and especially Catholics. But Hoffmann’s musicians do not start out using Christian imagery. They use the mythical milieu that included a larger and more important role for music as the pathway to transcendence, and that was known to all well-read members of society, presumably including Hoffmann’s readers; the universe of the shaman. Only if they fail at this do they attempt to re-orient their experience into the Christian ideology.

The ability to transform a vision into a new set of symbols is not as unusual as it might seem. Carl Jung explains that people will move from one set of symbols to another if the first set loses its power to contain the significance of archetypal revelations, or is contrary to the temperament of the visionary.9 Jung gives the example of Brother Klaus, a Swiss mystic and hermit, who had a terrifying experience so powerful that it changed his countenance; this to the extent that people who saw him were

frightened. Brother Klaus originally said that "he had seen a piercing light resembling a human face." 10 In trying to understand his vision, he turned to the writings and illustrations of a German mystic, ruminating on the experience for years. Finally, guided by the mystic diagrams, he came to the conclusion that he had "gazed upon the Holy Trinity itself -- the sumnum bonum, eternal love." 11 The final expression of Brother Klaus' experience was quite different from its original form, and came about as the hermit tried to reconcile his mysterious vision with the mysteries he was familiar with.

A similar option was open to those artists who were tired of their life-changing experiences being regarded as silly fables -- they could enter a monastery and be regarded as very holy men. Some of Hoffmann's artists take this route, or are at least sorely tempted, as Kreisler was. But in Hoffmann's universe, sometimes the other-world is simply too insistent to be ignored or reinterpreted, as was the case with Anselmus and his many visits to Atlantis, or Gluck in his travels to the realm of dreams.

The Realm of Dreams

For Hoffmann, the other world was the source of

10. Ibid., 9.
11. Ibid.
artistic inspiration; those who saw it had to have recourse to art, especially music, to express their experience or else go mad. In the same way, the journey of the shaman and his subsequent need for expression has been called the initial impetus for creating art, songs, and stories: "The shaman is not merely a medicine man, a doctor or a man with priestly functions, he is above all an artistically productive man, in the truest sense of the word creative -- in fact, he is probably the first artistically active man known to us."\(^\text{12}\) If the shaman does not heed the call to shamanize, "death will result."\(^\text{13}\) We have seen that in Hoffmann's stories, those who cannot successfully heed their artistic calling lose their ability to live in society.

Kreisler's Initiation

The call to the artistic life in Hoffmann's universe can be literally a crisis similar to that experienced by shamans, including an initiation. The images related by Kreisler in the Musical-Poetical Club form a typical dream-rite, which, however, Kreisler fails to complete, because of his capitulation to his fear of the demons. These fragments, in the episode that marked Kreisler's last


appearance, have the character of a recollection, as though he is reviewing his initial encounter with the realm of dreams before he vanishes from society. These initiation images are reenforced in Hoffmann's other writings about Kreisler and about other musicians with similar sensitivities.

The Calling. After playing the first chord of his improvisation for the club, Kreisler becomes disoriented as spirits suddenly appear around him: "What is it that rustles so miraculously, so strangely around me? Invisible wings glide up and down." This sort of spontaneous encounter sometimes happens to a newly-chosen shaman, as it did to the Tierra del Fuego Indian who was frightened to see water suddenly pour from a tree that he was about to fell. He realized that such a sign meant that he was to become a shaman. Another man in Siberia had just cut down a tree, when out of the roots sprang a spirit. The spirit took the man on his first journey to the other world.

For Hoffmann's artists, this call is as irresistible as it is for the shaman. In the sarcastic essay Gedanken über


15. Lommel, op. cit., 39.

den hohen Wert der Musik [Reflections on the High Value on Music], ostensibly written by a bourgeois dilettante, Hoffmann makes his views known in the ironic stance of a philistine who believes that music is a fine pastime for young girls and the lower classes, and as a pleasant background for conversation. But "if a titled family of high standing were ever so unlucky as to have a child who was drawn especially to art -- or in the ridiculous language of those fools [artists], a child who was consumed beyond all opposition by the divine flames," they should take drastic steps to re-train the child.\textsuperscript{17} The phrase "consumed beyond all opposition," used by Hoffmann when speaking as an artist, reveals an intensity of the call to art as strong as the call to shamanize.

**Musical Flight.** The next chord that Kreisler plays gives rise to the image of flight: "Ah, they are carrying me to the land of unending desire."\textsuperscript{18} The motif of flight, as noted earlier, is found throughout shamanic lore, usually in connection with music. It is also characteristic of Hoffmann's musicians. Kreisler tends to experience such a sensation while playing, as when he sat, exhausted after providing music for a social tea, at the piano: "To blame

\textsuperscript{17} Hoffmann, Reflections on the High Value of Music, trans. and cited in Schafer, op. cit., 138.

\textsuperscript{18} Hoffmann, Kreisler's Musical-Poetical Club, trans. and cited in Schafer, op. cit., 146.
is my dear old friend here on the music stand [Bach's Goldberg Variations] who carried me once again so high through the air . . . that I didn’t notice the people far below me." 19 In the story Ombra adorata [Ombra adorata], an unidentified musician (who may be Kreisler, Theodore from the Serapionsbrüder, or even Hoffmann himself) listens to a performance of the aria "Ombra adorata" from Crescentini's opera Romeo and Juliet. Moved by the music, he writes:

Like tender spirits your tones have embraced me, and every tone said: 'Raise your head, depressed one, come with us to the far-off land where pain is unknown and where the breast is filled with indestructible desire and enchantment.'

The song flows like a silver-bright stream among the brilliant flowers . . . and the soul rejoices in its transfiguration, transported on the crystal-clear melismas and borne up through the brilliant sky. 20

When placed beside Prem Das' description of his flight, during which he was riding on songs, and the claim of Geronimo that "as I sing, I go through the air to a holy place . . . I am surrounded by little clouds, and as I go through the air I change, becoming spirit only." 21 Ombra


adorata demonstrates a shared idea of the effect of music; it is a force that can transport one through the sky. Almost identical imagery is employed by Geronimo and Kreisler, who said that with Mozart's music one sees "shapes that beckon us to fly through the clouds to their ranks and join the eternal dance of the spheres." Kreisler, when he refers to being carried by music to other lands, is conceptualizing the power of music in a way similar to that of the many shamans who say that they ride their drum in order to fly between the worlds.

Dismemberment and Rebirth. While Kreisler is playing the same chord that gave rise to the flight imagery, he begins to undergo the initiation rite of dismemberment: "But as they lay hold of me they give rise to a pain which would rend my breast asunder in an effort to escape . . . be steadfast my heart; do not break at the touch of the burning ray that has penetrated my breast!" We have seen how shamans are dismembered and put back together as a form of rebirth, as the shaman dies to the old human form and becomes part spirit. The acquisition of mystical light is a part of many shamanic initiations as well, as a part of the new body. In Eskimo and Indian beliefs, there is a


sensation of light filling the body at the point of enlightenment or rebirth, and among the Australians the new bodies are stuffed with "solidified light." In Kreisler's initiation the burning ray entered his sundered breast at the hands of the spirits.

Kreisler also uses the imagery of initiatory death in Beethoven's Instrumental Music to describe the experience of the realm of dreams. While we are there, the giant shadows destroy "everything in us except the pain of that endless longing . . . in this pain which seeks to break our breast with the chords of all the passions . . . we live on and become enchanted visionaries!" The motif of one's rebirth as a new, more powerful entity after the experience of the other world is plainly in evidence in this passage.

Ritter Gluck also had an initiatory experience on his first visit to the other world that contains many of the same motifs:

As I was in the realm of dreams a thousand fears and pains tormented me. It was night and I was terrified of the leering masks of the monsters who dragged me one moment into the abyss of the sea and the next raised me on high. Rays of light came through the night, and the rays of light were tones which surrounded me with their serene purity. I awoke


from my pains . . .

The thousand pains and the abuse by monsters are similar to the dismemberment by and sharing of the shaman's body among the spirits of disease. Though Gluck does not refer to his body as being broken, the trauma of his extreme maltreatment serves to signify the chaos that precedes rebirth. Gluck is surrounded by light before he wakes up, his torment ended. In the same way, immediately after Kreisler mentions the ray of light, he is reborn and even exclaims: "Be refreshed my gallant spirit! Rise and move in the element which has given you birth and which is your home!"

Kreisler continues with the next chord in his improvisation to describe the crown that the spirits offer him. Crowns are not shamanic archetypes; this one reflects Kreisler's new status after initiation and rebirth, as well as his subjugation of his helping spirits. But it is also a reminder of his trial: Kreisler sees his own tears in the diamonds, and flames that destroyed his old self in the gold.


27. Mircea Eliade discusses the archetype of rebirth from chaos in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*.

The Celestial Wife. During the following two chords, Kreisler uses his new relationship with the spirits to meet a spirit wife: "Why are you fleeing, lovely maid? Why do you try, since invisible bonds hold you completely."\(^{29}\)

Unlike the shamanic celestial wife or husband, who seeks out the shaman and acts as a tutelary spirit, Kreisler finds a maiden and teaches her about desire and longing. Perhaps this choice of the wrong spirit wife led to his eventual downfall: because Kreisler did not receive the proper instruction in the other world, the demons overcame him.

Other musicians in Hoffmann's tales received female spirit helpers. The young Chrysostomus, whose story is included in Johannes Kreislers Lehrbrief [Johannes Kreisler's Certificate of Apprenticeship], is such a case. As a youth, Chrysostomus was enchanted by music that he heard in his head, especially when he sat near a large, mysteriously marked rock in the woods. When he was older he went away to study composition and lost the melodies that he used to hear; they were buried under the many precise counterpoint exercises he had done. But then one day he returned home and sat by the rock once more; he seemed to fall into a dream and he remembered the old days:

How stale, how hackneyed everything that I had composed seemed to me; it did not seem to be music at all, and all my efforts seemed immature dabblings of an idle

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
nobody. But the dream revealed to me a glistening, brilliant realm, and I was comforted. As I now looked at the rock, its veins blossomed into dark carnations whose fragrance rose almost visibly in bright, sounding rays. The rays condensed, as the long crescendo of the nightingale sounded, into the figure of a beautiful woman, but the form was again one of divine, delightful music.  

This woman from the realm of dreams may have instructed Chrysostomus in the ways of natural composition; we do not know, for his story ends here. In any case, she represented the regaining of the lost knowledge of true music. Another female helping spirit that exhibited more typical features appeared to the Travelling Enthusiast during a performance of Mozart's Don Giovanni. The Enthusiast was sitting in a private box when he heard the rustling of silk garments and a gentle breath behind him. After the first act concluded, he turned to find that the lady in the box with him was Donna Anna, and she appeared to be the same as the singer who was playing on the stage. The Enthusiast felt a dream-like state come over him, and realized that "there were secret bonds linking her so closely to me that she could not be parted from me." The Donna Anna spirit told him about the opera, and the Enthusiast gained new understanding of


the music. She revealed to him a "strange world" and spoke of "hidden secrets" that only music allowed access to, though her experience while she is in the terrestrial sphere is reminiscent of the plight that befell Ritter Gluck:

Everything about me is dead and cold, and when I am applauded for a difficult roulade or a successful effect, it is as if icy hands clutch at my glowing heart! But you, you understand me, for I know that you too are at home in the wonderful romantic realm where tones are infused with sublime magic.³²

As with the shamanic celestial wives, this spirit played a tutelary role in speaking with the Enthusiast about music, teaching him about deeper aspects of it. She came to him because he was one of the initiated; he already knew of the spirit realm. She even performed, in a mild way, some of the activities that led Eliade to designate these tutelary spirits as husbands or wives:

In Donna Anna's scene I felt myself enveloped by a soft warm breath; its intoxicating spirit passed over me and I trembled with bliss. My eyes closed involuntarily and a burning kiss seemed to be imprinted on my lips. But the kiss was a long-held note of eternal passionate longing.³³

Though sexuality is not a necessary feature of the spirit guide, the taking of a lover from the other world is an activity that is encountered rather frequently in shamanic

³². Ibid., 67.

³³. Ibid.
After the opera ended, the Enthusiast went back to the private box to write some letters and think about what he had seen. At two o’clock in the morning, a warm breath again surrounded him and he could hear Donna Anna’s voice singing with a far-away, other-worldly orchestra. The Enthusiast cried out:

Open out, oh distant, unknown realm of spirits! Open out, you land of genies! Open out, realm of glory, in which an inexpressible heavenly pain, akin to the most ineffable joy, brings fulfillment beyond all earthly promises to the enraptured soul! Let me enter the circle of your lovely apparitions! From thy dreams, which may terrify or serve as benign messengers to earthly men, choose me one which will carry my spirit to the ethereal fields as my body lies imprisoned in the leaden bonds of sleep! 

If the Enthusiast had been drumming while he chanted this, it could have been a shaman’s song for entering trance. Included are the frightening and the friendly realms, though he would obviously prefer to go to the wooded fields with the youthful men and maidens while his body lies in the seemingly lifeless entranced state.

The Upper Realm. After relating his meeting with the female spirit, Kreisler plays the next chord and describes the upper realm that he is in: "How joyful are the meadows and forests in spring! All the flutes and panflutes . . .

34. Eliade, Shamanism, 73.
35. Hoffmann, Don Juan, in Schafer, op. cit., 71-73.
are awake and are recalling their favorite melodies."\textsuperscript{36}

This is the same realm that Haydn leads one to, full of vast green woodlands where youths and maidens dance, described in Beethoven's Instrumental Music. It is also where Ritter Gluck ended up during his visit to the spirit realm, when he sat in the magnificent valley and listened to the singing flowers.

The Lower Realm. Finally, through a succession of chords, Kreisler encounters the demons of the lower realm: "look, he clutches after my heart with his fiery claw . . . Oh! you have tramped all over my flowers. Not a single stalk of green is left in this dreadful desert. Everything is dead, dead, dead."\textsuperscript{37} The flowers that fill the upper realm, and that are an important part of Ritter Gluck's final enlightenment, are destroyed by Kreisler's demon. Because he failed to overcome the monster, Kreisler never achieved the greatness in his music that is given only to those who travel, like Ritter Gluck, to the highest realm of truth for inspiration.

Although Kreisler's exposition of his initiatory experience ends at that point, there are other shamanic symbols in Hoffmann's tales that Kreisler didn't mention to his friends in the club.

\textsuperscript{36} Hoffmann, Kreisler's Musical-Poetical Club, trans. and cited in Schafer, op. cit., 147.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
Other Shamanic Symbols in Hoffmann’s Universe

The Difficult Crossing. Among the most important of these symbols is the strait gate or difficult crossing that shamans must traverse in order to gain the spirit realm. This motif shows up in Ritter Gluck’s description of his journey as the Ivory Gate: “Through the Ivory Gate one enters the land of dreams. Few even notice the Gate; fewer still pass through!”38 Just as Eliade wrote that, at this bridge of trials, “demons and monsters seeking to devour the soul must be faced ... only the ‘good,’ and especially the initiates, cross the bridge easily,”39 Hoffmann included in his realm fiendish perils: “Once entered it is difficult to leave this realm, for just as monsters blocked the way to Alzinen’s castle, the shapes whirl about threateningly ... Only a few ... pass through the dream-world.”40 In the realm revealed by Beethoven’s instrumental music, there are likewise “giant shadows surging back and forth, closer and closer around us.”41

The Center. The idea of the “center” as a holy or important place is included in Hoffmann’s cosmology as well.

40. Ibid.
41. Hoffmann, Beethoven’s Instrumental Music, trans. and cited in Schafer, op. cit., 84.
In his hierarchy of composers he includes Haydn among the masters because, as one of those who refined and ennobled purely instrumental music, Haydn wrote works that have the ability to take the listener to the spirit world. However, Mozart was a greater composer for Hoffmann, and therefore his music takes us to the "heart of the spirit realm;"\(^\text{42}\) that is, to the center. When one listens to Beethoven, the supreme master, one stands "at the centre of the spirit realm [where] the intoxicated soul hearkens to the unfamiliar language and understands all the secret premonitions that have touched it."\(^\text{43}\)

**The Axis Mundi.** The center is the location of the *axis mundi*, which connects the three levels of the universe and allows communication between them. In the world of E. T. A. Hoffmann, this central link takes the form of a beam of light that is conflated with musical tones. When Ritter Gluck spoke of the other world, he told of a "ray that passes through this realm."\(^\text{44}\) As he continued with his narrative, he said that "rays of light came through the night, and the rays of light were tones."\(^\text{45}\) According to Kreisler in *Beethoven's Instrumental Music*, "glowing beams

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42. *Ibid.*


of light shoot through the deep night of this realm," and he asks, in reference to the Fifth Symphony, which he is reviewing: "Do you not sense once again the turbulent, inexpressible longing and see the wonderful spirit realm which the master rules? How like a dazzling sunbeam is the splendid theme of the last movement." Shamans travel between the levels of the universe along the Cosmic Tree, riding their drums or their spirit helpers, propelled by music. Hoffmann's artists travel on music as well, which often takes the form of a beam of light in the other world and acts as an axis mundi.

Helping Spirits. The helpers that shamans have in the spirit realm are often grotesque and monstrous. Lommel says that "helping spirits in various, generally fantastic shapes or in the form of exceptionally large animals show themselves to the shaman in visions and place themselves at his command," and his book contains many illustrations done by shamans of their strangely-shaped familiars. Ritter Gluck had several unusual helpers of his own in the realm of dreams. The first was the great, disembodied eye that created wonderful melodies, and that raised him up out of the chaos. Gluck then met two giants in shining armor who

47. Ibid., 86.
"bore [Gluck] on high with them." 49 These two helpers, who were the Tonic and the Dominant, were joined by the Third in the form of a tender youth. Gluck's helping spirits carried him over the difficult parts of the other world, just as the shaman's spirits do; after he met his familiars, Gluck attained the magnificent valley of singing flowers. It was shown earlier how shamans often received their songs from their spirit helpers. In like manner, the eye bequeathed its music to Gluck, saying to him "may all my melodies be thine." 50

**Social Position**

The acquisition of spirit helpers and familiarity with the spirit world tends to separate the artist somewhat from the other people of the community, just as it differentiates the shaman. In the essay *Reflections on the High Value of Music*, Hoffmann makes clear the great gulf that divides the artist from the bourgeois. From the perspective of such a philistine, artists (that is, those undoubtedly insane individuals who dedicate their whole lives simply to diverting and amusing society) are to be tolerated because they bring *miscere utile dulce* into practice. No one with good judgement and mature insight would prize the best artists as highly as a good chancery clerk, or even an


artisan who stuffs the mattresses on which the councillor sits in the palace antechamber or the salesman in his office, for we are comparing here a necessity with something that is merely decorative.

Many of these unfortunate dreamers are apprised too late of their folly and as a result fall victims of madness, as is evidenced by their statements about art . . . Those people who . . . [value music as a pleasant decoration] . . . are called ignorant blasphemers who must forever remain locked out of the sanctuary of higher existence. In this way they confirm their madness. 51

In Hoffmann’s view, the artist is not like the common person in the street. Artists see beyond the everyday world, are ennobled by and take inspiration from the other side, while the common people do not believe there needs to be anything in their lives that is not practical and serviceable. Such people think that anyone who needs more than science can provide must be mad, but still, artists can be tolerated on the periphery of society because they are usually harmless and provide pleasantries.

Shamanism, too, was generally thought to be a form of mental illness by eighteenth-century explorers, and for many of the same reasons that Hoffmann’s artists were considered mad -- they had visions of another world that they could visit by means of music. As the nineteenth century continued, however, more and more scientists and travellers began to see shamans as simply representatives of a

different worldview than their own, which did not in itself imply any mental imbalance on the part of either culture. In the same way, more and more of the common people began to see artists and musicians as visionaries and important contributors to everyone's quality of life, and eventually to count them as some of the most important members of society. By then, though, Hoffmann was no longer around to see the world give its visionaries their overdue rewards.
CONCLUSIONS

"Music makes claims upon and gives expression to profounder energies than words can ever reach; which is to say, it is our most powerful magic, for good and for ill."¹

E. T. A. Hoffmann's musicians demonstrate, literally, the truth of this idea. They use magical music to enter trances and go on soul-journeys to other levels of a tri-partite universe, where they undergo initiations, encounter trials, and obtain helper spirits, in order that they may find wisdom and inspiration; in short, they display the characteristics of aesthetic shamans in a nineteenth-century Kunstreligion. This depiction of the artist as an elite emissary of the divine helped to change the way that society viewed its increasingly independent creative members, manifested archetypically in the mythic presence of Beethoven. For while not everyone could meet and be awed by such impressive, demanding, or eccentric musicians as Hoffmann and Beethoven, who insisted that their music made them the equal of princes, most people could read about them in the inexpensive and extremely popular Frauentaschenbücher that carried many of Hoffmann's tales and essays, and in his frequent contributions to the Allgemeine musikalische

Zeitung.

That Hoffmann should be acquainted with the imagery of shamanic mythology seems probable, considering the proclivities of the era in which he lived. The European appetite for the exotic was constantly fed by the reports sent back by explorers who travelled the globe and examined other cultures. Even within the bounds of European soil, exotic or uncommon phenomena in the form of automatons, mesmerists, spiritualists, and the mentally ill were receiving widespread attention. Mythology was beginning to be systematically examined and compared interculturally. Hoffmann, even more than most, was interested in alternate states of consciousness and would have found reports of shamanic trance fascinating. The fact that elements of shamanism appear in Germanic and Greek mythology added a touch of familiarity that helped to facilitate their acceptance as traits of German artists, and yet gave an aura of the primitive, the powerful, and the elemental to musicians that obviously appealed to Hoffmann.

However, without direct evidence of the influence of shamanic lore on Hoffmann it remains impossible to claim that his conscious utilization of that imagery is the only explanation for its appearance in his writings. Shamanism displays similar characteristics in widely diverse areas of the globe, where the possibility of intercultural borrowing has been questioned. Perhaps the appearance of the same
response to music in Romantic Germany as in non-Western tribal societies points to innate human reactions to such stimuli, or to resonant associations formed at some point of confluence of experience of music and imagery, modified by cultural and social definitions of what constitutes music.

By looking at Hoffmann through the lens of shamanism we have seen connections between different worldviews that extend beyond simple coincidence. The possibility now exists to search deeper into causes, and to look for other such evidence of creative incorporation of borrowing from the world pool of ideas for our own culture.

The exploits of Johannes Kreisler, Ritter Gluck, and the Travelling Enthusiast helped shape the nineteenth-century notion of music and musicians. In today's society, we are still under the influence of the ideas of people who lived two hundred years ago, and who formulated much of modern thought. In order to further our understanding of ourselves and our culture, we need to identify the forces that made us who we are. In our conception of the role and temperament of musicians, we are indebted to the ancient ideology of shamanism and its interpretation through such popular figures as E. T. A. Hoffmann.
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