

A BIOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATION OF  
E.T.A. HOFFMANN AND EDGAR ALLAN POE

by 6408

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B.S., Bowling Green State University, 1966

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A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

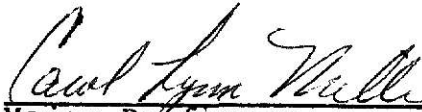
MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Modern Languages

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

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## Introduction

A prevalent trend in literary criticism today is concerned primarily with the "formal" characteristics of plays, poems and novels. It does not preoccupy itself with the author or his reading public as earlier criticism did. ". . . the formalistic critic," according to Cleanth Brooks, "is concerned primarily with the work itself."<sup>1</sup> Intentions are disregarded. The assumption is made that an author's intentions are fully realized in his works and that his literature need not be analyzed in the perspective of history or literary movements. The formalistic approach disregards the individual responsible for the composition and, in an attempt to be objective, excludes the author's life along with the product of that life, his personality.

Psychologists contend that man is the product of his heredity and environment. The impact of these two forces of life produce personality. Personality, in turn, colors all that is part of him. It distinguishes him in his writing. It sets him apart from his contemporaries. To exclude an author's personality when considering his work is to omit an intrinsic part of literature.

The subjects of this paper represent demonstrations of the bond between life and literature. E.T.A. Hoffmann and

<sup>1</sup>Cleanth Brooks, "The Formalistic Critic," The Modern Critical Spectrum, ed. Gerald J. Goldberg and Nancy M. Goldberg (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 2.

Edgar Allan Poe led such unique lives that it is impossible to separate the uniqueness of those lives from the literature which each man produced. A biographical comparison of these two men leads one to conclude that similar environments produce similar personalities and, in turn, similar literature.

### I. A Biographical Comparison

On the twenty-sixth day of October, 1767, Christoph Ludwig Hoffmann took Luise Albertine Doerffer for his wife. Although the wedding did not represent a union of the social elite, the bride's father had gained recognition in the city as a depository for a prominent Prussian family. The bride and groom were cousins. Luise was the daughter of the groom's mother's sister. Both were from families steeped in the tradition of the law. Christoph was a lawyer in the Superior Court of Justice in Königsberg, and Luise's father was a councilor of the consistory.

From the beginning the union was unsound. The couple's divergent personalities clashed endlessly. "Sehr bald scheint sich herausgestellt zu haben, daß die beiden Gatten nicht für einander geschaffen waren."<sup>2</sup> The nineteen year old bride sought social amenities while her thirty-one year old husband was coolly indifferent toward the social graces. Christoph was a poetic individual and sought peace of mind within himself.

<sup>1</sup>Georg Ellinger, "Lebensbild," E.T.A. Hoffmanns Werke: in fünfzehn Teilen (Leipzig: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., 1859), I, viii.

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Neither partner possessed qualities conducive to lasting compatibility. The legal bond between them might have been dissolved within a year had it not been for the fear of social disgrace which loomed as an unbearable consequence. The death of their first infant son may have delayed their separation. At any rate, in 1773 Luise gave birth to a second son, Karl Wilhelm Philipp and in 1776 to yet another, Ernst Theodor Wilhelm.

The intolerance which had been repressed for eleven years finally came forth in 1778 causing the inevitable separation. Ernst was over two years old. He was given over to his mother, while his older brother went with his father. After several years the elder Hoffmann took a position as a criminal lawyer in Insterberg. "With this departure, Hoffmann's father disappears almost completely from his life, save as an indistinct memory of one who, as he thought, could have understood him in a household where he felt himself an alien."<sup>3</sup>

Luise Hoffmann moved into her mother's house in the Junkergasse to bring up her son. Here the youngster spent his early years in the company of his mother's two unmarried sisters and bachelor brother. Ernst saw little of his mother and grandmother. The latter's husband had been a lawyer of some stature who had died several years before the Hoffmann divorce. The old lady became so depressed over his passing

<sup>3</sup>Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer, Hoffmann: Author of the Tales (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 4.

that she secluded herself in her room. Hoffmann's mother displayed the same traits. Unable to console herself concerning the failure of her marriage and the resulting social embarrassment, she also sought the melancholy seclusion of her room. "Da die alte Frau Doerffer hinfällig war und die hysterische Mutter nur in krankhaftem Zustande dahinvegetierte, stillte das Kind sein Liebesbedürfnis im Umgang mit den beiden Schwestern der Mutter;"<sup>4</sup>

Thus the child who was to become one of Germany's foremost authors was deprived of a normal home environment. His Uncle Otto sought to guide him, but his attempts to regulate the lad's life by means of a routine only produced contempt. The elderly gentleman, a former lawyer whose practice was short-lived and void of success, had become set in his ways, a willing victim of Epicurean laziness. While stressing the importance of diligence upon young Ernst, he passed his time sleeping, eating and drinking with an occasional indulgence in literature and music. His nephew quickly detected his uncle's shortcomings and mockingly referred to him as "O weh Onkel," replacing his first and middle names, Otto Wilhelm, with the two words. Uncle Otto was not an effective father substitute. Yet, as solitary and introverted as his youth was, Hoffmann did find one parental substitute. In his Aunt Johanna he found a

<sup>4</sup>Hans-Georg Werner, E.T.A. Hoffmann: Darstellung und Deutung der Wirklichkeit im dichterischen Werk (Weimar: Arion Verlag, 1962), p. 11.

receptiveness which he was to remember throughout his life. "Da war es für ihn ein Glück, daß wenigstens ein Mitglied des seltsamen Familienkreises Verständnis für sein Wesen zeigte und ihm die Möglichkeit gewährte, in bedrängten Augenblicken sein Herz auszuschütten: es war seine Tante Johanna Sophie Doerffer;"<sup>5</sup> Johanna represented one of the few positive elements of his youthful solitude, a solitude finally interrupted by his entry into school.

In November, 1805, thirty-eight years after the marriage of Hoffmann's parents in Königsberg, David Poe and Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins were wed. Both were actors. The twenty-eight year old groom had given up his study of law for a career on the stage, and his eighteen year old bride was completing her ninth year as an entertainer, having come from a family of actors. Seeking success in a field which offered little in the way of monetary rewards, they traveled northern and southern theatrical circuits with various troupes. In 1806, evidently weary of travel, they moved to Boston and joined the Boston and Charleston Players. They remained there for three years.

During their years in Boston two sons were born, one in 1807, William Henry, and one on January 19, 1809, named Edgar. Three weeks after the birth of Edgar, Elizabeth was back on the stage, an indication of the financial condition of the family.

<sup>5</sup>Ellinger, p. ix.

The marriage was also in a state of deterioration. The couple quarreled, and in July of 1810 David disappeared soon after the family had moved to New York. He may have left because he could not cope with a family situation in which he was not the breadwinner, or he may have been unable to withstand the sense of inferiority, his reviews having become increasingly negative. "David Poe was also an actor but does not seem to have inherited the sturdier qualities of his father, a hero in the American Revolution."<sup>6</sup>

Deserted by her husband, Elizabeth Poe sought theatrical employment in the South. Edgar, two years of age, was with her. Henry had been left with relatives in Baltimore. On December 20, 1810, Edgar's mother was forced to interrupt her appearances on stage to give birth to a daughter, Rosalie. Rosalie's arrival served to intensify her mother's financial discomfort. Her birth also contributed to the decline of Elizabeth's health, for Elizabeth Poe was suffering from tuberculosis. She struggled to provide for her children but left them in dire need. She passed away in Richmond on December 8, 1811, and her son was bequeathed a miniature, his only token of her life. "Young as he was, Edgar Poe could scarcely have remembered the actual scenes surrounding the final tragedy of his young mother, but even a child of three may be conscious

<sup>6</sup>C. Alphonso Smith, Edgar Allan Poe: How to Know Him (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co., 1921), p. 1.

at the time that its own familar world has suddenly gone to pieces about it."<sup>7</sup>

And so at the age of three Poe's environment strikingly resembled Hoffmann's. His sister was taken into the William Mackenzie family, and he found himself in the home of a Richmond merchant, John Allan. John Allan at that time was in no position financially to take on the responsibility of sheltering and educating a child. It was his childless wife who pressed the issue. Through visits with Elizabeth Poe, she had developed an interest in the youngster. She was so anxious to keep the boy that she failed to answer inquiries by his grandparents in Baltimore. Despite her relentless urging, John Allan refrained from legally adopting Poe. The boy felt, to a certain extent, that he was a stranger in the Allan household. He came to know solitude. Just as Hoffmann's uncle attempted to guide and direct every facet of his life, so Poe's reluctant new guardian-father sought to guide him. However, because John Allan had refused to adopt him, Poe could only view this new father with suspicion, and sought affection from the woman who had befriended him in his darkest hour. "Mrs. Allan's unusual fondness for children and for her foster-son in particular was the cause of remark at the time and later. That her affection for the little boy was one of the holiest and finest of his many feminine contacts, does not

<sup>7</sup>Hervey Allen, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (Murray Hill, N.Y.: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1934), p. 20.

lessen the probabilities of its far-reaching effects."<sup>8</sup> His new mother delighted in taking him on calls to her various friends and relatives. School put an end to many of the outings.

It should be noted that the early years of both Hoffmann and Poe were years of unhappiness. Both experienced family disintegration, abnormal foster home environments, solitude, displeasure with their father-substitutes, and authentic warmth on the part of their mother-substitutes. Ernst Hoffmann and Edgar Poe had ". . . embarked upon one of those quests of the soul that drive many artists to the greatest heights of creation and the lowest depths of despair."<sup>9</sup>

At the age of six Hoffmann carried his introversion and undeveloped talents into the Königsberger Reformierte Burgschule. He was wary of his fellow students, and they found little reason to befriend him. "Von seinen Mitschülern ward er wenig geliebt, denn sein Witz war ihre Geißel."<sup>10</sup> He saw in school and the music lessons supervised by his uncle those repressive aspects of life he had come to dislike at home. But it was at school that he met his lifelong friend, Theodor Gottlieb Hippel. In a world populated by representatives of what he considered superfluous regimentation, Hoffmann found in Hippel a companion whose spiritual inclinations resembled his own. He found a friend to whom he could unlock the remote

<sup>8</sup>Allen, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>Allen, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Theodor Hippel as cited by Werner, p. 12.

recesses of his mind. Such was the immediate effect of the new friendship. "Hippel war durchaus dazu geeignet, Hoffmann zu ergänzen."<sup>11</sup>

Since Hippel was an outstanding student, he was considered a worthy influence by Uncle Otto and was encouraged to spend many hours with Ernst in the Doerffer household. The elderly supervisor was more than pleased with the youths' diligent study of the classics, for such was the curriculum of the Burqschule. But when Uncle Otto was dozing or busying himself elsewhere, the works of Cicero and Homer were put aside. The classics were replaced by games, by Rousseau's Confessions, by works concerning the Middle Ages and books by Wiegleb on magic. "Rousseaus 'Bekenntnisse' waren eine Lieblingsschrift Hoffmanns schon in der Königsberger Zeit; laut Tagebucheintragung vom 13. Februar 1804 hatte er das Werk annähernd dreißigmal gelesen."<sup>12</sup> Their games were often based on medieval tales, magic, the grotesque and were, in many cases, accented by music. Under these conditions music and art acquired a new dimension for the young student. No longer were they the colorless implements of education. They were, rather, tools of creation left to the whims of his inventive mind.

At sixteen Hoffmann entered the University of Königsberg. Uncle Otto had relentlessly stressed the importance and necessity of a profession, of being able to make a living. Since

<sup>11</sup>Ellinger, p. xi.

<sup>12</sup>Werner, p. 13.

he was a lawyer, although he had only tried one case and that with no success, and as the family had long been involved with that profession, it followed that he so direct Ernst. In the university and his study of law Ernst saw an opportunity to realize freedom through financial independence. But of his intended profession he wrote: "Ich muß mich zwingen ein Jurist zu werden."<sup>13</sup> His real love was music, for which, along with drawing and painting, he demonstrated considerable talent. Again and again he related his discontent to Hippel. In 1795, upon completion of his law study he wrote his friend: ". . . wenn ich von mir selbst abhinge, würde ich Componist, und hätte die Hoffnung in meinem Fache groß zu werden, da ich in dem jetzt gewählten ewig ein Stümper bleiben werde."<sup>14</sup> Hoffmann was no bungler, however. His desire to be independent compelled him to diligence and excellence as a lawyer. But with the completion of his work at the university the frustrating conflict between the man of profession and the man courting a muse became deeper.

Having completed his study of law, the young lawyer sought a position with the legal service of the Prussian government. Acquiring such a position involved much waiting, and Hoffmann was able to pursue music as a pastime and a means of support. The new activities only added to his difficulties. As a music

<sup>13</sup>E.T.A. Hoffmann, E.T.A. Hoffmanns Briefwechsel, ed. Hans von Müller und Friedrich Schnapp (München: Winkler Verlag, (1968), I, 62.

<sup>14</sup>Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, I, 71.

teacher he fell in love with one of his students, a married woman, Frau Cora Hatt. The impossibility of their relationship served only to intensify his despair and the future again looked bleak. By all of his years of study he had only succeeded in making himself unhappy. His relationship with Frau Hatt created gossip and may have produced a clash with her husband at a masquerade party. Confronted with the distortion of rampant gossip and fearing further complications with Frau Hatt's husband, he wrote a letter of inquiry to his Uncle Johann Ludwig Doerffer, a counsellor in Glogau. The response was an invitation to reside in the Doerffer house in Glogau while seeking employment there. Hoffmann accepted. His departure from Königsberg was painful and silent.

Poe also began his schooling at the age of six and, as Hoffmann, kept to himself. He also viewed school as a compulsory but welcome opportunity to escape a home environment of uncertainties. He took an interest in his studies. "Poe was one of those strange freaks of nature in a school, a boy who took a lively interest in his books."<sup>15</sup> His first experience with education in Richmond was brief, for in 1815 John Allan went to England to reestablish his tobacco trade with that country. He went not only as a representative of his own firm, Ellis and Allan, but also as a son returning to his home, Scotland. After John completed transactions in

<sup>15</sup>Allen, p. 49

England, the family set up housekeeping in Irvine, Scotland, where Poe attended the grammar academy. The family remained there for a short time and then moved to London where Edgar continued his education at Stoke Newington in the Manor House School. Both institutions were bastions of strict discipline, their curriculums centering around the classics. " . . . English grammar schools of the period were amazingly innocent of anything but the dog-eared Latin grammars, spellers, cheap editions of Homer, Virgil and Caesar, and ponderous arithmetics of the period."<sup>16</sup>

In 1820 the Allan family returned to Richmond, and Edgar was reunited with a friend he had met during his early schooling in that city. Ebenezer Burling was to Poe what Hippel was to Hoffmann, an immeasurable catalytic force. The two youths spent considerable time together, playing games and reading adventure stories. "With Burling, Poe read Robinson Crusoe, . . ."<sup>17</sup> Otherwise Poe retained the habit of keeping to himself, as he did not get along with his schoolmates. "Poe must have stung many of his fellows by adroit references to their stupidity or laziness. Helpless to meet him on that ground, they would take the inevitable revenge of the tribe, and make him feel that he was an outsider."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Allen, p. 71.

<sup>17</sup>Allen, p. 79.

<sup>18</sup>Arthur Hobson Quinn, Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1941), p. 85.

Early in his youth Poe revealed an enthusiasm for music and sketching. He visualized what he saw with such a keen eye for color and shadow that he was driven to reproduce his impressions. "Considerable mention is made of Poe's enthusiasm for drawing, and there remains at least one drawing of his own hand, . . ."<sup>19</sup> He played the flute, loved to sing and listen to piano music. He became fascinated with the rhythmical melodies of Negro spiritual songs and spent many hours with the servants, listening to them sing and tell stories.

In 1824, prior to John Allan's establishing residence in a distinguished section of Richmond, an event occurred which was to have an impact on the life of the young poet. He felt a fascination for Mrs. Jane Stanard, the mother of a youthful acquaintance. "There seems to have been born between them instantly a bond of sympathy which produced a deep effect upon the boy."<sup>20</sup> In her Edgar saw a perfection of life and beauty. "Both Mrs. Stanard and Edgar Poe were types of those super-sensitive natures whose higher inner processes take place in that holy land of sensibility, the western border of which so often marches with the kingdom of insanity."<sup>21</sup> Through her Poe experienced an ideal love. His famous poem "To Helen" portrays his feelings toward her,

<sup>19</sup>Allen, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup>Quinn, pp. 85-86.

<sup>21</sup>Allen, p. 89.

and he often referred to her as "Helen." Mrs. Stanard died at the age of thirty-one. Some twenty-four years after her death Poe wrote a letter to Mrs. Sarah Whitman in which he stated: ". . . my eyes fell upon a volume of my own poems; and then the lines I had written in my passionate boyhood, to the first purely ideal love of my soul--to the Helen Stannard [sic] of whom I told you--flashed upon my recollection."<sup>22</sup> Her passing had considerable emotional effect on Poe. She had evidently consoled him on several occasions, and the passing of her sympathy and beauty brought forth within Edgar a feeling of helplessness.

The new house which John Allan purchased in 1825 with funds willed by a wealthy uncle provided a new environment for Poe and brought the family into contact with new personalities, many of them representatives of Richmond's wealthiest families. Among the visitors to the Allan household was Elmira Royster, a pretty girl of wealthy parentage who lived near the Allans. Edgar fell in love with her. Before his departure for the University of Virginia she secretly consented to become his wife. It had been decided that Poe would attend an institution of higher learning, and his foster-father had hired private tutors to prepare him. John Allan sought to impress upon Edgar the value of a

<sup>22</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. John Ward Ostrom, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), II, 385.

profession, especially that of law. He had hopes that Poe would complete a course of study in that field and perhaps aspire to a seat in the Congress. "If he had really been John Allan's son, he would have proceeded to the study of law or some other profession."<sup>23</sup>

Poe entered the University of Virginia in 1826. He excelled but disgruntled his foster-father by showing inclinations toward subject matter quite foreign to the disciplines of law. While at the university he wrote Elmira Royster many letters, but her parents, wary of her relationship with an individual whose social standing and background displeased them, sought vehemently to discourage her. Her father destroyed Poe's letters and told her that her young lover was untrue. When Poe returned from the university to take Myra, as he called her, for his wife, he found her married to a Richmond aristocrat.

By the time Hoffmann and Poe began their college careers they both had experienced repeated disappointments. Both had received classical educations and in their early schooling had formed intimate friendships which afforded opportunities for display of talents and desires repressed by their introversion. Hoffmann found it extremely difficult to overcome his natural inclination toward music and art for the sake of a profession. He sought financial independence assuming

<sup>23</sup>Quinn, p. 95.

that said independence would buy enough freedom or spare time to cultivate his beloved muses. The demands of the legal profession provided no such freedom, and the opposing forces caused him considerable mental strain. Poe's awareness of responsibility created a similar dilemma for him. He had seen his foster-father struggle to keep a business going, and he was well aware of the necessity of being able to earn a living. His first love, as in the case of Hoffmann, was the arts. When he succumbed to his inclination, however, he found himself confronted with a sense of guilt which resulted from financial dependence on John Allan. He found himself in the same frame of mind as Hoffmann, plagued by frustration and guilt. Both authors were faced with impossible situations concerning love. Both were unable to find happiness either in the world around them or within themselves.

Leaving Königsberg and Frau Hatt was not easy for Hoffmann. In a letter dated July 18, 1796, he informed Hippel of his feelings concerning the departure. "Ich bin in einer Art Betaübung [sic] oder Rausch meiner Vaterstadt entflohn -- der Abschied von ihr hatte mich so butterweich gemacht, daß ich mich bald vor mir selber sehr prostituiert und geweint hätte. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

Upon taking up residence with his Uncle Johann Ludwig Doerffer in Glogau, Hoffmann found himself facing a new

<sup>24</sup> Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, I, 99.

environment. He was still a member of a Doerffer household, but the Glogau Doerffers were preoccupied with society and culture. They often spoke French at home and passed evenings listening to music or acting out plays. The effects of the new atmosphere were reflected in the young lawyer's willingness to assist in the production of a play for the townspeople. In painting the scenery for the play, Hoffmann's artistic inclinations were again aroused. "For a time Hoffmann saw a good deal of the painter Molinare, who was engaged in the interior decoration of a Jesuit church. Though, as Hoffmann suggests, the legal authorities for whom he officially labored might have regarded it as a breach of professional decorum, he assisted Molinare in his work. . . ." <sup>25</sup>

With all his new activities, Hoffmann did not relinquish thoughts of Frau Hatt, who was unhappy with her marriage. Reminders of her were always close at hand, the products of their correspondence. His sorrows over her culminated in a trip home and an attempt to arrange a divorce for her. Hoffmann found that his profession could in no way enhance his private life. "Hoffmann ist nach Glogau zurückgekehrt, desillusioniert an seiner Liebe, deren Schluß innerlich besiegelt ist." <sup>26</sup> Having given up all hope of being united with

<sup>25</sup>Hewett-Thayer, p. 21

<sup>26</sup>Hedwig Eyrich, "E.T.A. Hoffmann: Jugend und Entwicklungszeit," Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie, 127, Nos. 4-5 (1930), p. 518.

Frau Hatt, he focused his affections on his cousin, Minna Doerffer.

In 1798 Hoffmann became engaged to Minna and passed a second legal examination. This success moved him one step closer to a governmental position. But success was never something to be fully enjoyed by Hoffmann, for it always created more problems for him than it solved. Each step on the ladder of his legal career offered a more enticing opportunity to participate in artistic endeavors. Peace of mind was not destined to be his.

During the same year in which he passed the "Referendar" examination, the government promoted his uncle to a position in a higher court in Berlin. As Hoffmann was his son-in-law to be and showed promise as a lawyer, it seemed only natural that Uncle Johann find a position for his nephew in Berlin. Hoffmann followed his uncle to the larger city with considerable anticipation, and the Berlin Doerffers furthered his artistic development. "Dort kommt er durch dessen hohe gesellschaftliche Stellung rasch in Beziehung zu einem Kreise geistig hochstehender Menschen."<sup>27</sup>

In Berlin Hoffmann was excited by the flourishing of the arts. He attended the opera and concerts and set about composing his own material. "Er ist voll Lebensgefühl, aktiv, sieht und hört, wo es etwas Interessantes gibt, er

<sup>27</sup>Eyrich, p. 519.

vervollkommnet seine Studien in der Malerei und Musik."<sup>28</sup>

But while he was indulging in these activities he was also busy with law. He passed a third legal examination, was assigned a position in the administration of Prussian Poland, and was sent to the city of Posen.

At last success had put Hoffmann completely on his own. No longer were his actions under the scrutiny of relatives. In Posen, consequently, he plunged into a bachelor existence founded upon a total release of inhibitions previously held in check. And yet it was not a joyous existence. It was more of a reaction than an action and hardly to be of benefit to Hoffmann's tastes. In the freedom of Posen his dissatisfaction with his inability to give himself over entirely to art came forth in the tragi-comic atmosphere of parties and good times. Later in his life, in 1803, Hoffmann made reference to this period in a letter to Hippel in which he stated: "Wein, der eben gährt, hat niemahls einen guten Geschmack, und ich war damahls wirklich im Gähren---Ein Kampf von Gefühlen, Vorsätzen pp, /sic/ die gerade zu widersprachen, tobte schon seit ein paar Monathen in meinem innern /sic/ --ich wollte mich betäuben, /sic/ und wurde das was SchulRectoren, Prediger, Onkels and Tanten liederlich nennen."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Eyrich, p. 520

<sup>29</sup>Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, I. 162.

It was also during his stay in Posen that he broke his engagement to Minna. He felt that marriage would only make both of them unhappy and probably feared the bond would bury him in a world of social trivialities. He abhorred the thought of society without art, of society for society's sake, and when, in 1802, he finally did choose to marry, the bride was nineteen year old Maria Thekla Michalina Rohr. "Mischa," as he called her, made no social demands.

But Posen represented more in regard to Hoffmann's life than a promotion or a breaking away from family connections. It represented a crossroads, a place where Hoffmann attempted to make important decisions and a place where decisions were made for him. It was a place where his talents caused him considerable trouble. He was urged to draw caricatures of the military staff stationed in Posen. Considerable resentment had developed between the civil authorities and the aristocratic military, and when Hoffmann's drawings were passed out at a ball, the commanding general complained to the young lawyer's superiors. As a result Hoffmann was exiled to Plock.

Plock, a small Slavic village with its solitude and quiet life, offered a respite from the hectic life of Posen. Although Hoffmann considered Plock a distasteful hole, it took him from the cycle of success-failure and offered an opportunity to ponder, to reconsider his predicament.

He studied music theory, painted, and wrote a play. He would have remained in Plock for a considerable time had it not been for Hippel, who through marriage and diligence had gained a reputation which enabled him to influence Hoffmann's superiors. Through his urging Hoffmann was transferred to Warsaw. "Am Anfang des Jahres 1804 gelang es tatsächlich seinen Freuden, seine Versetzung nach Warschau herbeizuführen;"<sup>30</sup>

With regard to the arts, residence in Warsaw resembled residence in Berlin. Hoffmann again met individuals whose interests resembled his own, notably Julius Eduard Hitzig and Zacharias Werner. But within two years he was forced to send his wife and daughter Cäcelie to Posen, for Warsaw came under French occupation. The profession to which he had clung was suddenly without German supervision. He endured six months of the occupation but ran out of money and patience. In the final days of his stay in Warsaw he came to view his musical talents as a means of survival. Not wishing to swear allegiance to the French government, he traveled first to Posen to visit his family and then to Berlin in search of employment.

Two months after Hoffmann arrived in Berlin he was notified that his daughter had passed away and that his wife was ill. Shocked and penniless he desperately strove to find

<sup>30</sup>Ellinger, I, xxix.

a solution to his predicament, again through his talents. He attempted to make money painting portraits and drawing caricatures, but to no avail. Again he turned his thoughts to music. On October 20, 1807, he wrote Hippel: "Du weißt, daß ich kein Vermögen sondern nur Talente habe, die mich erhalten können, diese Talente aber hier in dem menschenleeren geldarmen Berlin wuchern zu lassen, ist kaum möglich! Meine einzige Hoffnung ist bey irgend einer Kapelle als Direktor unterzukommen, und hierzu habe ich alle Anstalten gemacht, bis jetzt aber vergebens!"<sup>31</sup> But after much searching and many hungry days, an advertisement in the Allgemeiner Reichsanzeiger brought results, and in August of the year 1808 he and Mischa, who had recovered, traveled to Bamberg where he was to become composer-director of the theater.

At the University of Virginia Poe led much the same life as Hoffmann had in Posen. Residence at the newly founded institution in Charlottesville represented Poe's first experience away from the Allan household. It resulted in inner conflict. Edgar had scarcely arrived at the university when he found himself in debt. Although John Allan provided funds for the majority of Poe's expenses, he did not provide for all of them. Edgar was consequently forced to seek credit. "He quickly learned that his guardian's name was good for credit with the merchants of the town, who would advance money

<sup>31</sup>Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, I, 221.

at exorbitant interest, urging their goods on the Allan 'heir' as well--on credit."<sup>32</sup>

Poe was quite dejected about his financial complications, and his feelings of depression were intensified by letters written to John Allan in request of money. More often than not the letters were ignored, and Poe's homesickness, his longing to see Mrya, and his mounting indebtedness all weighed heavily upon the early days of his university life. "Back in his room, he would kindle a fire with wood not paid for -- and console himself with reading Byron, or write one of his long and increasingly pathetic letters to Elmira."<sup>33</sup>

His letters to Elmira unanswered and his monetary situation unstable, Poe sought consolation in the consumption of alcohol. Surrounded by students from wealthy families who viewed drinking as a social norm, he found in drink a readily accessible refuge from his problems. As with Hoffmann, it provided an opportunity to divest himself of depression. "Lastly, but most important of all, in the temporary excitement of wine came selfconfidence and oblivion. It made him confident, and it made him forget."<sup>34</sup> In trying to keep up with his fellow students Poe also began to gamble. The mental strain of placing his hopes on a turn of the cards only added to his

<sup>32</sup>William Bittner, Poe: A Biography (London: Elek Books Limited, 1963), p. 42.

<sup>33</sup>Bittner, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup>Allen, p. 139.

sorrows. He was unsuccessful at cards, and the more depressed he felt, the more he was tempted to overindulge.

Poe's performance in the classroom did not reflect his problematic existence. Like Hoffmann he did not permit mental unrest to destroy his academic excellence. His European experience with classical education made him an outstanding student of ancient and modern languages. "The wonder is that Edgar Poe did not turn out a complete reprobate instead of being mentioned in the final examination reports as 'distinguished' in Latin and French."<sup>35</sup>

But the debts amassed by Poe caused a crisis at the end of the first term. The Charlottesville merchants demanded payment, and John Allan had to come up with what he had not provided initially. Of course the gambling debts added insult to injury, and the guardian refused to pay them. Poe was compelled to return to Richmond, his one-term university career concluded.

Once back in Richmond friction between Poe and his foster father became unbearable. Frances Allan tried desperately to reconcile husband and son, but the continual quarreling caused Poe to leave the Allan household. In a letter dated March 19, 1827, he wrote John Allan: "After my treatment on yesterday and what passed between us this morning, I can

<sup>35</sup>James A. Harrison, "Edgar Allan Poe: Biography," Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Fred De Fau and Company, 1902), I, 62.

hardly think you will be surprised at the contents of this letter. My determination is at length taken -- to leave your house and endeavor to find some place in this wide world, where I will be treated -- not as you have treated me -- This is not a hurried determination, but one on which I have long considered and having so considered my resolution is unalterable. --You may perhaps think I have flown off in a passion, & that I am already wishing to return; But not so --"<sup>36</sup> Poe's inner conflict was now out in the open. He roamed the streets for a few days, assumed the name Henri Le Rennèt, and left Richmond with Ebenezer Burling.

Without means of supporting himself, he sought to live by his pen. Poetry became a part of survival, and he placed all of his hopes for financial independence, as well as his last dime, on the publication of a book entitled Tamerlane and Other Poems. The publication was unsuccessful, and Poe found himself in the direst of circumstances. The outside world was as hard to cope with as his guardian, and, unable to bring himself to return to John Allan's house, he joined the army under the name Edgar A. Perry. "His tender rearing, his education, his desire for solitude and, above all, his nervous, impulsive and erratic characteristics which the events of the last few years had tended to accentuate, now undoubtedly began to be tremendous handicaps in a world which despises

<sup>36</sup>Poe, Letters, I, 7.

a dreamer and puts a premium on physical endurance and insensibility."<sup>37</sup>

Poe found himself torn between everyday life and artistic creation. In the army he did not have to face the responsibility of providing for himself, but he missed the academic endeavors of study and creation he had come to relish at the University of Virginia. In 1829 he sought an appointment to West Point, and appealed to John Allan for assistance. During the same year Frances Allan died, and Poe was forced to deal with his foster father on his own.

In 1830 Poe entered West Point. A military academy would hardly seem a suitable place for a poet, but Poe found there the intellectual experience which his previous army life lacked. He found an opportunity to continue the education he had been unable to finish at Charlottesville. In the classroom he again excelled, but outside the classroom he gradually found himself at odds with army regulations, especially regulation number 173, which forbid cadets to possess novels and poems not related to the curriculum. The young southerner could not abstain from keeping books and writing poetry and eventually came to disobey such orders openly. He decided to leave West Point. He appealed to John Allan once more. When his foster father refused to help, Poe disobeyed

<sup>37</sup>Allen, p. 168.

orders to the extent that he was court-martialed and, on the seventeenth or eighteenth day of February, 1831, dismissed.

Having no desire to return to Richmond, he traveled first to New York and shortly thereafter to Baltimore. There he took up residence with his aunt, Maria Clemm. In his aunt's house were his bedridden grandmother and Maria Clemm's daughter, Virginia, and son, Henry. Poe was again part of a household, but conditions at the Clemm residence were considerably different from those which had pervaded John Allan's house. Edgar was still without gainful employment and again turned to writing. Instead of writing poetry, he tried his hand at mystery tales. He gained access to the library and read a great deal. "The Gothic movement in literature was in its fullest and most ridiculous stage, with Blackwood's Magazine publishing accounts of the sensations of people in impossible predicaments, and horror and ghost stories appearing everywhere. With his appetite for omnivorous reading, Edgar consumed these along with encyclopedias and works of philosophy, science and literature."<sup>38</sup>

During this period Poe evinced a special interest in German literature concerning the mysterious side of life. "Meanwhile, at the Baltimore library, the same pair of eyes were eagerly scanning The Tales of Hoffmann, German Philosophy, largely in a denatured and secondary English form. . . ."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Bittner, pp. 81-82.

<sup>39</sup>Allen, p. 275.

Poe's efforts put little food on Maria Clemm's table, and the family was forced on occasion to accept charity. In 1834 the Baltimore Saturday Visitor conducted a short story contest which Poe entered and won. His literary fortunes were changing. "The announcement of his winning of the prize at once surrounded Poe with a blaze of publicity, in which, afterwards, he never ceased to live."<sup>40</sup> During the same year John Allan died, making no mention of Edgar in his will. But Poe's contest triumph brought him into contact with many prominent newspaper owners, and in 1835 he submitted a story to the Southern Literary Messenger in Richmond. Not only was his work accepted, but he was invited to review books for the periodical.

During Poe's first year of literary success he was visited by Miss Mary Winfree, a close friend of Elmira Royster Shelton. Miss Winfree brought news of Elmira's dissatisfaction with her marriage. Having accidentally found one of Poe's letters, she realized that she had been betrayed by her parents. Old feelings were revived, and when Poe returned to Richmond to write for the Messenger, he could not resist attempting to see Myra. The two met briefly at a party, an incident which enraged Elmira's husband. He intimated that if her former fiance tried to see his wife again, he would risk "violent" consequences. Poe came to realize the

<sup>40</sup>Harrison, I, 101.

impossibility of the relationship. He turned his attentions toward his thirteen year old cousin, Virginia, and in September they were married.

An interesting aspect of Poe's devotion to his cousin was reflected in a letter sent to his aunt on August 29, 1835, after learning that she intended, due to her poverty, to permit Virginia to reside with grandparents. Poe wrote: "I am blinded with tears while writing thi(s) letter -- I have no wish to live another hour."<sup>41</sup>

Although not chronological in correspondence, many parallels can be drawn from the situations and problems faced by Hoffmann and those faced by Poe. These parallels consist of similarities concerning environment and mental attitudes. In Glogau, for instance, Hoffmann was again in a strange household. Poe was in a strange household in Baltimore. The longing Hoffmann felt for Frau Hatt in Glogau is comparable to Poe's desire to see Elmire, which he developed in Baltimore. Both households and cities offered the authors sanctuary and a place to pursue artistic inclinations. In Glogau Hoffmann found refuge from the problems inherent in his relationship with Frau Hatt. In Baltimore Poe found a place in which to write following his dismissal from the army. In Glogau Hoffmann painted and assisted in play production, and in Baltimore Poe experienced his first literary success. In

<sup>41</sup>Poe, Letters, I, 69.

both environments the authors felt frustration concerning love, frustration which was later reflected in their works.

In Posen Hoffmann faced disaster as did Poe in Charlottesville. In both cases the disasters delayed each of them on the road to success in a chosen profession. Hoffmann's brilliant legal career was seriously hampered by his adeptness at caricature. Poe's outstanding career in the classroom was terminated due to financial complications. Both authors found it difficult to understand or cope with their environments.

Posen and Charlottesville also mark points in the lives of the respective authors at which their health began to deteriorate due to neglect and overindulgence. They kept irregular, strenuous hours and developed an inclination to use intoxication as an escape. It was an inclination which was to remain with them for the rest of their lives.

In Plock Hoffmann tried to publish two plays. He found time to formulate philosophies of music and literary composition and to study artistic theory, as Poe did while he was in the army. Plock and West Point represent exile. Hoffmann was sent to Plock after the Posen disaster. Poe entered West Point following his first experience in the army after the termination of his career at the University of Virginia. Both places represent a confinement in the lives of the authors. Both places gave a new direction to the authors' lives. And

both authors sought to extricate themselves from these distasteful situations through the help of friends or relatives, Hippel in Hoffmann's case, John Allan in Poe's.

In Warsaw and Berlin Hoffmann sought to earn a living by utilizing his artistic talents, a problem faced by Poe after leaving the Allan household and again after leaving West Point. Both authors were driven from place to place by failure, hunger, and inner unrest. Inner unrest was more often than not responsible for their wanderings. While striving for success in the world, they found their development as artists incompatible with that world. There were, in effect, two Hoffmanns, two Poes, two restless souls in each man longing to be one--a successful artist. And these doubles were to come forth in their works as manifestations of their frustrations.

Bamberg marked the beginning of Hoffmann's literary career. His literary endeavors were an off-shoot of his writings on music, and during his life he was noted primarily as a composer. But his maturity as a writer eventually surpassed his accomplishments as a musician. It was in Bamberg that he first gave serious consideration to his writing abilities.

Hoffmann and his wife arrived in Bamberg on the first of September, 1808. Although his newly found employment rescued him from poverty, it did not coincide with his

expectations. Hoffmann did not find the Bamberg orchestra satisfactory. The musicians were extremely independent and lacked the sense of perfection which Hoffmann considered an essential part of music. A letter written to a friend, violinist Franz Morgenroth, on February 26, 1809, reflected his dissatisfaction: "Das Orchester ist erbärmlich, die Fagotte Kömme, die Hörner Brummeisen und die Violinen Pappendeckel . . ."42

Dissatisfied with his position as orchestra director, he sought to supplement his disheartening situation and his income by giving music lessons as he had in Königsberg. Ironically enough, he again fell in love with one of his students. Fifteen year old Julia Mark represented the most profound emotional experience of Hoffmann's residence in Bamberg. In a diary which he had begun to keep since his residence in Plock, he wrote the name of Mark more than any other name. On February 4, 1809, for example, he wrote: "'Gespenst' bey Madame Mark zum Thee."43 Every entry from the twenty-sixth to the thirty-first of January, 1811, begins: "V.M. Stunde bey Mark, . . ."44 By the twenty-eighth of February of the same year his feelings for Julia led him to write: "V.M. Mark Stepf Roth(en) h (an). N.M. Holbein in

42Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, II, 268.

43E.T.A. Hoffmann, E.T.A. Hoffmanns Tagebücher und literarische Entwürfe ed. Hans von Müller (Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1915), I, 49.

44Hoffmann, Tagebücher, pp. 79-81.

Buch -- im Theater, bey Kunz -- Hol' der Teufel die curiose Stimmung -- entweder schieß ich mich todt wie ein(en) Hund, oder ich werde toll! . . ."<sup>45</sup>

But the most important aspect of Hoffmann's Bamberg stay was his debut as an author of something more than criticism of music. In a period of two years, 1808-1809, he sought to renew connections with publishers whose acquaintance he had made in Berlin. He contacted Rochlitz, the editor of the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung and began to write musical reviews for that periodical. This endeavor led him to offer the periodical a manuscript entitled "Ritter Gluck." A note was made of this in his diary on January 11, 1809: "An den HofRath Rochlitz nach Leipzig geschrieben und ihn den ,Ritter Gluck' für die Mus(ikalische) Zeitung geschickt und mich zum Mitarbeiter angeboten!"<sup>46</sup>

Publication of "Ritter Gluck" led Hoffmann to offer additional literary works, and additional works appeared in Musikalische Zeitung, notably a series of tales known as the Kreisleriana which dealt with the eccentricity of the gifted musician.

But Hoffmann's security in Bamberg waned under the pressure of war, as had his security in Warsaw. Hoffmann's livelihood was based upon his work as orchestra director and

<sup>45</sup>Hoffmann, Tagebücher, p. 87.

<sup>46</sup>Hoffmann, Tagebücher, p. 39.

music teacher. When war rattled the city, the orchestra could not perform, and his students were among the many who fled Napoleon's armies. Yet the war was not solely responsible for Hoffmann's financial dilemma. "It is not to be denied that Hoffmann himself was seriously at fault for his financial embarrassments. He was extravagant and improvident; despite household economies his manner of living was highly indiscreet for a man of his income."<sup>47</sup>

Nor was Hoffmann's health conducive to the strenuous schedule he chose to follow. His diary was filled with continual references to headaches and colds. "Hoffmann, now thirty-six and the best drinker in the town, had a complexion that already bespoke a decaying liver and a weakening constitution."<sup>48</sup> But he continued to work in spite of his illnesses.

By 1813 Hoffmann was again in search of employment. Bamberg no longer provided a suitable income for the war had intensified and had driven even his most intimate colleagues away. Having been recommended by Rochlitz and Härtel, he moved to Dresden where he was to serve as music director under Joseph Seconda.

On April 25, 1813, Hoffmann and his wife arrived in Dresden, but Joseph Seconda was nowhere to be found. He had

<sup>47</sup>Hewett-Thayer, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup>Leonard J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight, "Introduction," Selected Writings of F.T.A. Hoffmann, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), I, 23.

traveled to Leipzig, and the Dresden theater, Hoffmann found, was managed by Seconda's brother, Franz. Hoffmann was financially embarrassed and immediately sent a letter to Joseph requesting funds. He also sought out Franz, who advised him to go to Leipzig as soon as possible. Owing to the dangerous political situation, the trip was impossible at that time. Hoffmann was forced to remain in Dresden.

Napoleon had failed in his attempt to march to Moscow. Prussia had formally declared war on France, and Dresden was filled with Prussian and Russian troops. The Prussian chancellor had brought his staff to Dresden. The staff included Hoffmann's old friend, Hippel, who worked as counsellor for the chancellor. He and Hoffmann met in the "Linkisches Bad," a popular garden resort. The reunion brought back fond memories and undoubtedly lifted Hoffmann's spirits.

But the war and the importance of Dresden were of more significance to Hoffmann than merely uniting him with a friend he had not seen in nine years. It brought forth an interesting aspect of his personality, which was heavily influenced by the fluctuating military situation and manifested in his writing. For Napoleon occupied Dresden, driving the Russians and Prussians across the Elbe, where they took up positions. Dresden literally became a battlefield, shelled first by the French and then by the Russians. Despite his melancholy view of death, Hoffmann demonstrated an apathetic attitude towards his own safety. Inner conflict and insecurity were second

nature to him. The war with its suffering came as no great shock to his psyche. While others attempted to cope with the confusion of the war, Hoffmann was able to exist within that confusion as he had existed in the frustrations and confusions of his own life for over three decades. In a letter to Hitzig dated December 1, 1813, he wrote: "Hier habe ich alles erlebt, was man in der nächsten Nähe des Krieges erleben kan [sic].-- ich habe Scharmützel -- eine bedeutende Schlacht (am 26. Aug.) deutlich angesehen, habe das Schlacht feld besucht, kurz, meine Erfahrungen sind in dieser Art nur zu sehr bereichert worden --"<sup>49</sup> His experiences reinforced his philosophy of the tragic delicacy of life.

During a respite in the fighting, Hoffmann found opportunity to travel to Leipzig where he worked for a while only to return to Dresden with Seconda during an armistice which lasted from the fourth of June until August twelfth. But his Dresden residence became more of a Leipzig-Dresden residence, for he moved as events in the struggle against Napoleon dictated.

During this period Hoffmann continued to write, completing such stories as "Der Dichter und der Komponist" and "Der goldene Topf." The latter he considered his best tale. In 1814 he had come to resent Seconda's criticism of his

<sup>49</sup>Hoffmann, Briefwechsel, I, 423.

conducting abilities. He listened with interest to Hippel's talk of a position in Berlin. Hippel was on his way to that city and had stopped in Leipzig to see his old friend again. The visit proved to have interesting consequences. Hoffmann accepted a position as assistant counsellor at the Supreme Court of Judicature or Highest Court of Appeals in Berlin. The decision to return to a profession was not an easy one, but positions as music director did not offer satisfactory salaries and positions which had been available in the past had all been filled. He finally accepted Hippel's suggestion because of the opportunity he felt it would afford him to write and the possibility that a job in Berlin would provide a salary acceptable to his often extravagant needs. He returned to a profession he disliked, but to a place that he had found most conducive to artistic endeavors. He entered Berlin more inclined as a writer than a composer, for in 1814, several months before his departure, his first book, Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier, was published.

Two years after his arrival in Berlin, Hoffmann received a promotion to counsellor to the Prussian Supreme Court. This appointment reflected two years of diligence as a lawyer. His knowledge of law was indeed profound. It had not waned after five years of dormancy.

In Berlin Hoffmann reverted to his old habit of frequenting Wegner's Café. His Phantasiestücke brought him

into contact with many important men of letters, notably Tieck, Brentano, Chamisso, and Fouque. Through Hitzig he met the mimic and violinist, Contessa. Hoffmann also became acquainted with Dr. Koreff, the Prussian Chancellor's personal physician. Koreff was working with hypnotism, a subject that fascinated Hoffmann. These men often met to discuss literature and eventually took the name Seraphionsbrüder, a title Hoffmann used for a series of stories.

By 1819 Hoffmann was caught up with two struggles, one for his integrity as a lawyer, and the other for his life. He had been appointed to a commission to investigate Vater Jahn's Turnverein, which the government considered a front for subversive activities by radical students. The investigation was a reaction to the war with France. Hoffmann refused to make it a witchhunt. "Hoffmann never learned to become a political creature, possibly because he could not bend his sense of honesty, or because there was something self-destructive about the man;--"<sup>50</sup> The commission's activities were satirized in a work entitled "Meister Floh." Only through the efforts of Hippel was his position and reputation as a lawyer saved.

But Hoffmann's health was in rapid deterioration. "Die Arbeitslast, die Hoffmann sich zumutete, verbunden mit seiner die Nerven zerrüttenden Lebensweise, die die Nacht zum Tage

<sup>50</sup>Kent and Knight, I, 25.

machte, zehrte wiederum an seiner Gesundheit."<sup>51</sup> Excessive drinking, contrary to doctor's orders, and the rigorous schedule of his Berlin residence had taken their toll by 1821. An atrophy of the liver and a degeneration of spinal marrow forced him to bed. "By the start of the new year, 1822, Hoffmann was in very bad straits indeed. Hippel and Hitzig joined him in his apartment on 24 January to help celebrate his forty-sixth birthday, but under the circumstances it was a grotesque though well-intentioned evening. Hoffmann, drinking mineral water because wine had been forbidden him as long as two years before, over and over reaffirmed his intense desire to stay alive, despite his agony; and he had his wish for five months, existing only to be slowly destroyed by a creeping paralysis."<sup>52</sup>

From his deathbed Hoffmann dictated the last portions of "Meister Floh," "Die Genesung" in its entirety, and the beginning of "Der Feind." His dedication to writing was phenomenal and yet justifiable. In his suffering he could permit his mind the freedom of phantasy. His body had been destroyed, but not his imagination. It was that imagination which consoled him through the frustrations of his life and death. He died June 25, 1822.

For two years Poe worked in Richmond as editor of the Messenger. Having brought Virginia and his aunt to Richmond,

<sup>51</sup>Ellinger, I, lxxix.

<sup>52</sup>Kent and Knight, I, 26.

he was able to concentrate on his work. His knack for journalism and his honesty and adeptness at writing literary criticism made the Richmond paper foremost in the South. "But in the succeeding year, his frank, individualistic reviews of books, mainly by American authors, helped establish his reputation as an outspoken literary critic."<sup>53</sup> His honest and terse analysis of the books of his time also brought him into literary conflict with authors of his time. "From 1835 to 1849, the period that spans Poe's critical career, Poe was engaged in literary battles that involved such celebrities of the day as Theodore Sedgwick Fay, associate editor of the popular New York Mirror, Colonel William Leete Stone, co-owner and editor of the powerful New York Commercial Advertiser, Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of the widely circulated Knickerbocker Magazine, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Harvard professor and well-known poet."<sup>54</sup> Poe did not feel that the merit of literary works should rest solely on advertising, and offered biting criticism of works which he felt were thrust upon the public by northern author cliques.

By 1837 the Messenger was in great demand. Poe's criticism had literally made the magazine. He had also contributed short stories which the public accepted with keen interest,

<sup>53</sup>Irwin Porjes, Edgar Allan Poe (Philadelphia: The Chilton Company, 1963), p. 104.

<sup>54</sup>Sidney P. Moss, Poe's Literary Battles: The Critic in the Context of his Literary Milieu (Durham, North Carolina; University Press, 1963), p.3.

stories which included "Morella," "Lionizing," "Hans Pfaall," and "Voyage to the Moon." But a printers' strike in 1837 and a feeling of uneasiness which developed between him and Thomas White, the owner of the Messenger, caused Poe to be dismissed. "The dismissal was no great blow to him, for he knew he was ready to go his own way."<sup>55</sup>

Having been asked to contribute regularly to a New York magazine, The Review, and formulating plans for the founding of his own periodical, he decided to move the family north. Expenses involved in the trip made the financial situation worse, not to mention the political crisis that ensued. "Some hotheads were trying to start a revolution in Canada, and on January 1, the Distribution Act had come into effect, scattering the funds of the United States to the state banks . . . Throughout the first months of 1837, prices rose until they were nearly double those of two years before."<sup>56</sup> If Poe had found a bit of financial security in 1837, it was practically valueless. He, Virginia and Maria Clemm remained only one year in New York. Since the literati of the day were gathering in Philadelphia, Poe and family, after scrounging up fares, went to that city during the summer of 1838.

In Philadelphia Poe's accomplishments brought him into contact with important writers and publishers. Those

<sup>55</sup>Bittner, p. 126.

<sup>56</sup>Bittner, pp. 126-127.

interested in the arts met regularly at the Falstaff Hotel, and for a time Poe participated in these meetings. It was there that he met William E. Burton, founder of Burton's Gentleman's Magazine. Burton offered Poe a position as co-editor of his magazine, and Poe accepted. His contributions to Burton's magazine included "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "William Wilson." His efforts resulted in an increase in subscriptions, but he realized little financial reward. Burton's attempts to censure Poe regarding criticism resulted in discord between them, and Poe resigned in 1840.

During his year in New York and his residence in Philadelphia, Poe occasionally resorted to consuming alcohol in times of stress. This habit often brought him into conflict with his employers. His drinking was sometimes the result of a quarrel with an employer. Due to his ability as a critic, his employers were reluctant to delegate to him full authority as editor. White, the owner of the Messenger, for instance, feared the consequences of Poe's criticism and, as a result, came into conflict with him in much the same way as Burton did. In both cases Poe resorted to drowning his frustrations in alcohol. ". . . White referred to him as 'Editor' in official correspondence, but in practice White controlled the newspaper with a firm hand and a critical eye, seeming reluctant to give Edgar complete authority. For some of this reluctance he cannot be blamed. There is evidence

that the two men quarreled and that the cause, at times, was the familiar one: Edgar's periodic drinking, followed by days of illness and inaction."<sup>57</sup>

During the second half of 1840 Poe continued to write and to make plans for the founding of his own periodical. In 1841 he became editor of Graham's Magazine. Again he wrote book reviews and contributed "The Murders in the Rue Morque."

Subscriptions to Graham's Magazine increased under Poe's influence, as had the Messenger and Burton's Magazine. But in 1842 Poe experienced a disaster in his personal life that again drove him to drink and despair. At a family party in the middle of January, Virginia broke a blood vessel. The hemorrhage was the result of tuberculosis. Her illness sent Poe in search of refuge from the pain of watching her slowly die. In a letter to George W. Eveleth, dated January 4, 1848, Poe described this crisis and its effect on him. "Six years ago, a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever & underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again -- I went through precisely the same scene. Again in about a year afterward. Then again -- again -- again & even once again at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of

<sup>57</sup>Porges, p. 112.

her death -- and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly & clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive -- nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank, God only knows how often or how much."<sup>58</sup>

By 1843 Poe's drinking habit had begun to show physically. "On January 19, 1843, Edgar Poe was thirty-four years old, a slim man a trifle over medium height, still erect in carriage and fastidiously neat, but his complexion was pale and his dark brown hair thinning toward the top."<sup>59</sup>

In 1843 Poe founded The Stylus, his own magazine, but he lacked financial backing or enough money of his own to make the venture survive. In a search for financial security he went to Washington, D. C., to make a personal request for a customs house position. He had worked for the victorious Whig party and, therefore, stood a chance of getting such a position. Once in Washington he went on a binge, and all hope for a position was abandoned. He returned to Philadelphia. Since the financial situation there had worsened, he decided to move to New York again.

<sup>58</sup>Poe, Letters, II, 356.

<sup>59</sup>Bittner, p. 182.

The years between 1844 and 1849 saw Poe wander from city to city seeking employment in a race with the deterioration of his health. In New York he again worked as an editor, but he inevitably came into conflict with his employer. In 1847 Virginia died, and he remained in a state of shock for weeks. Virginia's death marked the beginning of the most disconsolate part of Poe's life. In 1848 he journeyed to Richmond. Physicians had warned him that his reliance on alcohol, occasionally supplemented with drugs, had sapped his strength to a dangerous extent. He often experienced periods of complete insensibility and was unable to hold steady employment. He began to give short lectures and readings of his poetry to earn a living. He was a noted author, but report was merely the means by which he sought to survive financially in the last years of his life.

Much of what Poe did during the last two years of his life is not known. In trying to pull himself together he solicited the aid of certain women, among them Marie Louise Shew and Sarah Helen Whitman. In 1849 he discovered that Mr. Shelton had died. The way to Elmira was clear. He visited her in Richmond and without regard to his physical condition, became engaged to her. During the stay with Elmira, he complained of being quite ill, but he had plans to travel to Philadelphia where, for a fee of \$100, he was to revise a collection of poems written by Mrs. Leon Loud. Mrs. Loud's

poems, however, remained unaltered. Poe departed for Philadelphia on the morning of September 29, but never reached his destination. He was found in Baltimore, lying in the street near a tavern. Whether he had been plied with intoxicants by members of a political faction who were at that time trying to win an election in Baltimore, or whether he himself took the fatal drink is not known. Poe remained unconscious for four days. On the second day of his coma he spoke in delirium of the past. "On the last night, as the shadow fell across him, it must have been the horrors of shipwreck, of thirst, and of drifting away into unknown seas of darkness that troubled his last dreams. . . ." <sup>60</sup> On the morning of October 7, 1849, he became forever silent.

Had Poe and Hoffmann been able to change countries and times, each would have felt despairingly comfortable in the other's shoes. The amazing number of similarities in their biographies begins with similar childhood environments in which they were deserted by their fathers, guided by well-meaning guardians whom they mistrusted, and encouraged to study for a profession providing a lucrative income. Both men knew solitude, made few lasting relationships, and were victims of unrequited love. Both men enjoyed reading adventure stories in their early years and were fascinated and curious

<sup>60</sup>Allen, p. 864.

about magic. Poe became interested through conversing with the Negro servants. Hoffmann and Hippel investigated the world of the unknown while Uncle Otto dozed.

The fact that money problems constantly plagued both Poe and Hoffmann is a further important similarity. Never was either author truly comfortable financially. Both were extravagant. Financial insecurity often forced each man to wander from place to place seeking better employment. Both authors quarreled with employers, and honesty often prevented them from holding a job. Hoffmann's quarrel with his superiors concerning the Vater Jahn trial endangered his financial security, while Poe argued with almost every magazine owner for whom he worked because of what he considered honest criticism. And both authors sought financial security through governmental appointments, although Poe was unsuccessful in this endeavor. Hoffmann accepted a position as counsellor in Berlin. Poe attempted to obtain an appointment as a customs house official.

In Bamberg Hoffmann displayed a distaste for the incompetence of the musicians. Poe reflected the same distaste in his writings for the Messenger when he criticized the "puffed up" authors of the north who sought to sell their work through advertising instead of relying on their talents. Bamberg was to Hoffmann what Philadelphia was to Poe, for it represented the first time each was employed as an artist,

paid regularly for creativity.

The extent to which Hoffmann loved Julia Mark must also be compared to Poe's feelings concerning his cousin and wife Virginia Clemm. Hoffmann's diary entry of February 28, 1811, in which he indicated that he would rather be shot like a dog than continue the torments of a man in love and unable to do anything about it is comparable with Poe's letter of August 29, 1835, in which he states that he would rather die than lose Virginia. Both letters provide evidence of the depths of each author's feeling when faced with situations over which he had no control.

Both authors had opportunity to observe death, Hoffmann in the midst of the war against Napoleon, and Poe, who was forced to watch his wife waste away for five years.

Both authors emerged as literary figures late in their lives, although Hoffmann's initial fame came as a composer. In both cases, too, they continued to work with literature long after their health had failed. Both exhibited strong wills to create, to dream, and in both instances phantasy was the product of being unable to cope with society.

Last of all, both men succumbed to the excessive use of alcohol, which eventually caused their demise. Perhaps in alcohol each was able to find a release from the many frustrations of this world, or at least a place where the line of difference between phantasy and reality disappears.

## II. Life and Literature.

Much has been written concerning Hoffmann's influence on Poe. Poe himself was confronted with accusations that what he wrote was permeated with Germanic horror, that is, frightening situational description which appeal to the senses and which was used by German writers of the Romantic period.

That Poe sought to write material that would sell, there can be no doubt. His pitiful financial predicament and dependence upon writing for a living dictated that he interest the public. And there can be no doubt that he was influenced by German writers whose works became popular in the United States during his life time. "First, from about the year 1825 there was a constantly increasing interest in current German literature in England and America."<sup>61</sup> And certainly Hoffmann can be singled out as the most influential of German writers in regard to Poe. Poe's perusing of Blackwood's Magazine in which many of Hoffmann's stories appeared, and the titles he chose for some of his collections of works attest to this influence. Poe's title, for his 1842 collection of tales, Phantasy Pieces is merely a translation of the title of a collection of tales by Hoffmann entitled Phantasiestücke. Works by Hoffmann appeared in Blackwood's as early as 1824,

<sup>61</sup>Palmer Cobb, The Influence of E.T.A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Studies in Philology, 3, (1908; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1963), p. 103.

and Poe's interest was keenest during that period from 1831 to 1834 when he frequented the Baltimore Library. "Blackwood's Magazine brought out as early as 1824 a translation of Die Elixiere des Teufels."<sup>62</sup> But the use of like titles by two authors does not make one collection of works or one work a carbon copy of the other, nor does it indicate literary plagiarism.

In his dissertation entitled The Influence of E.T.A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Palmer Cobb enumerates the similarities between works by Poe and works by Hoffmann. Cobb concludes that Poe's indebtedness to Hoffmann consists mainly of motives. "Finally, Hoffmann's influence on Poe did not extend to the latter's style. It was solely a borrowing and adaptation of motives."<sup>63</sup>

Poe created the substance of his writings by drawing on his own experiences, his own life, and the similarities between the problems faced by many of his characters and the problems faced by characters created by Hoffmann is due primarily to the similarity of the two authors' lives, a similarity of their environments and personalities. This biographical similarity constitutes a heretofore unconsidered facet of comparison of the works of these two authors. In reading Hoffmann, Poe undoubtedly saw subjects of interest. The ideas he found were molded and colored by his own

<sup>62</sup>Cobb, p. 15.

<sup>63</sup>Cobb, p. 104.

experiences. He once commented on the individuality of his work in a preface to the Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, published in 1840. He stated: "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany but of the soul--"<sup>64</sup> And that terror was of the soul of Poe.

An examination of similar works by Hoffmann and Poe inevitably bears out the degree to which each author drew upon his life and also demonstrates the symbolism inherent in each author's use of personal experiences. Two stories which lend themselves most effectively to such an examination are Hoffmann's "Die Elixiere des Teufels" and Poe's "William Wilson." Hoffmann's work is lengthy and consequently divided into two sections. Each section is divided into chapters. The events of the tale are presented in detail, and the plot is quite involved, each chapter revealing a portion of the life of the main character, Brother Medardus. The tale is framed within the author's account of being allowed to read a document at the Kapuzinerkloster in B, as presented in preliminary words by the author, and a record of the death of Medardus which appears at the end of the tale. Hoffmann utilizes the I-form narrative, the story of Medardus' life being related by Medardus himself.

The tale begins with a description of Medardus' childhood

<sup>64</sup>Edgar Allan Poe, "Preface," Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960), p. 8.

and background. His real name is Franz, and he is able to remember portions of his childhood and early impressions of the Kloster der heiligen Linde in Prussia. His only recollections of his father have come to him through stories his mother told him. He knows that his father left his mother because of a vision the former experienced concerning the absolution of his sins, and that he was born on the very day of his father's death. Medardus' education is the result of his mother's having taken him to a Cistercian nunnery where he was taught by a parish priest. There he made the decision to become a Capuchin monk and took the name Medardus.

At the age of sixteen Medardus takes his vows and enters the Kapuzinerkloster in Königswald. There he is entrusted with the relics of the cloister. Medardus is a good monk, an adept speaker, and the prior recognizes his ability at giving sermons as an asset to the cloister. But among the relics he must care for is a strange elixir which St. Anthony supposedly received from the devil. The elixir represents temptation, and anyone who drinks it will be possessed by the devil. In fear of his weakness to temptation Medardus keeps the flask containing the elixir locked in a cabinet and removes the key to the cabinet from the ring of keys to the various relics. His uneasiness concerning temptation is also reflected in his decision to

preach a sermon on that subject. In preaching the sermon he is disturbed by a strange figure in the congregation whom he believes he has seen before. His inability to remember further weakens his will, and he succumbs, partaking of the forbidden elixir. The potion fosters evil thoughts within him, and he seeks to rebel. Often he is unable to control his thoughts at all. His condition is further deteriorated by a young woman who reveals her love for him in the confessional. Sensually aroused, he decides to run away from the cloister in search of her, but the prior attempts to placate the rebellious inclinations by sending Medardus on an errand to Rome.

On his way to Rome, Medardus comes upon a uniformed young man in a trance, who is leaning over the edge of a precipice. Fearing the man will fall, Medardus approaches him. In an attempt to awaken him he so startles the stranger that the latter falls over the precipice. Medardus believes himself a murderer and stands in shock, holding the stranger's hat and dagger. A page approaches, compliments him on his disguise and informs him that he is expected at a castle down the road. Medardus readily accepts his situation.

The stranger whom Medardus assumes he has killed later turns out to be Graf Viktorin, his half brother. The fall sustained by Viktorin is not fatal. He receives injuries that render him insane, and in his irrational state of mind

he believes himself to be Medardus.

Meanwhile, the real Medardus, pondering the incident at the precipice, proceeds to the castle designated by the page. The Baroness, Euphemie, there accepts him as Viktorin with whom she has been having a love affair. Baron von F--, her husband, is unaware of the affair. His wife has formulated a plan whereby Viktorin, her lover, was to come to the castle disguised as a monk to give spiritual assistance to Hermogen, her stepson, who is mentally unbalanced. Medardus has in action and appearance assumed the role of another individual. Through his relationship with Euphemie he finds an opportunity to satisfy his sensual desires. But when he also falls in love with Aurelie, the Baron's daughter by his first wife, an Italian, Euphemie is enraged with jealousy and attempts to poison him. Medardus switches glasses on her, and in making his escape kills Hermogen, who has suspected the monk's relationship with his stepmother and his desirous attitude toward his sister. As Medardus flees the castle, he comes face to face with Viktorin, his double, who utters the very words on Medardus' mind.

Medardus dresses in civilian clothes and travels as a distinguished gentleman. In an industrial city, Frauenburg, he meets Pietro Belcampo, a barber, whom he befriends. The friendship proves lasting and advantageous, for at an exhibition of paintings in the city, Medardus believes he

sees scenes from his life in the cloister and is confronted by a stranger who exposes him as a criminal monk. Medardus attempts to kill the man but is restrained by Belcampo.

Medardus next takes a coach ride south, and when the coach breaks down in a storm, he seeks refuge in a forest house. During his stay with the forester, he learns that an insane monk is being harbored there. This monk, he learns, is Viktorin, who purports to be Medardus, the perpetrator of the crimes at the castle of Baron von F--. The behavior of Viktorin causes Medardus to doubt the validity of his own identity, and when the forester takes the insane monk into a city for confinement, Medardus follows.

In town, Medardus becomes acquainted with distinguished individuals and becomes a prominent figure of the court of a prince. There he again sees Aurelie, but she recognizes him as the murderer of her brother. Medardus is charged with murder and tried. Under cross-examination he continues to portray himself as Krczynski, a Polish gentleman, but he is exposed, convicted and sentenced to death. When he attempts to escape, he is placed in more secure quarters. Thoughts of suicide cross his mind, but he is saved from the death sentence by his double, who appears and confesses that, in fact, it was he who killed Hermogen. Exonerated in the eyes of Aurelie, he asks her for her hand, and she consents.

On the day of the wedding Medardus sees his double being

taken to the scaffold, goes insane, attempts to stab his bride, and runs into the forest, where he is confronted by his double who also has managed to escape. Viktorin hops on Medardus' back and clings to him until the latter struggles free. But the struggle to free himself from the clutches of Viktorin has sapped all of his strength, and Medardus collapses, completely exhausted.

When he awakens he finds himself in an Italian mental institution. Having been taken there by Belcampo, who found him in the woods, he recovers and sets about repenting. He punishes himself severely and so distinguishes himself in the eyes of the Church that he wins an audience with the Pope. He returns to his old monastery and there learns that Aurelie is alive and about to take the vows to become a nun at a nearby convent. The Kapuziner monks are to take part in the ceremony, and when Medardus again sees Aurelie, he must fight to repress evil desires to make her the bride of death. As she begins to take her vows, he finds strength in her words to conquer the evil within him. But suddenly Viktorin arises from amid the crowd, runs to Aurelie, stabs her and escapes. From the lips of the dying Aurelie, Medardus learns that he and she were destined to suffer the sins of their forefathers.

The story ends with a record in the hand of Father Spiridion of the Kapuzinerkloster in B--, recording the death of Medardus.

Throughout the story characters and predicaments faced by the characters represent characters and predicaments which were a part of Hoffmann's life. Medardus' environment at the beginning of the tale, for instance, corresponds to Hoffmann's environment during his childhood. As in the case of the author, Medardus doesn't really know his father. "Nie hat meine Mutter gesagt, in welchen Verhältnissen mein Vater in der Welt lebte; rufe ich mir aber alles das ins Gedächtnis zurück, was sie mir schon in meiner frühesten Jugend von ihm erzählte, so muß ich wohl glauben, daß es ein mit tiefen Kenntnissen begabter lebenskluger Mann war."<sup>65</sup> Hoffmann certainly had no intimate knowledge of his father, and in Medardus' being ushered into the disciplined, restrictive world of monastic life can be seen Hoffmann's personal experiences in the restrictive, demanding atmosphere of the Doerffer household in Königsberg. Nor is Uncle Otto overlooked. He comes forth as the preacher entrusted with Medardus' education, a rather mild representation of someone Hoffmann often viewed with scorn.

At the beginning of the story the main character is portrayed as a gifted man, yet a man destined to suffer. The comment of an old pilgrim relates this. "Euer Sohn ist mit vielen Gaben herrlich ausgestattet, aber die Sünde des Vaters

<sup>65</sup>F.T.A. Hoffmann, "Die Elixiere des Teufels," F.T.A. Hoffmanns Werke (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1946), II, 9.

kocht und gärt in seinem Blute, . . ."67 In looking back on his youth, Hoffmann must have certainly seen himself as gifted but destined to suffer sins similar to those of his father, for Hoffmann's artistic nature was to exceed that of his father greatly.

The elixir which appears early in the story represents Hoffmann's early inclinations toward art. Once Medardus has partaken of the forbidden liquid, he rebels against monastic life. Once Hoffmann had found the demands and freedom of artistic creation, his mind became plagued with thoughts of what he was, restricted and destined to become a lawyer, and what he could be, free, an artist. The elixir contains also the power of artistic endeavor, and in the case of the main character, Medardus, as well as the actual case of the author, once it has been tasted, life is permanently altered.

The elixir must also be mentioned in regard to one of the most important aspects of the story, the concept of the double, of dual existence. Hoffmann's knowledge concerning dual existence ran deep, for in his life he had actually existed as two people, Hoffmann, the lawyer, the rationalist, the representative of the principles and discipline of law, and Hoffmann, the musician, the writer, the creator. It was, therefore, with deep insight that he created Viktorin, Medardus'

<sup>67</sup>Hoffmann, Werke, II, 11.

double, who is free to the point of insanity. Medardus' changing places with Viktorin after startling the latter into falling over the precipice, provides a representation of Hoffmann's opportunity to step out of the garb of the lawyer and into the garb of the artist, as he did upon accepting a position as music director at Bamberg. And as Hoffmann returned to the study of law with what he considered its restrictions, so Medardus returns to his monastic life with all of its restrictions. The intensity of Hoffmann's symbolism becomes quite evident at one particular point in the story in regard to the concept of dual existence. After attempting to stab Aurelie, Medardus escapes into the woods and is confronted there by his double. Hoffmann has Viktorin then jump on Medardus' back. In Medardus' success in freeing himself from Viktorin can be seen Hoffmann's return to the profession of law in 1814. This event in his life certainly involved a mental struggle comparable to Medardus' physical strife and, as in the case of Medardus, by no means meant that the inclinations represented in Viktorin were never to recur as a part of his life.

Inner strife was something Hoffmann knew well, and the extent of Medardus' inner conflict is repeatedly mentioned throughout the story. He is constantly at odds with himself, trying to overcome evil thoughts, trying to keep from going insane, trying to control his emotions. "Des Sturms in meinem

Innern unerachtet, gelang es mir, die dem Priester ziemliche Ruhe zu erheucheln, und so trat ich vor den Baron."<sup>67</sup>

It must also be noted that wandering, escaping or traveling served to rescue Medardus from situations which are distasteful. At the beginning of the tale the prior placates Medardus' rebellious nature by sending him on an errand to Rome. When he stabs Hermogen, he escapes. He travels from city to city. An examination of Hoffmann's life is the examination of a nomad's life. He, too, traveled or fled from city to city. And just as his main character was often rescued or aided by his closest friend in a time of crisis, so was Hoffmann. In Pietro Belcampo, the barber who rescues Medardus on two occasions, once in Frauenburg when the monk tries to kill a man who has exposed him at an art exhibition, and later in the story when Medardus' fame as a churchman has created enemies who plot to kill him, can be seen the generosity and understanding of Hoffmann's life-long friend, Hippel, who extricated him from distasteful situations, such as Plock and Leipzig.

The predicaments involving women also represent situations analogous to Hoffmann's personal experiences. Medardus' adventure with Euphemie, a married woman, is a symbolic representation of the author's experience with Frau

<sup>67</sup>Hoffmann, Werke, II, 69.

Cora Hatt. The incident concerning Medardus' switching glasses on Euphemie compares to Hoffmann's willingness to avoid conflict as evidenced by his flight from Königsberg and Cora, and in Aurelie Medardus sees the beauty that the author saw in two women, Minna Doerffer and Julia Mark. In the tale Medardus describes Aurelie in this way: "Ich sah sie, es war, als schwebte sie daher, mich voll Liebe anblickend, wie in jener Vision, und mir winkend, daß ich ihr folgen sollte. --"<sup>68</sup> In regard to the two women mentioned, Medardus' attempt on Aurelie's life and his failure to marry her symbolize Hoffmann's reluctance to settle down, and Medardus' thoughts of suicide after being convicted as the murderer of Aurelie's brother reflect Hoffmann's consternation concerning his love for Julia, as evidenced by his entries in his diary.

This tale also exemplifies Hoffmann's interest in the supernatural, an interest that had its origins in the readings of his youth. It also demonstrates his ability to use his imagination and to intermesh real and unreal situations. Medardus, a man trained and disciplined in religion, is to strive to emulate the principles of Christianity in the world of mortals in order that he may gain access to the joys of the unseen world. But the supernatural powers of the elixir force him into the

<sup>68</sup>Hoffmann, Werke, II, 90.

world of the flesh and the conflicts of opposing sets of values cause his insanity.

Perhaps Hoffmann's most important message in writing the tale is that life is by no means a series of routine events. As rational as life may seem, mysterious forces undeniably hold sway over human intentions. There is something inherent in Medardus' being, something buried deep within his mind that, as a result of the elixir, will not allow him peace of mind. He seems to force upon himself burdens which he cannot bear. In times of confusion he acts as if by instinct. At the beginning of the story he is unnerved by a figure in the congregation whom he thinks he has seen before, but he is not fully aware of the reasons for the extent of his discomfort. Nor can he fully understand his acceptance of his predicament on the precipice, his murder of Hermogen, or his attempt on the life of Aurelie, someone he supposedly loves. It is as if he is destroying himself, unable to prevent his own self-destruction. It is Hoffmann's vivid imagination that portrays Medardus' world of dreams and desires.

Hoffmann foreshadows this mysterious side of life in the preface to the tale. "Hoffmann selber weist im Vorwort darauf hin, daß die Geschichte des Mönches Medardus mehr sei als das regellose Spiel der erhitzten Einbildungskraft, und daß das, was wir insgeheim Traum und Einbildung nennen, wohl die

symbolische Erkenntnis des geheimen Fadens sein könne, der sich durch unser Leben zieht, es festknüpfend in allen seinen Beziehungen."<sup>69</sup> Hoffmann himself knew what it meant to be driven to doubt reality. Certainly his behavior in Posen was not something he planned. It was something he was driven to do because of his inability to find satisfaction in a single profession or a single endeavor.

Hoffmann knew Medardus and the problems he faced well, for he was Medardus. His ability to portray the plight of an unstable monk was exceeded only by his deep insight into the problems of double existence and his belief that there is more to life than reason. Medardus is driven to do things he does not want to do, as Hoffmann was driven to commit undesirable acts. Medardus is confronted with an elixir, a temptation that drives him to flee his monastic order, and with Viktorin, the conscience of the artist, who unifies the story with his appearances and disappearances. Viktorin appears only after Medardus has partaken of the elixir and continually drives Medardus toward destruction. It was art that continually drove Hoffmann toward what at times appeared to be destruction. Viktorin is also represented as being unrestrained. He kills Aurelie when Medardus has succeeded in overcoming his desire to kill her. In artistic endeavors Hoffmann felt unrestrained, that is, he could do with his

<sup>69</sup>Emil Ermatinger, Deutsche Dichter: 1700--1900 (Bonn: Anthenäum Verlag, 1949), II, 218.

imagination that which he had to fight to overcome in real life. He could flee his monastic order. Hoffmann was an individual of high emotions and this also is reflected in his characters. Medardus' feelings are extreme. He either loves or hates. He is either devoted or rebellious to the point of insanity. And yet he is all that was and has come down through literature as Hoffmann. That Hoffmann portrayed himself in his characters there can be no doubt, and this was a similar characteristic of his American counterpart, Poe.

Poe's tale does not lend itself to comparison to Hoffmann's in terms of length. Poe's work is much shorter, comprising some 10,000 words, while Hoffmann's endeavor includes well over 110,000 words. Poe is considered the formulator of the short story, which he described as a tale that could be read in a single sitting. Hoffmann's tale could hardly be read in one sitting.

The main character of Poe's story, "William Wilson," relates various events that have befallen him in his life. In the beginning he introduces himself and proceeds to describe his youth at a school for boys in England. Although its building, its head master, its rules, and its curriculum are monotonous, he discovers a student whose presence threatens what little comfort he manages to find. The student has entered school on the same day as the narrator, and bears his name. Both lads have the same mental, physical, and spiritual composition. They compete

for leadership among their fellow students. Although they tolerate one another's companionship, they soon come to realize that they possess a strong inner resentment for one another. Wilson is extremely irritated by his double's exact imitation of his gait and manner, especially that he can surmount the handicap of a whispery voice to imitate his very tone in speaking. The desire to retaliate against this mockery becomes an obsession with Wilson. Knowing his rival's dislike for practical jokes, he formulates a plan of attack and slips into the boy's bedroom in the middle of the night. When he draws the curtains away from the bed and raises the lamp, he is possessed by a strange feeling about the individual sleeping in the bed and bolts from the room, resolving never to return to the school.

After some time spent idly at home, William Wilson enters Eton. There he begins a life of dubious diversions in company with a group of uninhibited students. One night during a wild party, an intoxicated William Wilson is summoned to the door by a visitor. The caller, he is shocked to discover, is his double who merely whispers the name William Wilson admonishingly and disappears into the night. The experience sobers him instantly.

Not long thereafter, William Wilson enters Oxford and embarks on a career of even more serious debauchery. Gambling becomes his forte. It is his practice to lure the wealthier

of his companions into the games at which he excels in cheating. One night while in the final moments of cheating a rich nobleman, his double bursts into the room and discloses the secrets of Wilson's success, namely, marked cards and cards in his sleeve. The double again vanishes, and Wilson finds himself banished from the premises as well as the school.

Everywhere William Wilson travels, every rascality in which he becomes involved, in Paris, in Moscow, and in Berlin is thwarted by his determined double. In Rome during a carnival, Wilson attends a masquerade ball with the intention of charming the young wife of a Roman nobleman. Before he can find his intended, however, his double appears to deter him again. In a fit of violent rage he seizes his rival and challenges him to a duel. In the ensuing fight Wilson destroys his double. In doing so, he suddenly realizes that he has just destroyed the good in himself and delivered himself over completely to evil.

Biographical symbolism is as prevalent in Poe's tale as it is in Hoffmann's, and as in the case of Hoffmann, Poe's own life experiences influenced his treatment of the story. Similar, also, is Poe's use of the I-form narrative. William Wilson reveals the events of his life himself. In both tales the I-form narrative provides an air of authenticity which the author uses to interchange real and unreal situations.

William Wilson's ten thousand word description of his life is, in reality, Poe's life in a nut shell. In Wilson's portrayal is depicted a youth of loneliness, a student life of excesses, which carries over into Wilson's life after school, and a nomadic existence of wandering under pursuit by a double, whom he eventually succeeds in destroying. All of these experiences were a part of Poe's life.

Immediately recognizable as biographically symbolic is Wilson's description of the solitude of his childhood and his strong will. ". . . I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions."<sup>70</sup> Wilson's solitude relates directly to the author's solitude, first in the care of his mother who spent most of her time trying to earn a living, and later in the Allan household in which he felt somewhat alienated and alone. Because he is left to himself, so Wilson asserts, he developed a strong will. That Poe had a strong will, there can be no doubt. His refusal to be pressured by John Allan into a profession and his frequent arguments with employers provide evidence of this. Wilson's childhood is Poe's childhood.

In Wilson's descriptions of his early schooling lie symbolic representations of Poe's experiences in English schools when at the age of six he traveled with the Allan

<sup>70</sup>Edgar Allan Poe, "William Wilson," Tales by Edgar Allan Poe (New York: The Century Co., 1902), n. 345.

family to Scotland and England. The enormity of the impression the trip made on Poe is reflected in Wilson's description of the ominous appearance of the Gothic architecture. "The school-room was the largest in the house -- I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the sanctum, 'during hours,' of our principal, the Reverend Dr. Bransby."<sup>71</sup> To a young boy separated from all that he had known in his days in Richmond, the change of environment must have been "terror-inspiring" at times. Important here, also, is the name of the principal. Dr. Bransby actually was the name of one of Poe's English schoolmasters.

One statement in particular by Wilson reflects Poe's attitude toward his childhood and early youth. In recounting his school experiences Wilson comments on youth and memory: "Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow -- a weak and irregular remembrance -- an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so."<sup>72</sup> In this statement is to be found a description both of Poe's youth and his entire life which was a series of "feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric

<sup>71</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 349.

<sup>72</sup>Poe, Tales, pp. 350-351.

pains."

The central theme of the story is a theme also found in Hoffmann's work, the theme of double existence. And it was as easy for Poe to work this theme as it was for Hoffmann. In Wilson's gradual recognition of the existence of his double, climaxed by his entry into his double's room at night, lies the symbol of Poe's battles with his conscience. Poe's acquisition of a classical education, a product of his early schooling in England, was an indispensable tool in his writing, his endeavors as an artist, and so it is of symbolic importance that Wilson's double develops during his early schooling.

That Wilson also spends some time in idleness following his early schooling relates to Poe's life. "After a lapse of some months, spent at home in mere idleness, I found myself a student at Eton."<sup>73</sup> Those periods before and after Poe's attendance at the University of Virginia were periods of relative idleness that stood out in the author's mind to the extent that he presented them in his tale.

That Wilson comes face to face with his double at Eton and Oxford relates to Poe's life at the University of Virginia, and certainly Wilson's account of his activities at both places must be related to Poe's activities during his university career. At Eton, for instance, Wilson recounts

<sup>73</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 363.

his obsession with wine. "The wine flowed freely, and there were not wanting other and perhaps more dangerous seductions; so that the grey dawn had already faintly appeared in the east while our delirious extravagance was at its height. Madly flushed with cards and intoxication, I was in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity, when my attention was suddenly diverted by the violent, although partial, unclosing of the door of the apartment, . . ."<sup>74</sup> Wilson's drinking and card playing are, in fact, Poe's drinking and card playing, and as Poe was plagued by thoughts of dismay and remorse concerning his debts, so Wilson at Eton and Oxford is harassed by his double. A further comparison of a preoccupation by Wilson and Poe with extravagance is a symbolic reference to the cloak worn by William Wilson to the ill-fated card game at Oxford. "The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry, in matters of this frivolous nature."<sup>75</sup> Poe was attracted by luxury, by expensive clothes, one probable reason for his great indebtedness. No doubt it gave him pleasure to think about this coat which he may have designed and owned while

<sup>74</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 364.

<sup>75</sup>Poe, Tales, pp. 373-374.

at the university, discarding the unpleasant reality that transpired, namely, John Allan's having to pay off his debts.

And Wilson's exposure at Oxford symbolizes Poe's termination under duress from the University of Virginia. For Poe the facade was over. He was not, in fact, the heir to the Allan estate, the son of a wealthy Richmond merchant, but rather someone whom Allan viewed as he did his debts. Poe was forced to give up his earnings at cards. Both have cheated, both are exposed.

After his university experience and the ensuing conflict with John Allan, Poe's life became nomadic. This is also to be noted as a part of Wilson's plight. "I fled in vain. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun. Scarcely had I set foot in Paris, ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable interest taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew, while I experienced no relief. Villian! --at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness, stepped he in between me and my ambition! at Vienna, too --at Berlin --and Moscow!"<sup>76</sup> In Wilson's wandering is to be perceived the nomadism which Poe displayed from the time he left the Allan household in 1827 until his death.

<sup>76</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 379.

An interesting but tragic portion of Poe's life is also reflected in Wilson's intentions concerning the wife of a Roman nobleman, prior to his final confrontation with his double. "The difficulty, too, of forcing my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling of my temper; for I was anxiously seeking (let me not say with what unworthy motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio. With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence."<sup>77</sup> In the "beautiful" wife of the Roman nobleman lies the symbolic person of Elmira Royster Shelton and in the "aged and doting" Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio, the symbol of her husband. Wilson's entire account of the incident at the carnival of 18-- is a replay of Poe's return to Richmond to work for the Messenger in 1835 after learning of Elmira's unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her marriage. As in the case of Wilson, he learned of that discontent through a friend of Elmira's, Mary Winfree, who visited him in Baltimore.

In Wilson's killing his double can be seen what Poe considered his own plight. He knew what responsibility was, and he knew what was required of him to be part of the

<sup>77</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 379.

outside world, the world of responsible living, of paying bills, or earning a living. But in giving himself over to his strong, artistic will, he destroyed, as Wilson, that which would have made him acceptable and responsible. As Wilson remembers: "You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead -- dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist --. . ."78

Poe experienced feelings that he did not belong throughout his life. In the Allan household, at Charlottesville and even as an editor he was deprived of a sense of belonging. This deprivation provided him with insight, and his writings reflect a profound knowledge of what it means to be a part of the world, to belong. The same may be said of Hoffmann, who strove to overcome feelings of alienation. In the Doerffer household, in Posen and as a lawyer he felt he did not belong.

Finally, as in the case of Hoffmann, this tale demonstrates Poe's preoccupation with the supernatural, a preoccupation which resulted from his youthful contact with the superstitions of the Negro servants at the Allan household. The existence of Wilson's double is mental, though the author so aptly portrays the existence of the double as physical. As the tales told by the Negro servants

<sup>78</sup>Poe, Tales, p. 380.

haunted Poe's thoughts, so Wilson's double terrorizes him, follows him with mysterious cunning all over the world. For Hoffmann and Poe the double represented in each story was a mental image which was treated physically in the story. Wilson and Viktorin were characterizations of mental problems each author experienced.

That Medardus and Wilson were relentless there can be no doubt, and that E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe were similar individuals there can also be no doubt. They both perceived the dark side of life. They recognized the relentless complications in life which lead men to despair, and these perceptions and feelings they exhibit through their characters. In writing his tale, Hoffmann was influenced by Matthew G. Lewis' novel entitled The Monk. "Die Elixiere des Teufels (1815-6), the most solidly constructed of Hoffmann's longer works, is a kind of Gothic 'tale of terror' adapted to the later Romantic manner; its subject, indeed, was suggested to Hoffmann by a reading of Lewis's Monk." <sup>79</sup> From the Englishman, Hoffmann took subject matter and motives which he utilized in the perspective of his own life. The individuality of his work is reflected by the fact that there is no double for Lewis' monk. Although he is a tormented soul, as Hoffmann's Medardus, he does not face the problem of dual existence, nor is he able to

<sup>79</sup>John G. Robertson, A History of German Literature (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1902), p. 476.

alter the course of his inevitable destruction.

Hoffmann's approach to Lewis is similar to Poe's approach to Hoffmann. Both authors saw value in the motives of another author, and both permeated their works with biographical symbolism, symbolism of considerable likeness due to the similarity of their lives.

### III. Conclusion

A biographical consideration of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe throws considerable light on the writings of the two authors.

The lives of Hoffmann and Poe are replete with similarities. In producing literature each author drew upon his life for the substance of his productions, each created works containing biographical symbolism. "Die Elixiere des Teufels," by Hoffmann, and "William Wilson," by Poe, provide evidence of the use of said symbolism.

Similarities in the works of Hoffmann and Poe are due more to similarities in their lives as reflected through the aforementioned symbolism than plagiarism on the part of Poe.

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B.S., Bowling Green State University, 1966

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Modern Languages

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

## ABSTRACT

A biographical consideration of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe throws considerable light on the writings of the two authors.

The lives of Hoffmann and Poe are replete with similarities. Their childhood environment, their education, their experiences concerning marriage and profession are strikingly similar. They were confronted with similar problems and sorrows. These aspects of their lives are important in regard to the literature each produced, for in producing literature each author drew upon his life for the substance of his productions. Each created works containing biographical symbolism. "Die Elixiere des Teufels," by Hoffmann, and "William Wilson," by Poe, provide evidence of the use of said symbolism.

Similarities in the works of Hoffmann and Poe have been attributed in the past to plagiarism on the part of the latter author. This thesis demonstrates that these similarities are due more to similarities in their lives than plagiarism on the part of Poe.