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EDGAR ALLAN POE'S USE OF ARCHETYPAL IMAGES  
IN SELECTED PROSE WORKS

THESIS

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This study traces archetypal images in selected prose fiction by Edgar Allan Poe and shows his consistent use of such imagery throughout his career, and outlines the archetypal images that Poe uses repeatedly throughout his works: the death of the beautiful woman, death and resurrection, the hero's journey to the underworld, and the quest for forbidden knowledge. The study examines Poe's use of myth to establish and uphold archetypal patterns. Poe's goal when crafting his works was the creation of a single specified effect, and to create his effects, he used the materials at hand. Some of these materials came from his own subconscious; however, a greater portion came from a lifetime of study and his own understanding of the connections between myth and archetypal images.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Through an analysis of selected prose works spanning Poe's career, this study examines his careful creation of literary effect, in all phases of his writing, through the use of archetypal images. These works, which include selections from his short works of horror, ratiocination, and fantasy, as well as both of his book length works, show his consistent interest in states of mind and how they bring about an effect in the mind of the reader. Poe's use of mythological references to foreshadow archetypal images clearly demonstrates his conscious intention to create such effects throughout his career and underlines his critical understanding of archetypal patterns and their association with myth.

Critics traditionally interpret the works of Edgar Allan Poe from either an occult or psychological standpoint. This double interpretation stems from Poe's use of myth and archetypal images to create specified effects that enable his works to touch readers on the deepest emotional level. In his introduction to Modern Critical Theories: Edgar Allan Poe, Harold Bloom states that "Emerson, for better or worse, was and is the American mind, but Poe was and is our hysteria, our uncanny unanimity in our repressions" (5).

Poe creates the effects of horror, suspense, and beauty by using mythological references and patterns in combination with the literary techniques of his day to evoke predetermined emotional responses from the reader. His use of these patterns allows for both occult and psychological interpretations of his works and makes both lines of interpretation valid.

In A Theory of Discourse, James L. Kinneavy argues that "the ways of thinking of a scientist are not those of the artist . . . Each has its own logic or logics" (40). In Poe's case, however, the two modes of thinking are combined. He uses his facility for critical analysis in creating his artistic works. Largely because of his use of myth and archetypal patterns, Poe's work endures. His was considered the most important literary achievement of the old South (LHUS 609); his fiction and poetry continue to affect readers today, and his influence carries over into modern genre fiction, as seen in the works of H. P. Lovecraft, Steven King, and John D. MacDonald (King 63). However, Poe so constructs his works that the reader cannot easily determine whether these patterns convey the meaning of the works or simply uphold and enhance the intended emotional impact (Marginalia 10).

Traditionally, myth presents supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serve as primordial types in a

primitive view of the world. In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye says that "in terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of action at or near the conceivable limits of desire" (136). Poe uses readers' unvoiced urges to reach or exceed those limits to draw the readers into his world.

Archetypes work through myth to introduce original models after which we pattern those particulars of our world that we consider valuable. John T. Irwin, in American Hieroglyphics, observes that

in Eureka, then, Poe presents us with the paradox of a 'unified' macrocosmic body that is without a totalizing image--an alogical, intuitive belief whose "truth" rests upon Poe's sense that cosmologies and myths of origin are forms of internal geography that, under the guise of mapping the physical universe, maps the universe of desire. (6)

The Classical mythologies provide the patterns for Poe's work: (1) death and resurrection; (2) the hero's journey to the underworld; (3) the death of the beautiful woman; and (4) the quest for forbidden knowledge. He also uses the Jungian images of the "Shadow," "The Anima," and the "Trickster" in crafting his stories. These archetypal patterns create his desired "effects" of horror, suspense, and beauty.

In addition, Poe uses Greek dramatic techniques such as the refrain and unity of time to create a single specific effect in each work. However, he applies these techniques differently than did the Greeks. The refrain, for example, varies in structure, as in the "Raven" (1845) where he reduces it to one word. He also interprets the unity of time somewhat differently by applying it to the length of time involved in reading a work of fiction or a poem as well as to unity of impression.

In "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Poe argues that the author should first choose a single unified effect, and then decide which tone and incidents to use to create that effect. He also states that in creating his works he "kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable" (Essays and Reviews 16). The works considered in this study provide ample evidence that Poe consistently used this technique in his writing.

Increasing numbers of modern critics have begun looking at Poe's "single effects," but these critics often consider Poe more philosopher than artist. In Fables of Mind, for example, Joan Dayan focuses on Eureka, and points out Poe's antagonism toward society's rituals: she views his works as "complicated critiques of the law of identity and contradiction, the law of cause and effect, and of any abstract notion of body and soul" (3).



Both Dyan and Kenneth Silverman state their belief that Poe's works form an autobiography of the author's mind, but they fail to take into account Poe's continuous striving to please popular taste or his explicitly stated goals. All authors use elements from their own lives, and the lives of most of the people they have known. This use does not necessarily make the fiction of any one author "autobiographical." Many additional factors such as the social and literary climate of the day and the tastes of the reading public contribute to the content of fictional works. Poe pointed out in his now famous letter to T.W. White of April 30, 1835, "to be appreciated, you must be read" (Letters 58). As I. A. Richards states in Principles of Literary Criticism,

Whatever psycho-analysts may aver, the mental processes of the poet are not a very profitable field for investigation. They offer far too happy a hunting ground for uncontrollable conjecture.

(29)

In Poe's case, textual evidence presents a portrait of a craftsman, using the tools at his disposal to create predetermined effects. All else must of necessity, without the author himself to confirm, deny, or submit to psycho-analysis, be conjecture.

Other critics recognize the craftsmanship necessary to use myth effectively; however, the studies available focus on individual works or themes. No one has considered the grand scope of Poe's use of myth, and the archetypes behind those myths, to create specific effects, nor has anyone considered the level of Poe's artistry as he uses myth and archetype to touch readers on the deep level necessary for successful fiction and poetry.

Critics have tried to classify Poe's works thematically, but such categories inevitably overlap. Jules Zanger, in "Poe and the Theme of Forbidden Knowledge," points out that "Morella" (1835), for example, falls into three different categories. Stuart Levine places it in "The Death of the Beautiful Woman" group; Patrick Quinn includes it in his "metempsychosis" group; and Daniel Hoffman puts it in his "marriage" group; Zanger places "Morella" (1835) in the "theme of forbidden knowledge" group (534).

"Ligeia" (1838), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), and the "Tell-Tale Heart (1843)," as well as several of Poe's poems, fit easily into these categories. The overlap in these categories indicates that the connections noted in the categorical groupings extend throughout Poe's works as he carefully crafts the effects of beauty, suspense, and horror.

Recent criticism shows a resurgence of interest in the Gothic tradition in American literature. In "Gothic Patterns in American Short Fiction of the Nineteenth Century," Maria Katrakis observes that the prose fiction of Poe, Irving, Hawthorne, and James reveals an attempt to locate the source of terror not in the environment but in the mind (2896). The works considered here study show how Poe structures his tales to explore the depths of the human psyche at its most terrifying. Each of Poe's protagonists journeys to the underworld of the soul, either to commit murder or as the supposedly innocent observer of death and regeneration.

In "The Function of Terror in the Work of Edgar Allan Poe," Joseph Garrison deals with Poe's application of his theories of poetry to his prose (140). He also discusses Poe's use of the word Truth to indicate both Essence and Existence; he further interprets this truth as the condition of finite man seeking the beauty of heaven (145). Garrison focuses on the Adam myth to illustrate the cathartic effect of terror on the reader (146-67). Poe, however, pronounces "terror for terror's sake" illegitimate. He seeks and uses the "truths" of the soul in creating his fiction.

Poe sought the same truths man has always sought. These truths brought about the myths, based on patterns C. G. Jung calls "universal archetypes". Poe's knowledge of

what causes terror of the soul, shown by his use of the patterns that touch the very depths of humankind's fears and desires, further indicates his deliberate blending of the archetypical images of myth with the literary techniques of the day to achieve universal effects.

Poe uses both Gothic techniques of the romantics and rational techniques of science to present man's continuing quest to understand the nature of life. His major themes, (apocalyptic vision of the gods, demonic vision of the gods, vegetation (death and regeneration), mutilation of the god, search for forbidden knowledge, and the journey to the underworld) indicate that Poe's deliberate creation of intended effects reflects the scope of his own investigation of life. He explores the creation of universal effects.

Poe examines one such reaction to effect, humankind's propensity for acting against its own best interest, in "The Imp of the Perverse" (1845). He had previously looked at this issue in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "William Wilson" (1839) "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), and "The Black Cat" (1843). These works receive further analysis in Chapters III and IV of this study.

### EDUCATION

Edgar Allan Poe's extensive use of overt mythological references attests to his knowledge of myth as does his educational background. He could read and write Latin and

French and excelled in literature and history at the age of eleven. In addition, his early education, with the Misses Dubourg, included the study of geography, spelling, history and religious education. During his stay at the Reverend John Bransby's Manor House School, he studied French, Latin, and literature (A. H. Quinn 69-71).

His scholastic achievement continued throughout his educational career. Records from the University of Virginia list Poe among the distinguished students in both French and Latin (A. H. Quinn 100), and George Long, whose senior class Poe attended, required both Greek and Latin readings and translations (A. H. Quinn 98). His quarrel with his guardian, John Allan, shortened his scholastic career, but he excelled in his formal education.

In addition to his formal education, Poe increased his knowledge through reading literature, philosophy, and psychology from both his own and classical times. His notes in Marginalia and his letters reveal his mastery of diverse reading material and his critical acumen. He analyzed both the structure and content of his reading not only in his capacity as a journalist, but also as a personal habit. His "Philosophy of Composition" (1846) and "The Poetic Principle" (1850) reflect his method of appraising the works he read and the methodology used in composing his own works.

### MYTH AND ARCHETYPE

Jung interpreted myths as the projection of the "collective unconscious" of the race. They contain "archetypal images" that are the traditional expressions, developed over thousands of years, of symbols upon which the society as a whole has come to depend. Jung's concept emphasizes the psychological dependence of all societies (sophisticated as well as primitive) upon their traditional myths, often also expressed in religion and ritual.

According to Jung, the mind of humankind, like the body, has pre-established forms of behavior and belief. These forms are demonstrated in repeated patterns of psychic functioning. Despite the appearance of variance and free will, humankind, like the animals, will follow set patterns of behavior until for some reason self-styled patterns conflict with instinctual patterns (Psyche and Symbol xiv).

This conflict can cause the individual to develop peculiar ideas and emotions. The distance individuals deviate from conformity to these original patterns determines the degree of their alienation from society (Psyche and Symbol xiv). Poe's criminals and protagonists have set self-styled patterns that deviate in varying degrees from the archetypal patterns of their community. When their personal systems come into conflict with

instinctual patterns, the individuals withdraw even further from society, and their ideas become morbid and self-destructive.

These archetypal patterns belong to the realm of the instincts and represent inherited forms of psychic behavior. Jung points out that "these secrets are jealously guarded, anxiously concealed and highly feared and esteemed." Humankind guards these secrets carefully because he not only fears they are ridiculous but also reveres them as revelations (Psyche and Symbol xv).

In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye states that certain archetypal images touch mankind on the deepest emotional level because they function at the limits of humankind's desires. These images predate myth and explain the similarities between the myths of geographically widespread countries. Societal influences and rituals validate humankind to itself as a part of society. Myths and rituals based on archetypal images enhance this validation of humankind as a part of the whole and as individuals. However, while myth operates at the outside level of human desire it does not necessarily present a world attainable by human beings (136). Frye also points out that "in literature, as in painting, the traditional emphasis in both practice and theory has been on representation or 'lifelikeness'" (134).

Frye states, "myth, then, is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance." He uses the term "romance" to denote the tendency to "displace myth in a human direction and yet, to conventionalize content in an idealized direction." Frye's "central principle of 'displacement' is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like" (Frye 136-37).

Frye further proposes three organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature. He groups myth into the categories of undisplaced myth, implicit myth, and suggestive myth. Undisplaced myth concerns itself with gods or demons. This type of myth deals with two contrasting worlds which have "total metaphorical identification"; one world is desirable, the other undesirable. Poe's "Ligeia," "William Wilson," and "Metzengerstein" show his use of this type of myth in crafting his stories. Frye labels these worlds the "apocalyptic" and the "demonic," and identifies them with the existential heavens and hells of the religions contemporary with such literature.

Frye's second organizational category suggests implicit mythical patterns in the world of human experience



(140). Poe's "The Black Cat," and "The Fall of the House of Usher" exemplify this type of myth.

Frye's third category focuses on the tendency of realism to place emphasis on content and symbolism rather than on the shape of the story:

Ironic literature begins with realism and tends toward myth, its mythical patterns being as a rule more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic, though sometimes it simply continues the romantic tradition of stylization. (139)

Examples of Poe's use of this type of myth can be found in "Morella," "The Masque of the Red Death," and "The Cask of Amontillado." Seasonal festivals and other rites of passage celebrate the seasons of the year and of life, linking humankind to nature, the universe, and to God. As Joseph Campbell points out in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, "it has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward" (11). The images inherent in these myths belong to humankind's innermost psyche and if not supplied by outside influences such as society, the psyche will provide them through dream (12).

When people cuts themselves off from these rituals and rites of passage, they loses their communal identity, becoming isolated and alienated. Poe's criminals exemplify

the individual's isolation from and society and its rituals at its most extreme. This releases them from societal responsibility for their actions, leaving them free to justify any act on the basis of a self-styled mania which often imagines society the cause of their isolation. Poe's murderers often identifies themselves with the hero of myth who must isolate himself from society to reach a higher spiritual level.

Not all of Poe's characters, however, carry their isolation to this extreme. Most content themselves with the extreme melancholy of dark romanticism that repeatedly permeates Poe's poems and fiction. Poe believed melancholy most suited to creating the effect of "Beauty" and the "Truth" of essence and existence (Essays and Reviews 17). He uses melancholy to examine the isolation of the soul in its various stages.

The myths of death and regeneration and the journey to the underworld provide a corollary to the loss of validation. The ultimate separation from community comes with death. To triumph over death, the spirit must journey to the underworld, battle death, and return victorious to rejoin the community of humankind. Poe uses both of these themes frequently, often in combination with varying degrees of isolation shown in each of the characters.

Poe also uses the archetypical fears and quest for domination associated with mythical beasts.

"Metzengerstein" (1832), and "The Black Cat," (1843) provide examples of two disparate interpretations of the beast as demon. Again he creates literary effect by intricately blending archetypical images with the literary techniques of the day.

This study examines selected works of Poe in his Tales of Terror and Tales of Fantasy, and his two book length works to demonstrate his use of myth to create intentional literary effect. Poe's conscious craftsmanship gives his fiction a unity that allows us more clearly to understand the scope of his critical examination of life. He applied his genius to blending the archetypal images that touch all mankind with the conventions of the period and created fiction that allows for valid interpretation on more than one level.

In "Poe and the Theme of Forbidden Knowledge," Jules Zanger points out that it has become apparent that the Poe canon, taken together, constitutes, "if not precisely a seamless garment, at least not that patchwork quilt implied by the great number of Poe source studies and publishing market analysis." In increasing numbers, critics see connections in the numerous patterns such as arabesques, grotesques, hoaxes, and parodies. These works share

patterns of images and ideas and show the concerns of both only the author and his day, and the present day (533).

Zanger, however, focuses on the Garden myth and the Adamic hero in discussing the quest of the narrator for forbidden knowledge (535). He deals with Poe's women through the forbidden knowledge theme, attributing to woman the downfall of humankind. While this interpretation does recognize Poe's use of myth to create his specialized effects, it is not of sufficient scope to deal with all of the patterns Poe uses in both his poetry and his fiction.

In "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) Poe tells the reader specifically that he has no trouble recalling the progressive steps involved in creating his works and that he prefers "commencing with the consideration of an effect." His desire is to show beyond a doubt that in composing "The Raven"

no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition--that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem. (Essays and Reviews 14-15)

Poe further states that once he has chosen a novel and vivid effect, he considers "whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone." Once the desired effect has been

determined, he chooses the "combinations of event, or tone as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect."

Poe also discusses the extent of the poem and uses a variation on the Greek principle of unity by stating that if any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression. (Essays and Reviews 15)

Poe then details the successive steps undertaken in writing "The Raven." He focuses on originality, brevity, and unity. For Poe, the death of a beautiful woman "is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (Essays and Reviews 19). This he chooses as his topic for the creation of Beauty. With the bereaved lover as the protagonist of the poem, he lifts the poem beyond the mundane setting, the poor student, and the repetitive bird. The poem becomes a plea of the soul to be rejoined with its lost love.

Poe judges poetry by its ability to elevate the soul, convey a specified effect, and be universally understood. He considers "Beauty" the sole province of poetry, but for Poe, "Beauty" is an effect rather than a quality. He points out that "it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes" (Essays and Reviews 16).

"Truth" which Poe calls the "satisfaction of the intellect," and "Passion," "the excitement of the heart," he finds more suitable to prose although both "Truth" and "Passion" may be treated in poetry to "aid the general effect." The true artist, however, should subordinate the secondary elements to the predominant effect. To best achieve the specified effect of "Beauty," Poe thinks the poet should next choose the proper tone. For Poe, the tone most suited to the creation of "Beauty" is sadness, or melancholy.

In his letter to Thomas W. White, Baltimore, April 30, 1835, Poe states that he undertook to write "Bérenice" as a result of a bet that he could produce "nothing effective on a subject so singular, provided I treated it seriously" (Letters v.1 57). He refers to seeing articles similar in nature to "Bérenice," and continues to explain that the nature he refers to consists of

the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical.

(Letters v.1 58)

As he points out later in the same letter "to be appreciated you must be read." Poe was acutely aware of his

audience and recognized that "these things are invariably sought after with avidity" (Letters v.1 58).

As an aid to his writing and his unending quest for knowledge, Poe read avidly and carefully analyzed all that he read. His letters and his comments in Marginalia give ample evidence of his analytical turn of mind. Poe used this analytic ability in combination with his artistic talent to create his effects.

In "Edgar Allan Poe: The Error of Reading and the Reading of Error," Joseph Kronick reiterates the idea that Poe shared with Emerson and Hawthorne the idea that "word" corresponds to "idea" as "body" does to "soul." He points out however that the origins of Poe's thoughts on matter did not lie in the "Christian concept of spirit" (23). While he shared some of the transcendental ideas of Emerson such as the attempt to discover humankind's origin through understanding the origins of language, Poe's more secular background allowed him the freedom to use humankind's most basic beliefs in the creation of his poetry and fiction. Kronick further points out that "Poe's texts are analytical and that to analyze "means to expose what lies in plain view--that is, the impenetrability of the familiar" (26).

In "The Poetic Principle" (1850), Poe restates his belief in the principle of unity. As Joseph Garrison points out in "The Function of Terror in the Work of Edgar Allan

Poe," "the only determinants he supports uniformly and systematically are the principles of originality, brevity, totality and single effect" (137). Poe applies the same principles to his short stories as to his poems and aims at the same creation of specified literary effects. As Garrison also notes "it is clear that Poe frequently employed the word poetry to describe any exercise of the creative imagination which has the creation of Beauty as its object" (137).

In "'Nests of Boxes': Form, Sense, and Style in Poe's 'The Imp of the Perverse,'" Sandra Whipple Spanier points out Poe's statement that "In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design" (311).

In Psyche and Symbol, Jung states that "mind is not born as a tabula rasa" (xiv). Both Jung and Poe examined the "spontaneous manifestation of the unconscious." In Marginalia, Poe states that the fancies of the waking dream state are "of a character supernal to the Human Nature . . . a glimpse of the spirit's outer world." To Poe, these fancies "arise in the soul" and are "rather psychal than intellectual" (99). From these images he creates effect in his fiction and poetry. He does not suppose himself the only person to experience these "psychal impressions"; he also states that while he cannot assert that these



impressions are common to all humankind, he does not "despair of embodying in words at least enough of the fancies in question to convey to certain classes of intellect, a shadowy conception of their character" (100-01).

Jung, however, believes that everyone experiences such fancies "so frequently as to take them for granted" (Psyche and Symbol xx). These experiences form the predominant activity in creativity from which the tales, legends, myths and rituals of entire civilizations develop. The deeper psyche expresses itself through the imagination, whether of an individual, a society, or a civilization. Jung focuses his research on the definition of symbol, and to him "the living symbol expresses an essential unconscious factor." Only when the symbol comprehends all those and conveys them with ultimate force can it evoke a universal response. Therein resides the powerful and redeeming effect of the living social symbol (Psyche and Symbol xxi).

Poe's works illustrate these fundamental theories of myth and literary creation throughout his career; this provides not only an explanation for the numerous double interpretations of Poe's works but also an overview of the unity of Poe's entire body of work not previously examined.

## CHAPTER II

### Myth and The Tales of Terror 1832--1838

In his horror fiction, Edgar Allan Poe combines the symbols of archetypal mythology with the Greek dramatic technique of unity to create terror of the soul that stems from the individual's alienation from society and from his quest for forbidden knowledge. He also often chooses images susceptible to several interpretations to create the patterns in his works. In "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Poe states that he "kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable" (Essays and Reviews 16). In addition, Arthur Hobson Quinn points out in his biography of Poe that "'To Helen' (1831) and 'The Coliseum' (1835) show how deep an impression the civilizations of Greece and Rome made upon him" (103), although he also notes Byron's influence on "The Coliseum."

Poe often uses the concept of the journey to the underworld and the idea of the death of the beautiful to set the scene for his horror fiction. He then uses regeneration of the soul and vengeance from beyond the grave to provide the horror that touches the reader's soul. While Poe states in his review of Hawthorne's tales in Godey's Lady's Book that allegory "must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in

the world," he does allow for allegory when "the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a very profound undercurrent so as never to show itself unless called to the surface" (Essays and Reviews 582-83).

The works discussed in the next two chapters, "Metzengerstein" (1832), "Morella" (1835), "Ligeia" (1838), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), "The Black Cat" (1843), and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), all demonstrate Poe's use of overt mythological references to call to the reader's mind the images he wishes them to receive as he sets up the archetypal structure of the story. As stated in the "Philosophy of Composition," he first chooses the effect he wishes to create; then he determines what elements will best help him establish that effect (Essays and Reviews 16).

In his review of Sheppard Lee, by Dr. Robert Montgomery Bird, Poe states that the author should avoid "directness of expression . . . writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth, yet astonished at the immensity of the wonders he relates." Poe uses this technique throughout his tales of terror. In none of the tales does he directly state what has happened. He allows his readers to draw their own conclusions based on the sense of wonder that overwhelms the narrator, leaving him unable to relate events directly, "leaving the result as a wonder not to be

accounted for" (Essays and Reviews 402). As Thomas O. Mabbott points out in his introduction to The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, this review "certainly tells us what Poe's early ideal was for a kind of story of which his mastery is acknowledged" (Mabbott xxii).

Source material for the tales varies. However, as Patrick Quinn states in The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe, "his work cannot be reduced to the materials he started from and the hints he used" (219). The craftsmanship used in establishing the mythological and archetypal imagery is very much Poe's own. In his letter to T. W. White on April 30, 1835, Poe states that "to be sure originality is an essential in these things--great attention must be paid to style and much labour spent in their composition, or they will degenerate into the turgid or the absurd" (Letters 57).

### "Metzengerstein"

In "Metzengerstein," first published in the Philadelphia Saturday Courier, January 14, 1832, Poe deals with the doctrine of metempsychosis, change of soul. According to this theory, the soul passes into another body, either human or animal, upon the death of its original body. This doctrine stems from the Greek belief in transmigration of souls. Poe prefaces this story with a quotation from Martin Luther. "Pestis eram vivus--moriens tua mors ero."

"Living I have been your plague, dying I shall be your death." (Poetry and tales 134). He then begins the story with a statement concerning the prevalence of the belief in metempsychosis, and he further states "that much of our incredulity (as La Bruyère says of all our unhappiness) 'vient de ne pouvoir être seuls'" comes of being unable to be alone (Poetry and Tales 134).

From this statement, the narrator launches his story which centers on a feud based on a prophecy which seems to imply ultimate triumph on the part of the already more powerful house of Metzengerstein. The patriarch of this family has died, and his son, Frederick, has become an exceedingly wealthy young man who has "out Heroded Herod," and acted like a "petty Caligula" for three days (Poetry and Tales 135). In the original version of this story, Poe states that "he had arrived at the age of which I speak, through a career of unfeeling, wanton, and reckless dissipation, and a barrier had long since arisen in the channel of all holy thoughts, and gentle recollections" (Poetry and Tales 20). In keeping with his philosophy that no word be included which is not vital to the story, however, Poe deleted this account of Frederick.

Thus with but two references, Poe details the personality of the protagonist and sets the scene for Frederick's reactions in the rest of the story. Through his quotation from Hamlet, III, ii, and his reference to

Caligula, Poe establishes Frederick's dementia and prepares the reader indirectly for Frederick's later obsession. Immediately following this description, Poe recounts that on the fourth day the stables of Castle Berlifitzing catch fire. The neighborhood is of the "unanimous opinion" that Frederick is to blame.

Throughout the works classified under "Terror of the Soul," Poe uses the image of eyes, fire and teeth and their associations with "forbidden knowledge" and regeneration to foreshadow the return of the deceased. Metzengerstein is no exception. While the stables burn, Frederick sits meditating in a "vast and desolate upper apartment" of his family mansion. As he does so, the light reflects particularly vividly on the faded tapestry of an enormous and unnaturally colored horse. The tapestry catches Frederick's attention and holds his gaze, which causes him overwhelming anxiety when viewing the tapestry. He states that the head of the steed altered its position, and the eyes "wore an energetic and human expression" above its "distended lips and sepulchral teeth" (Poetry and Tales 137).

Frederick's servants then call him to say they have discovered a "gigantic fiery colored horse," which Frederick perceives as identical to the one on the tapestry, coming from Berlifitzing Castle and wearing the WVB brand of the house of Berlifitzing. The horse bears signs of having

narrowly escaped from the flames; however, when Frederick's servants try to return it to Berlifitzing Castle, servants there disavow all knowledge of the horse. As the protagonist deals with the matter of the horse, a page comes to tell him that a small portion of the tapestry has disappeared. A vassal then tells the Baron of the death of the head of the rival house who died in the fire while trying to save his favorite horse (Poetry and Tales 138).

Since Poe has previously established Frederick's frame of mind, the reader accepts Frederick's personality change without question. The protagonist never leaves the grounds of Metzengerstein castle, and he becomes a loner except for his horse, which he rides constantly. Frederick has already begun to alienate himself from society. He rejects society's rituals and religion. He next turns down all social invitations, thereby completing his alienation. He, like Roderick Usher in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), develops a morbid melancholy in addition to his hereditary ill health.

Although all other horses in the Metzengerstein stable are named, this horse remains nameless (Poetry and Tales 140). In notes for this story, Thomas Mabbott states that "Metzengerstein knew the horse was Wilhelm von Berlifitzing, and dared use no other name" (30) although this is not specifically stated. In this story, as in "Morella," the body to be used for the transmigration of the soul has no

name of its own. Thus Poe reenforces the effect he wishes to create. No one but Frederick can touch the horse. Even the grooms who first captured the horse cannot say that they ever actually touched the body of the horse. His human-looking eye causes all to shudder and turn away. Poe uses the opinion of one misshapen and insignificant page to state that

his master never vaulted into the saddle, without an unaccountable and almost imperceptible shudder; and that upon his return from every long-continued and habitual ride, an expression of triumphant malignity distorted every muscle in his countenance. (Poetry and Tales 141)

By using a page whose impressions are immediately subject to suspicion and subsequent dismissal ("if his ideas are worth mentioning") Poe allows the reader to accept Frederick's reactions to the horse, and further establishes his premise that the horse contains the embodied soul of the head of the rival house, without forcing the reader to accept this as the only interpretation (Poetry and Tales 141).

Poe continues to establish the mania of Frederick for the horse in the penultimate scene of the story as Frederick awakens "from heavy slumber," descends from his chamber "like a maniac," mounts "in hot haste" and bounds off "into the mazes of the forest." During this ride, taken in the middle of the night, the castle catches fire. The fire is



depicted as uncontrollable and the castle is "discovered crackling and rocking to its very foundation, under the influence of a dense and livid mass of ungovernable fire." Poe implies that the building was unsavable; however, he also says that "the astonished neighborhood stood idly around in silent, if not apathetic wonder" (Poetry and Tales 141-42).

As the castle burns, the horse returns with an "unbonneted and disordered rider," and Poe tells readers that the horse leapt "with impetuosity that outstripped the 'Demon of the Tempest.'" Horse and rider disappear into the whirlwind of the chaotic fire and the tempest dies away. A cloud of smoke settles over the battlements in the form of an enormous horse (Poetry and Tales 29). The cycle of death, regeneration, and in this case vengeance, is complete.

### "Bérenice"

In "Bérenice" (1835), however, Poe twists the regeneration cycle, adds the anima and something of the hero's journey to the underworld to the imagery associated with teeth. "Bérenice," written in response to a challenge, was based on a scandal in Boston having to do with robbing graves for teeth. The source for the name Bérenice "was the wife of King Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt." To fulfill a

vow made to ensure her husband's safe return from battle, she cut off her hair and hung it in a temple (Mabbott 208).

As was Poe's custom, he again begins with a quotation, this one from the French Book of Songs (1697), which states "My companions told me I might find some little alleviation of my misery, in visiting the grave of my beloved." The source of the Latin version is not known (Mabbott 219). The narrator then begins by telling the reader that "out of joy is sorrow born" (Poetry and Tales 225), thus establishing the pattern of the story. He gives the reader rather sketchy information about himself and his family and states that without doubt he has lived before. He speaks of remembrances "of aerial forms--of spiritual and meaning eyes," memories as vague as shadows (Poetry and Tales 225). He goes on to say that

the realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn, not the material of my every-day existence, but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself.

(Poetry and Tales 226)

The narrator then describes the differences between his life and that of Bérenice, for although they grew up together, he was in poor health and spent his time in study while Bérenice was healthy and beautiful. Here again Poe establishes the narrator as cut off from all society save

that of the ideal beauty and anima, personified in this case in Bérenice. Poe's understanding of the image of the anima is clear in "Pinakidia," as he refers to "the tale in Plato's 'Convivium' that man at first was male and female" (Works VII 251). According to the tale, Jupiter "cleft them asunder", but they retained a natural love for each other. He further points out that this "seems to be only a corruption of the account in Genesis of Eve's being made from Adam's rib" (Works VII 251). That Poe would note this indicates his understanding of the universal nature of the pattern.

Alas, Bérenice becomes ill. As she slowly grows weaker, the narrator's illness worsens, and his monomania increases (Poetry and Tales 227). He states that his "disorder revelled in the less important but more startling changes wrought in the physical frame of Bérenice--in the singular and most appalling distortion of her personal identity" (Poetry and Tales 229). Poe has foreshadowed the remainder of the tale with a quotation from Tertullian's De Carne Christi that translates "The Son of God has died, it is to be believed because it is incredible; and, buried, He is risen, it is sure because it is impossible" (Poetry and Tales 228).

The narrator further tells readers that his feelings have always been of the mind, not the heart and that he had seen Bérenice "not as the living and breathing Bérenice, but

as the Bérenice of a dream; not as a being of the earth, earthy, but as the abstraction of such a being". To him she is an ideal; however, she is an ideal that is not something to admire, but something to analyze. The narrator now shudders in her presence, much like the narrators in "Morella" (1835) and "Ligeia" (1838) which use many of the same patterns as "Bérenice," and he tells us that "in an evil moment, I spoke to her of marriage" (Poetry and Tales 229).

He then describes the physical changes in Bérenice; however, he prefaces his description with the possible explanation that it was his own "excited imagination" that caused her to have "so vacillating and indistinct an outline." But at length, his "burning glances . . . fell upon the face." Mabbott uses the 1850 version in which the "once jetty hair. . . overshadowed the hollow temples," and is "now of a vivid yellow" (Poetry and Tales 230). Previous versions of this story reverse this process; however, in this version, Poe uses this variation to foreshadow his twist on the death and regeneration theme.

In his later story "Ligeia," Rowena's hair changes from yellow to black as Ligeia wins her otherworldly battle with Rowena (Poetry and Tales 277). In "Bérenice," however, Poe uses a variation on the contest with death as Bérenice falls victim to a type of epilepsy that renders her in a death

like state while still very much alive; therefore, her hair, originally black, becomes yellow.

At this point, the narrator says he becomes obsessed with Bérenice's teeth. His description of her changed countenance ends with "and in a smile of peculiar meaning, the teeth of the changed Bérenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view." He wishes he had never seen them or "that, having done so, I had died!" From this point, the narrator focuses on her teeth. He comes to feel "that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason" (Poetry and Tales 230).

Bérenice then, appears to die, as do most of Poe's beautiful women, not necessarily because of parallels to the deaths of the women in Poe's life, but because for Poe, the death of the beautiful woman, the death of the anima, is the most beautiful of themes, as he states in "The Philosophy of Compositions" (Essays and Reviews 19). After her supposed death, Poe highlights the significance of the quotation with which he began his story as the narrator discovers his midnight visit to the grave of Berenice and his possession of the box containing her teeth (Poetry and Tales 233).

That Poe carefully chooses the elements with which to create his effects becomes more clear from the facts of Poe's life during the time he wrote Bérenice. While Poe was not happy with his financial status, he married his adored and adoring Virginia shortly after the publication of

"Bérenice" and "Morella," and but a few years before the publication of "Ligeia." Virginia's health did not begin to deteriorate until nearly 1842, some four years later (Poetry and Tales 1365). Although predating Jung, his understanding of Jung's archetypes again becomes evident in the structure of his works.

### "Morella"

Poe deals again with regeneration in "Morella," first published in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1835. In this story, however, as in "Bérenice" and later, "Ligeia," this is regeneration of the ideal accompanied by man's eternal quest for forbidden knowledge. Poe, along with most other mid-nineteenth-century writers, often associates both the impossible ideal and forbidden knowledge with women.

Mabbott notes that the source for the name "Morella" is an article in Godey's Lady's Book, September 1834, entitled "Women Celebrated in Spain for Their Extraordinary Powers of Mind." The article discusses a Juliana Morella of Barcelona whose intelligence and skill eventually led to her being known as Venerable Mother Juliana Morell. He notes that this name fits Poe's plot well because it is also the common name "morel" of the weed *Atropa belladonna* (Mabbott 222). Poe's study of natural science, combined with his avid

reading of the periodicals of his day, indicates that he may have chosen the name precisely because of its dual implications.

Poe prefaces this story with a quotation he attributes to Plato, although he actually quotes Henry Nelson Coleridge's paraphrase of Plato from Introduction to the Study of the Greek Classic Poets (1831), "Itself--alone by itself-- eternally one and single" (Poetry and Tales 225). He then begins by stating that from their first meeting, his soul "burned with fires it had never before known." These fires, however, were not the fires of passion, and the narrator states that the marriage was of friendship not of passion.

Again, the major character cuts herself off from society. Morella attaches herself to the narrator alone and he likewise attaches himself to her. In the beginning of this story, however, the reader is led to see this more as a natural consequence of the marriage rather than an alienation such as Frederick's in "Metzengerstein" or Roderick's in "The Fall of the House of Usher;" as the story progresses, however, the alienation from society and its rituals becomes clear. Poe presents Morella as a highly intelligent woman and says "her powers of mind were gigantic." In his own quest for knowledge of the unknown, the narrator becomes her pupil.

Morella's favorite and constant studies were mystical writings. The narrator abandons himself to the guidance of his wife and finds a forbidden spirit enkindling within himself. The music of her voice becomes tainted with terror and a shadow comes over his soul. He states that "he grew pale and shuddered at her too unearthly tones." At this point, his joy fades and turns to horror.

Through his references to her beliefs, Poe foreshadows the patterns developed later in the work, and he prepares the reader for the descent to the underworld through a biblical reference "Hinnom became GeHenna" (II Chronicles 28:3) This statement refers to the Valley of the Children of Hinnon, near Jerusalem, which became the site of idol worship. The Jews called this site "the place of the damned . . . Gehenna . . . usually now translated as Hell" (Poetry and Tales 235).

Poe follows this description of his changed state of being with references to Morella's sole topics of conversation, the "wild Pantheism of Fichte," the doctrine of Pythagoras, and the doctrines of "Identity" of Schelling and Locke. He expands on this theme by telling readers of the "marked and agitated manner" with which Morella discusses "the notion of that identity which at death is or is not lost forever" (Poetry and Tales 235).

Margaret Allerton states that "In his article 'Genius,' Poe summarizes other passages from Locke's 'Essay on Human



Understanding.'" "Locke has sufficiently proved that all our ideas are originally derived from the senses. These first impressions form the basis of all human knowledge" (Origins 100). From this background, Poe sets forth for readers the question of whether at death, identity is or is not lost.

Poe again uses eyes as a referent. The all seeing, all knowing eyes of the godhead are associated with the unknowable world of the afterlife. The narrator speaks of her "melancholy eyes" and her "meaning eyes." He says "his soul sickened and became giddy with the giddiness of one gazing down into unfathomable abyss" (Poetry and Tales 236). He longs for Morella's death.

Her death, however, fails to provide the release he seeks from the prison created by their quest for forbidden knowledge. On her death bed she says "I am dying, yet shall I live." Morella carries his child which she says is a pledge of her affection. Only upon the death of the mother does the child live. "The child breathed not until the mother breathed no more" (Poetry and Tales 237). In his introduction, Mabbott points out Poe's apparent knowledge of a prevalent superstition of the day "that is a most unusual, even supernatural, child who takes its first breath after its mother takes her last" (Mabbott 222). Through the use

of this statement, Poe prepares the reader to accept the regeneration of the soul of the mother in the body of the child.

The narrator loves the child obsessively, and the child grows rapidly into the perfect image of the departed mother. This change is accompanied by a rapid increase in body size, and he states that "in the conceptions of the child," he could see "the adult powers and faculties of the woman." As the similarities between mother and child grow, the narrator says that "suspicions of a nature fearful and exciting crept upon my spirit." He specifically mentions that he shuddered at the eyes and their "two perfect identity," and that they looked into the depth of his soul (Poetry and Tales 237-38).

The child has heretofore remained nameless. Just as in "Metzengerstein," the vessel for the transmigrating soul has no name of its own. In an attempt to overcome the horror that has consumed him, the narrator seeks to baptize the child; however, at the baptism, he questions "what fiend spoke from the recesses of my soul, when, . . . I whispered within the ears of the holy man the syllables--Morella?" The child's features become "overspread. . . with hues of death," as she falls "prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault," and responds "I am here!" Both Morella and the child die, and when the narrator carries her to the tomb he says that "I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the first, in the charnel where I laid the

second--Morella" (Poetry and Tales 238-39). Again, the cycle of death and regeneration is completed.

### "Ligeia"

In "Ligeia" (1838), and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), Poe crafts two of his best tales, with the death of the beautiful woman, regeneration, the quest for forbidden knowledge, the hero's journey to the underworld, the twin cycle, the images of the anima, and the shadow as the elements. Of Ligeia, Thomas Mabbott points out "it must be regarded as a thoroughly conscious and complete work of art" (306). That Poe uses eyes representatively in this work can be established further through a look at his notes on the copy of the story sent to Helen Whitman. He tells her to "observe the eyes in both tale and poem" (Mabbott 306).

As usual, Poe provides readers with a way to interpret the tale that does not rest in the supernatural. He refers to the narrator's use of opium to allow a mundane interpretation for those who wish it. On the other hand, as Mabbott points out, "the pentagonal shape of the bridal chamber is meaningless unless genuine magic be intended" (308).

Poe begins this story as he does all his tales with a quotation. This is one he states is from Joseph Glanville;

however, most critics attribute it to Poe since it is not to be found in Glanville. It reads

And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.

(Poetry and Tales 262)

However, in "Ligeia," unlike his other tales, Poe uses this quotation four times in the course of the story so that it takes on the characteristics of the refrain of the greek chorus, foreshadowing for readers the final scene of the story.

The narrator then begins by stating that he can no longer remember how, or when, or where he met Ligeia. He does not even know or remember her family name. Of their marriage he says that "if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged Ashtophet of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine" (Poetry and Tales 262).

In this way, Poe begins establishing the Lady Ligeia as the ideal of not only the beautiful woman, but also as the embodiment of the quest for forbidden knowledge. His description of her physical characteristics further establishes this pattern as well as the shadow and anima

images. He refers to her as "more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos," and tells readers that her hair set "for the full force of the Homeric epithet, 'hyacinthine!'" (Poetry and Tales 263).

Poe uses mythological references in this and all his tales to highlight and call to readers' mind those images he feels necessary for them to follow the patterns he wishes to establish. He further establishes her supernatural beauty, the depth of her wisdom and her hold on him through references to "the contour which the God Apollo revealed but in a dream" (Poetry and Tales 264), followed by a long description of her eyes which includes references to "the beauty of the fabulous Houri of the Turk." This description he follows by telling readers that the expression of her eyes possessed "that something more profound than the well of Democritus," and that they became to him "twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers" (Poetry and Tales 264). Again Poe uses the image of eyes for their implication of wisdom and knowledge, in this case, forbidden knowledge. The "refrain" follows his lengthy description of her eyes and their import to him, foreshadowing Ligeia's strength of will.

Poe's narrator then discusses Ligeia's intelligence and "learning." She was proficient in the classical tongues and in the modern dialects of Europe. She can discuss every

subject, and the narrator states that he has "never known her at fault." The narrator, therefore, resigns himself, "with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation." This path he follows that he might eventually reach "the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!" (Poetry and Tales 266).

Alas, Ligeia becomes ill and the narrator sees that she will soon die. He tells readers that "I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael," the angel of death, for Ligeia. She also struggles against death and the narrator tells us that "words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow" (Poetry and Tales 267). Ligeia's love for her husband, coupled with her love of life, strengthens her in her struggle with death, and on her death bed, she confesses her intensely passionate devotion to the narrator on her death bed.

At midnight on the night of her death, the narrator repeats the verses composed by Ligeia some days earlier. "The Conqueror Worm" foreshadows for the reader the understanding that Ligeia's struggle with death cannot succeed (Poetry and Tales 269). And Poe follows the poem with a dual repetition of the "refrain" of this work immediately preceding her death (Poetry and Tales 269).

Immediately following her death, the narrator removes himself from their home and wanders aimlessly for a number of months before purchasing an abandoned abbey "in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England." He then tells readers that he "became a bounden slave in the trammels of opium" (Poetry and Tales 270). Again, Poe prefaces a story involving the supernatural by having the narrator use opium which allows readers to accept the events in the story on the level at which each individual reader feels most comfortable.

The narrator at length marries Rowena Trevanion. Of their bridal chamber he tells readers that he remembers the physical details minutely, but he finds himself "sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment." He describes its "pentagonal" shape, its "capacious" size, and the immense window that covers the entire southern face of the room. Light enters this window only to shine rays that fall "with a ghastly lustre on the objects within." The ceiling is decorated with designs that are "semi-Gothic, semi Druidical," and from the center is suspended an incense burner with Saracen engravings. The furniture follows the fantastic motif with Egyptian and Indian designs (Poetry and Tales 270-71).

The bridal bed is low and made of ebony, and "in each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings

over Luxor" (Poetry and Tales 271). Mabbott points out that Luxor, in Upper Egypt, is near Thebes, "the site of the great temples built by Amenhotep III and Ramses II" (334). The walls are completely covered with tapestries made of the richest gold cloth etched with figures "of the most jetty black," that upon close inspection the visitor finds to be "an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman" (Poetry and Tales 271).

To this chamber he brings his new bride, a bride who can never hope to live up to the ideal of Ligeia, and the narrator tells readers "that she shunned me and loved me but little." Rather than distressing the narrator, however, he finds that this gives him pleasure, and he "loathed her with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man" (Poetry and Tales 272). He dwells on the memory of his beloved Ligeia and in his own mind idealizes her further.

At the beginning of the second month of his marriage to Rowena, however, she also becomes ill. During her illness she is subject to hallucinations of sight and sound which the narrator ascribes to the influence of the bed chamber. As she finally dies, the narrator sits with her in the bed chamber and sees "a shadow--a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect--such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade" (Poetry and Tales 273).

Again Poe refers to the narrator's use of opium, and as Rowena revives slightly, he pours her a goblet of wine. As



she drinks he speaks of seeing, or dreaming that he sees, "three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid" fall into the wine (Poetry and Tales 273). Although these drops have been supposed to be poison in past interpretations such as that by Vincent Buranelli, Thomas Mabbott states that "they are rather a primary corporeal form attained by Ligeia's spirit; and in themselves the elixir of life" (334). This interpretation seems much more likely, for while the narrator admits that he hated his new wife, nothing in the story indicates that he would act on this feeling to the point of poisoning her. She drinks the wine without hesitation, and the narrator dismisses the drops as a result of her condition, his use of opium, and an overactive imagination (Poetry and Tales 274). However, a change for the worse occurs in Rowena's illness such that by the third night, she is prepared for the tomb.

The narrator continues to sit with her and again sinks into memories and dreams of Ligeia. Rowena, however, continues her struggle with death, and as her struggle becomes more intense, the narrator notices "how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse." Finally the shrouded corpse stands and walks to the middle of the chamber. At this point, the narrator begins to question if the figure before him is really that of Rowena. What he can see of the face might indeed belong to the Lady Rowena;

however, he asks himself "had she then grown taller since her malady?" Finally she lets the shroud fall from her head to reveal her eyes and hair, and he realizes that he now looks on not Rowena, but Ligeia (Poetry and Tales 276-77). As Arthur Hobson Quinn points out in his biography of Poe, "the two women, therefore, meet for their struggle in the other world, and Ligeia's triumph over her rival is that of an immortal over an immortal" (269). And once again, the cycle of death and regeneration is complete.

## CHAPTER III

### Tales of Terror 1839--1846

Poe continues his use of archetypal images throughout his career. "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," and "The Cask of Amontillado," discussed in this chapter further show Poe's use of the alienation of the individual from society and images of the "shadow" and the "anima" to create specified effects.

#### "The Fall of the House of Usher"

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," first published in Burton's Gentleman's Magazine in September 1839, Poe uses the journey to the underworld, the twin cycle, and the death of the beautiful woman, and the anima and the shadow, to craft his tale. Roderick and Madeline are but two sides of one person; the house itself reflects the shadow image of the two. As Mabbott points out in his introduction to the tale, Richard Wilbur has observed that "The House of Usher is, in allegorical fact, the physical body of Roderick Usher, and its dim interior is, in fact, Roderick Usher's visionary Mind" (Mabbott 393). Madeline then represents the anima, the feminine side of Roderick rather than an actual and distinct personality.

Several sources, such as "Das Majorat" and the story "Thunder Struck" from Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician, have been proposed for "The Fall of the House of Usher; however, as Mabbott points out "that analogies exist is undeniable, but they all seem to me to be common themes of Gothic romance" (394). These common themes and the archetypal images of myth combine to form the basis for this Poe story. Jung states that

who knows does not talk, and who talks does not know. In the same proportion as the amount of such inner experience increases, the social nexus between humans decreases. The individual becomes isolated for no apparent reason. Finally this will become unbearable and he has to confide in someone. . . . Fortunately enough, such people are instinctively careful and as a rule do not talk more than necessary. (Psyche & Symbol xiv)

Such is the case with Roderick Usher. He has isolated himself from all society, but he must confide in someone and, therefore, calls on his old friend from childhood. This friend serves as the narrator, allowing readers to witness the action through the somewhat more "objective" viewpoint of an outsider. Again Poe arranges to allow readers to follow their own interpretations rather than being forced to accept one from either Roderick or the

narrator. He also includes, as is customary in all of Poe's tales involving the supernatural, the idea of an opium dream as "a suggestion," Mabbott notes that "unimaginative readers may consider the whole story hallucination" (418).

Poe's narrator, however, aids in Poe's creation of effect. On arriving at the House of Usher, he refers to "the melancholy House of Usher," and tells readers about the "sense of insufferable gloom" that "pervaded" his spirit. He tells readers of the bleak walls, the "vacant eye-like windows," and the "utter depression of soul" which he compares to "the after-dream of the reveller upon opium." As on other occasions, Poe offers his readers yet another explanation for the events of which they will read, the supernatural, the psychological, and the opium induced (Poetry and Tales 317).

The narrator then rationalizes the effect for those readers who would have difficulty accepting a supernatural interpretation. "It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression." However, on viewing the scene from a different angle, he finds that the impression is, if anything, even worse, and he again refers to the "vacant and eye-like windows. This reference, now used twice within the space of a single page, and both before and after the narrator's

attempt at rationalization for his own peace of mind, begins to establish the house as a living entity, the shadow self of Roderick and Madeline Usher (Poetry and Tales 317-18).

Poe then begins establishing a picture of Roderick Usher in his description of the narrator's response to "a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. He states that Roderick has spoken, in the letter, of "acute bodily illness--of a mental disorder which oppressed him--and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend" (Poetry and Tales 318).

The narrator next tells readers that although they had been close friends when young, he really knows little of the family of Usher, only that "his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art . . . as well as . . . musical science." He also notes that "the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch;. . . that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always . . . so lain." To this family history he attributes the idea prevalent with the peasantry that the "House of Usher" has come to represent "both the family and the family mansion" (Poetry and Tales 319).

The oppressive atmosphere surrounding the mansion and grounds is believed to be the primary cause of his "superstition" which "served mainly to accelerate the increase itself." The narrator's theory that terror causes its own increase enables him to attribute his sensations to his own imagination playing on the atmosphere of the house. He then shakes off from his spirit "what must have been a dream" (Poetry and Tales 319).

The narrator then describes more completely the House of Usher and its state of decay. He tells readers that "no portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones." Here he focuses on the air of decay about the house while emphasizing that the overall structure appears sound. Although the narrator suggests that a more scrutinizing observer "might" have discovered a crack in the wall (Poetry and Tales 320), this description, combined with the final scene of the house falling into the tarn, effectively creates for readers the impressions that Poe wishes them to have; and it allows for the questions of interpretation Poe uses in many of his works.

The sense of gloom follows the narrator as he enters the house and briefly describes the interior, here mentioning twice the "ebon blackness of the floors," and stating that he felt that he "breathed an atmosphere of

sorrow" (Poetry and Tales 321). He follows this description with one of Roderick Usher in which he focuses on his "cadaverousness of complexion;" and "an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison, for in these features he sees so great a change in his boyhood friend that he tells readers "I doubted to whom I spoke" (Poetry and Tales 321). He also notes what he describes as an "inconsistency" in Roderick's actions and his speech which vary from vivacious to sullen, and his speech varies rapidly

from a tremulous indecision . . . to that species of energetic concision--that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation--that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

(Poetry and Tales 322)

Here Poe's narrator views the mind of madness, and his description of Usher's condition can be compared to that of the narrators of both "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "Ligeia." Roderick suffers "from a morbid acuteness of the senses" as does the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart," and Usher's narrator tells us that "to an anomalous species of terror I



found him a bounden slave," just as the narrator in "Ligeia" finds himself "a bounden slave in the trammels of opium" (Poetry and Tales 322).

While readers are told that Roderick believes the house sentient, Madeline is mentioned only briefly and is viewed by the narrator more as a shadow figure passing through the hall than as a real person. The narrator sees the living Madeline only once before she returns from her burial chamber to retrieve her brother. Her passage through the halls of the house of Usher instills a new dread in the narrator from which he eagerly seeks relief in the countenance of her brother (Poetry and Tales 323).

On the night of the narrator's arrival, Madeline takes to her bed, and no more is mentioned of her until her supposed death when the narrator helps Roderick "temporarily" entomb her in the dungeons below the house. The narrator then briefly describes the passage of the few days between his arrival and Madeline's demise. He tells readers of the "long improvised dirges" Roderick plays on a guitar and of Roderick's paintings, stating that "if ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher" (Poetry and Tales 324).

In this discussion, he tells of one composition in particular, "The Haunted Palace" which depicts, under the allegorical disguise of the ruin of a palace, the decay of a human soul. Mabbott calls it "an allegory of a deranged

mind" (418). It was first published separately in the Museum for April, 1839, and later was incorporated into "The Fall of the House of Usher." Arthur H. Quinn points out that "with such a family history as Poe's, even an exceptional writer might have avoided such a topic" (271). The contrast is masterly between the beginning,

In the greenest of our valleys  
 By good angels tenanted  
 Once a fair and stately palace  
 Radiant palace reared its head.

and the ending when:

A hideous throng rush out forever  
 And laugh--but smile no more.

Poe makes just the right distinction between sanity and insanity" (Quinn 271).

The narrator then returns to his discussion of Roderick's idea of the sentience of the house itself and gives readers a clearer view of the depth of Roderick's belief. He says that he lacks "words to express the full extent, or the earnest abandon of his persuasion." Here Poe reinforces the idea of the shadow image of the house.

Alas, shortly thereafter, Madeline succumbs to her illness, and Roderick chooses to preserve her corpse for a fortnight within the house because of the nature of her illness and the prevalence of grave robbers (Poetry and Tales 328-29). The measure of Roderick's aberration of mind

lies in his sealing the coffin of the twin sister he knows to suffer from cataleptic states virtually indistinguishable from death. Here he further cuts himself off from the world by cutting himself off from the "anima" image that is Madeline.

After several days of grieving for his sister, the narrator notices a change come over Roderick as, unknown to the narrator, he seems to realize Madeline still lives yet he makes no move to free her from her sealed coffin (Poetry and Tales 331-35). Roderick's restlessness and nervousness, of course, affect the narrator who becomes "infected" with "the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (Poetry and Tales 330). Roderick's influence on the narrator is so strong that the narrator believes his nervousness and sleeplessness to be the results of that influence combined with the "gloomy furniture of the room-- of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls. . ." (Poetry and Tales 330).

The narrator is finally overcome with "utterly causeless alarm," and he finds himself hearing "certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals." As the narrator paces in his chamber, Roderick knocks at his door. The narrator notes that "his countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan--but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes--

an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanor." Even in this condition, the narrator welcomes Roderick's presence as preferable to solitude (Poetry and Tales 331).

Roderick then throws open the casements to show his friend what he has seen within the storm.

The under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion. (Poetry and Tales 331)

To distract Roderick from this eerie occurrence, the narrator offers several rational explanations for the sight and suggests that he read to Roderick the "Mad Tryst." As he reads, the narrator hears sounds that seem to echo the action of the book. At first uncertain whether Roderick hears these sounds, the narrator then notices that "a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes taken place in his demeanor." Roderick has changed the position of his chair to face the door and sits "murmuring inaudibly" and rocking from side to side. As the sounds become more pronounced the narrator leaps up; however, Roderick maintains his position and continues his murmuring and rocking (Poetry and Tales 334).

Finally, the narrator leans close enough to understand what Roderick is saying, discovering, as he does, that Roderick has not only heard the noises, he has been aware for some time that Madeline was alive, but he "dared not speak." Roderick then jumps to his feet exclaiming that Madeline now stands outside the chamber door. As he says this, the doors open, and Madeline stands before them briefly before falling upon her brother, "and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated" (Poetry and Tales 335).

As the narrator flees in horror, he sees a wild light shoot along the path toward the house, a light that has the radiance "of the full, setting, and blood-red moon," which now shines through the "barely discernable fissure" the narrator spoke of at the beginning of the story. As the fissure widens, the house of Usher crumbles and as he watches "the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher" (Poetry and Tales 335-36).

### "The Masque of the Red Death"

In "The Masque of the Red Death," first published in Graham's Magazine in May of 1842, and considered a masterpiece among Poe's very short fiction (Mabbott 667), Poe again deals with the supernatural. The plot revolves

around the cholera epidemic of Paris in 1832 although the "Red Death" of the story is imaginary. The events described are also reminiscent of those of Boccaccio's Decameron, and as Mabbott points out, "the name parallels the medieval Black Death of 1348-1349." Mabbott also states that "it . . . reminds one a little of the first plague of the Egyptians described in Exodus" (669).

Poe begins this story with an account of the effects of the Red Death, associating the illness with the "horror of blood." He tells readers of the "Red Death" that "Blood was its Avatar and its seal" (Poetry and Tales 485). He follows this delineation with a description of the effect the disease has on the person afflicted and states that "the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour" (Poetry and Tales 485), foreshadowing the sudden and certain cessation of life that follows the entrance of the "spectral image" of the Red Death at the end of the tale.

In an effort to circumvent humankind's greatest fear, death, Prince Prospero summons a thousand friends and retires to seclusion in one of his abbeys. The courtiers then seal off the abbey, allowing no one to enter or leave (Poetry and Tales 485). In this case, Poe's protagonist does not shut himself off from all society, but he does withdraw from the world at large in hopes of defying the plague and entertaining himself in the process.

The masked ball comes in the fifth or sixth month of this seclusion, at the height of the plague. Poe begins his description of the ball by describing each of the seven rooms in which it was held. Unlike most such suites, the rooms form angles to each other, and the participants can see only one room at a time.

Mabbott sees the tale as a moral lesson that man "cannot run from his responsibility" (668). This interpretation suggests the seven deadly sins as the most probable meaning for the number of rooms; however, the first and final rooms correspond to the poles of a compass with blue signifying beginnings and red signifying endings (677). That the red is superimposed on the black of the final chamber intensifies this emphasis and its association with the "Red Death" that causes the pores to bleed profusely.

The absence of light in any of the chambers also suggests endings and the darkness of the soul Poe uses throughout his works to cause the reader to experience the effect of horror that he so deftly suggests. When he alleviates this darkness somewhat in the next sentences as he describes the braziers of fire that illuminate the rooms and produce "a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances" (Poetry and Tales 486), he continues to draw the reader into his horror with his description of the final chamber in which the light from the fire streams through "blood-tinted panes," and "was ghastly in the extreme."

Again Poe suggests madness while at the same time discounting the idea. He states that some "would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure he was not" (Poetry and Tales 487). The use of this device here as in "Metzengerstein" helps Poe create the effect of horror he seeks to establish as he probes the unconscious fears of the reader.

The narrator then connects the suggestion of madness with dreams as he describes the costumes of the masqueraders. He describes them as grotesque and tells the reader "there were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions" (Poetry and Tales 487). He describes them further by stating that "there were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust" (Poetry and Tales 487-88). After which he states that throughout the seven rooms "there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams."

The clock enhances his suggestion of darkness and horror as Poe tells the reader that as the "ebony" clock strikes, "the dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand." The chiming of the clock becomes more solemnly emphatic for those nearest it as the night wears away while in the other rooms "beat feverishly the heart of life." Finally, the



music ceases, the clock strikes midnight, the very deepest hour of the night, and the revelers become aware of a previously unnoticed masked figure (Poetry and Tales 488).

The arrival of this new presence first causes reactions of "surprise--then finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust." This is no ordinary figure. Poe again uses the expression from Shakespeare and states that "the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod," to further establish the character of this new figure in the drama. Only then does he describe the features of the newcomer to the group. He says that "the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood--and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror" (Poetry and Tales 489).

Prince Prospero is first convulsed "with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste," but this soon turns to rage as he demands to know "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery?" He orders the figure unmasked so they will know whom to hang; however, although several of the revelers move toward the figure, none will seize him. The Red Death, therefore, proceeds unhampered through the party, "and one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel. . . . And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all" (Poetry and Tales 490), as man succumbs to the death he has long feared.

### "The Tell-Tale Heart"

In "The Tell-Tale Heart," first published in the Boston Pioneer, January 1843, Poe presents the murder of a kindly benefactor by the narrator, who has isolated himself from his benefactor as well as from society through his obsession with the old man's eye. In "'The Tell-Tale Heart' and the 'Evil Eye,'" B.D. Tucker finds the Cyclops of Greek mythology and Odin of Norse mythology unlikely candidates for the one-eyed specter of the murder victim. He finds the single eye used on the one dollar bill a more likely candidate (Tucker 94). However, Poe's classical background, his copious use of mythological references and the archetypal patterns that they evoke suggests that the mythological references offer a more likely source for the wise old man with the all-seeing eye.

Tucker neglects to point out that the eye on the one dollar bill is a Masonic symbol based on the mythological symbol of the all-seeing eye. Though Poe was not a Mason, his classical background would virtually ensure his familiarity with the all-seeing eye of mythology. Poe also uses a play on the symbols of the Masons and masonry in "The Cask of Amontillado," and although Dr. Henry Ridgely Evans, a thirty-second degree Mason, maintains that Fortunato's gesture is made up (Mabbott 1265), Poe's symbolism is quite clear.

Therefore, it may be simplistic to say that Poe would refer simply to so common a symbol when his own educational background would easily supply him with a much more likely literary source that brings with it images of wisdom and treachery. In general, the eye represents understanding, and in The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen Peithman suggests that the old man may understand that the narrator is insane; thus, "the narrator must rid himself of this threat to his existence" (135).

The narrator in this tale suffers the same maladies as Roderick Usher and the narrator of "Berenice," intensely acute hearing and obsession with an idea. For Roderick it is the intertwining of his soul, that of his sister, and the house. For the narrator of "Berenice," the obsession focused on her teeth. In this case, the focus is on the eye of the benefactor. Poe also uses references to eyes in "Metzengerstein" and "Ligeia" although they are not the sole focus as they are in "The Tell-Tale Heart."

The narrator in this tale stalks the old man in his chamber each night for seven nights which may again represent the seven deadly sins, or may simply allude to the magical properties generally associated with the number seven. On the eighth night, however, although the narrator takes special care when opening the door to the old man's room, the old man hears him and wakes. That the old man is awake does not deter the narrator; on the contrary, the

problem he has had the seven previous nights is that he has been unable to see the eye on which he is so fixated. On this night, the old man sits up in bed and asks "Who's there?" (Poetry and Tales 556).

The narrator still waits, knowing the old man's growing terror and taking delight that the old man is suffering some of the terrors to which the narrator feels himself subject. He says that the old man is awake "hearkening to the death watches in the wall." This statement refers to deathwatch beetles. To the Egyptians, this beetle represents death and regeneration. In this case, the deathwatch beetles foreshadow the regeneration, in the narrator's mind, of the beating of the old man's heart, and as Mabbott points out they also offer skeptical readers the possibility of a rational explanation (798).

At length, the narrator uncovers the grate of the lamp and shines his light toward the old man's bed. He has managed to aim the light directly into the eye that he fears and says "I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot" (Poetry and Tales 557). Again, Poe uses a Shakespearean reference to emphasize this image.

At this point, the narrator begins to hear the beating of his own heart; however, he fancies it to be the heart of the old man. Still he waits. In his paranoia, he fears the

beating of the old man's heart will be heard by a neighbor, and this prompts him to finally kill the old man by suffocating him in his bed. After a few minutes, the heartbeat ceases, and the narrator feels himself free of the eye (Poetry and Tales 558).

He takes elaborate precautions to conceal the body. He dismembers the corpse and buries it beneath the floor. As he finishes this task, the police come to the door in response to a neighbor's report of hearing a shriek in the night. The narrator however feels himself perfectly safe and invites them to search the house. He feels that he has satisfied them, but as they sit chatting, his paranoia again exerts itself in the beating of the heart which the narrator believes to be the old man's (Poetry and Tales 559). In this case, as in "The Black Cat," regeneration serves to achieve vengeance from beyond the grave as the narrator finally breaks down while the police are investigating and confesses his deed, convinced that he is telling them nothing they do not already know.

### "The Black Cat"

In "The Black Cat," first published in the United States Saturday Post, August 19, 1843, the narrator begins by asserting his sanity as he prepares to recount the events for which he will die. He then focuses on what he calls "a series of mere household events," and states that someone

less excitable than himself may see "nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects" (Poetry and Tales 597).

The narrator then asserts his previous docility and humanity, his tenderness of heart; he also states that he was especially fond of animals. He had always had a variety of pets and was happiest when caressing and caring for them. He compares the loyalty of animals to the "paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of man." He and his wife had numerous animals, including a large black cat named Pluto, for the god of the underworld in Greek mythology. He mentions his wife's superstitions and says that she "made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise." This cat, however, was his favorite pet (Poetry and Tales 598).

The narrator then begins drinking and becomes more moody and violent toward his wife and pets, eventually even toward Pluto. One night after a bout of drinking, he fancies the cat has avoided him and grabs the cat. The cat scratches him, at which point he says "a demon" takes possession of him, so he removes the cat's eye with a pen knife (Poetry and Tales 598-99).

The narrator says that his "original soul seems to take leave of my body," and the next morning he finds himself half horrified, half remorseful at the deed. However, this feeling is "but a feeble equivocal feeling." His soul

remains untouched and he soon drowns the memory of his deed in wine.

The cat recovers but naturally flees in terror at the approach of the narrator. The narrator is at first grieved, but then becomes irritated. At this point the narrator finds himself overtaken with the "spirit of perverseness," which he believes is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart. He calls this spirit an "unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself--to offer violence to its own nature--to do wrong for the wrong's sake only." In this fit of perversity, one morning in "cool blood" he hangs the cat. He states that he "hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes." He hung it even though he believed he was committing a mortal sin which would place his soul beyond the mercy of God (Poetry and Tales 599-600).

The same night he is awakened by fire. The house burns, and the destruction is complete, except for one wall. The wall against which his bed had stood remains standing. On it "as if graven in bas relief, the figure of a gigantic cat with a rope around its neck." The narrator is terrified even after he decides upon a logical explanation for the cat's image on the wall. He is unable to rid himself of the "phantasm" of the cat.

At this point he feels an emotion close to remorse and regrets the loss of the cat, so he begins looking for a similar cat to replace Pluto. Finally "in a den of more

than infamy" he sees a "black object" on a hogshead of liquor. The object turns out to be a large black cat with a large "indefinite" spot of white on his breast. The cat attaches himself to the narrator, and the narrator tries to buy him. No owner is found, and the cat follows the narrator home. He discovers after taking him home, that the cat has only one eye.

The narrator's wife becomes immediately attached to the cat, but the narrator himself develops a dislike for it and eventually become loathe to look at the cat. He flees from its presence. The more he hates the cat, the more it follows him around. The memory of his past deed keeps the narrator from harming the cat. However, he also develops a dread of the cat based not on a "dread of physical evil," but prompted by the fact that the white spot has taken on the shape of a gallows (Poetry and Tales 603).

The narrator can no longer rest, the cat is constantly with him during the day, and at night he is subject to nightmares. He says that "evil thoughts became my sole intimates" (Poetry and Tales 603). His play on words with sole and soul indicate the depth to which the narrator has become obsessed by what the cat represents to him, the destruction of his soul.

His moodiness increases to a hatred of all things, and his wife is the usual victim of his violence. In the cellar, the underworld for Poe's characters, the narrator



swings at the cat with an axe. When his wife intervenes, the narrator kills his wife. He then plans to conceal the body and considers cutting it up into "minute fragments," but he finally determines to put her behind a wall in the cellar "as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims." This he does, and afterward looks for the cat who is nowhere to be found. For the first time in a long while, the narrator sleeps well "even with murder on his conscience" (Poetry and Tales 605).

Three days pass with no sign of the cat, and his guilt disturbs him "but little." On the fourth day, however, the police come and search the house. The narrator is supremely confident as he accompanies them on their search. They visit the cellar three or four times. On the final visit, the narrator goes so far as to rap on the very wall behind which he has placed his wife. Immediately, from behind the wall comes

one long, loud, and continuous scream--utterly anomalous and inhuman--such as might have arisen out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned and of the demons that exalt in their damnation. (Poetry and Tales 606)

The police tear down the wall and find the corpse of the narrator's wife erect with the cat sitting on the head "with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire" (Poetry and Tales 606). Again, regeneration provides the

opportunity for revenge from beyond the grave, and Poe provides readers with those elements that stir the soul.

### "The Cask of Amontillado"

In "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), the last of the works of terror discussed in this study, first published in the first issue of Godey's following the completion of his "Literati" papers, Poe uses the journey to the underworld and the revenge motif as the images on which he builds his story. In his introduction to this work, Thomas Mabbott points out that much of the story "was the working out of his immediate emotions" in response to the bitter quarrel between Poe and Thomas Dunn English and Hiram Fuller (1252). However, Poe still shows his craftsmanship and his knowledge of and insight into human nature. Again, the sources for the story vary, but his most immediate source is believed to be "A Man Built in a Wall, by Joel T. Headley, which was published in the same issue of the Columbian Magazine as Poe's "Mesmeric Revelation" (1253).

In this tale, one of the few that do not begin with a quote, the narrator perceives himself the recipient of a "thousand injuries" inflicted by his intended victim, Fortunato. However, the narrator states that only when he "ventured upon insult" did he vow revenge, says that "at length" would he be avenged, but he is very careful to give his proposed victim no indication of his intentions.

Montressor, the narrator, treats Fortunato as he always has to make sure that he has no "cause to doubt my good will" (Poetry and Tales 848).

To obtain his vengeance, the narrator feels he "must not only punish, but punish with impunity." Unlike most of Poe's murderers, the narrator in this story does not succumb to "The Imp of the Perverse" by confessing his crime to the authorities. While the text of the story itself gives evidence that Montressor is making some kind of confession, possibly on his death bed, the narrator does state, however, that his victim now rests in peace, something the narrator has not done in fifty years (Poetry and Tales 854). This story also provides a contrast to some of Poe's other works in that Poe gives no evidence that the narrator has cut himself off from society. Fortunato sees nothing amiss in being asked by Montressor to pass judgement on the cask of wine. As a wine connoisseur, Fortunato is highly susceptible to Montressor's appeal to his vanity, and this persuades Fortunato to follow him into the wine cellar.

Montressor knows his victim well enough to pretend hesitance at taking Fortunato away from his engagements and leading him into the damp cold of the cellars. Fortunato's ego assures Montressor that his intended victim will insist on accompanying him to the vault to sample the wine. The

narrator takes his victim on a journey to the underworld, and as is common in Poe, the cellars represent the underworld.

Once they begin the journey down into the cellars, the two stop periodically, as Montessor says, to have a draught of wine to fortify them against the dampness. The victim drinks to the buried that repose around them; the killer, ironically, drinks to the victim's long life. As Montessor tells Fortunato of the vastness of the cellars, Fortunato subtly insults Montessor by stating that he has forgotten the Montessor family's coat of arms. At this point, Poe uses a biblical allusion from Genesis which refers to Eve's temptation by the serpent in the garden of Eden to further foreshadow the events at the end of the story (Genesis 3:14-15). The arms consist of a human foot crushing a serpent "whose fangs are imbedded in the heel" (Poetry and Tales 851). The motto on the coat of arms, "no one provokes me with impunity," further establishes Poe's pattern.

As they descend further, below the river bed, they pass "walls of piled bones" mingled with the wine casks. Montessor protests repeatedly that they must return to the surface for the sake of Fortunato's health; however, again, Fortunato's hubris pushes them onward and downward. As in much of mythology, the journey to the underworld and back is the "hero's" only hope of overcoming his excessive pride

and escaping his doom. Unfortunately for Fortunato, Montressor will see that he does not avoid paying the price for his "o'erweeing pride."

The narrator's reference to Masons serves as a double play on words, inferring not only the hidden knowledge of the Masonic Order, but also the masonry of bricklaying. The wine they drink is "De Grave," Poe's further foreshadowing of his narrator's intentions. Their descent ends in a "deep crypt" in which the air is so foul that the narrator says it "caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame" (Poetry and Tales 852).

Poe repeatedly refers to this deepest chamber as a crypt, and tells readers of the bones piled against three of the walls, a silent testament to the cellar's tenure as a dungeon. Of the fourth wall however, Poe's narrator says that the bones had been thrown down and lie "promiscuously upon the earth," playing with words to highlight the many connotations of the word promiscuous which include immoral as well as haphazard. This description underscores not only Montressor's intentions, but also the care with which the murderer has planed his crime, for under the bones so "carelessly" scattered, Montressor has secreted the mortar and stone with which he will seal Fortunato in the wall. He tells Fortunato that the Amontillado is within the recess behind the fourth wall, and once Fortunato has entered, it

is but a matter of moments until the narrator has him chained to the wall. Even as Montressor builds the wall that will seal Fortunato's fate, he implores his victim to leave with him (Poetry and Tales 854).

Fortunato's pride has led him to an underworld from which there is no escape, and like many of Poe's narrators, obsession with an idea leads to murder. While the narrators in the works discussed in this chapter vary in the degree of their illnesses and obsessions, in each work, Poe uses the images of myth and archetype to create the structures that form the foundations of the works and uphold and enhance the intended effect.

## CHAPTER IV

### TALES OF FANTASY

Throughout his prose works, Poe uses archetypal images as the foundation on which he builds his effects. In his works of terror, the images lie beneath the surface. In his works of fantasy, the archetypal images quite often are the story. In "William Wilson," the image of the "shadow" becomes an actual character, and in "The Imp of the Perverse," discussed later in this chapter, Poe combines the images of the "shadow" and the "trickster" into an overwhelming urge that finally forces the narrator to confess to a crime of which he has been unsuspected for several years.

As Carl Jung points out in Psyche & Symbol,

The living symbol expresses an essential unconscious factor. The more widely this factor operates, the more generally valid is the symbol, for in every soul it evokes a resonance. (xxi)

#### "William Wilson"

"William Wilson," first published in The Gift for 1840, "is generally recognized as one of Poe's greatest achievements in prose" (Mabbott 422). In this tale, Poe again addresses the theme of a man's struggle with his own

conscience. Here, however, Poe deals with what has come to be termed the bipartite soul which, he also explores in "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Morella."

The primary source for this tale, as Poe himself has stated, is "An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron" by Washington Irving. However, Poe's story centers on the theme that "each man has only half a complete soul, and the pair has but one conscience, which abides wholly in the half that belongs to the whisperer" (Mabbott 425), a theme he has repeatedly dealt with in his fiction. He uses this same theme in "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Imp of the Perverse." In The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen Peithman points out that "Poe anticipates much of what concerned the psychological movement later in the century," but since he writes before Freud and Jung, the terminology is different (78). While he does acknowledge that doubling is a common characteristic of Gothic fiction, Kenneth Silverman states that this and other doubles in Poe's works stem from Poe's unresolved grief over the deaths of his mother, Helen Stannard, and Francis Allan and the desire for the dead to be undead or to be alive while also dead (Silverman 151). The universality of the death fear, pointed out by Jung, and the popular taste of the day for Gothic fiction indicate that Silverman may be reading more than is necessary into Poe's tales. As T. O. Mabbott has



pointed out, Poe is the creator of Roderick Usher and William Wilson; he is not Roderick Usher or William Wilson (Mabbott 425).

Poe begins his tale as he often does with a quotation, this one from Chamberlayne's Pharonnida. "What say of it? what say of CONSCIENCE grim, That spectre in my path?" (Poetry and Tales 337). This quote, like many of his others, demonstrates that Poe understood the elements with which he dealt.

The protagonist in this tale believes that from him "in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle" (Poetry and Tales 337). Like most people, the protagonist cannot see the gradual development of his personality, nor can he distinguish between his exterior façade and his hidden inner self, and as is customary in Poe's tales, the protagonist is not privy to information Poe gives to the reader. This lack of personal insight contributes to the alienation from society and often the journey to the underworld, of the soul, that the protagonist must undertake.

Wilson states that "death approaches," and he speaks of "dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions." Peithman suggests that this statement may form a kind of death-bed confession as in "The Black Cat" and "The Cask of Amontillado" (80 n. 7). While

Peithman may in part be correct, here Poe may also be referring to the death of hope for the soul as he calls up the images of half waking visions, which he mentions in Marginalia, as the narrator begins to relate his tale.

The narrator, in describing the school, uses the gothic conventions of description as he speaks of "the refreshing chilliness of its deeply shadowed avenues," and says that "the prison like rampart formed the limit of our domain" (Poetry and Tales 339). Each word in this description contributes to Poe's overall effect, in accordance with his stated intentions in all his works. He continues his description by drawing for readers a verbal picture of the school and says the "extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses." His description here is reminiscent of his portrait of Roderick and Madeline Usher's house and lineage

there was really no end to its windings--to its incomprehensible subdivisions . . . The lateral branches were innumerable--inconceivable--and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole place were not far different from pondered upon infinity.

(Poetry and Tales 340)

The echoes of shadow, in this tale, foreshadow for readers the image of the "Shadow," in this case the double

that was thought to be Wilson's brother, his twin, much the way Usher's twin and his house represent this same archetypal shadow image in "The Fall of the House of Usher."

Poe continues to establish the image of the shadow in his descriptions of not only the second Wilson's appearance, but also essential facts about his life. The shadow figure was both born on the same day as the original and entered school the same day as the first William Wilson. The two are part of the same group of friends and are continual rivals. While the original Wilson is usually the public victor, he always feels that his double truly deserved the victory, and the pair is always on speaking terms. The first Wilson has difficulty defining his feelings toward his double and rival, although he says that he "secretly felt that I feared him" (Poetry and Tales 342).

Poe continues to develop the shadow image of the double as he describes the rival's weaknesses, primarily one of the vocal chords which prevented him from raising his voice at any time above a very low whisper. The narrator becomes increasingly more irritated at anything which brings up the similarities between the two. As time passes, the resemblance becomes more pronounced as the double copies his gait and general manner as well as his dress. Wilson says of his double's whisper, "it grew the very echo of my own" (Poetry and Tales 344). The rival's moral sense is much

keener than that of the original, and he gives advice in innuendo and insinuation which outrages the original Wilson at the idea that his rival dares to thwart his will which has always previously been indulged. In retrospect, Wilson acknowledges that he "might today have been a better and thus a happier man," had he not rejected the counsel of his double (Poetry and Tales 345).

As his resentment of his rival grows so does his hatred, and once this becomes obvious, he says his rival "afterwards avoided, or made a show of avoiding" him. During a fight he becomes aware of the sensation of having known his rival at some time in the long ago past, although this feeling quickly passes. After observing his rival sleeping one night and observing how closely the rival resembles him, he is finally driven to leave the school. (Poetry and Tales 347).

The narrator now passes some months at home and eventually goes to Eton. The period of time away from his double and the school allays his fears and he says he "could now find room to doubt the evidence" of his senses and he seldom thought about the subject. Again he returns to the habits against which his rival had cautioned him. However, as Poe points out here, man cannot escape himself. His double returns "after a week of soulless dissipation" and speaking only the name "William Wilson," brings the events

of the past home to the narrator with force. He undertakes to discover "who and what was this Wilson?--and whence came he?--and what were his purposes?" Unfortunately, he finds that he cannot answer these questions to his satisfaction; he can only discover that the double left Dr. Bransby's academy the same day as the original Wilson (Poetry and Tales 349).

Soon after, the narrator departs for Oxford and is again unimpeded by his double for some time. Here Poe again uses the Shakespearean phrase "out-Heroded Herod" to establish for the reader the magnitude of the narrator's vices. At Oxford, the narrator sees no sign of his rival until one night after he has set up and fleeced one of his school mates at cards.

When the original Wilson realizes that apparently his victim at cards was not as well off as he had believed, he experiences a moment of anxiety. At this precise moment Poe tells us "the wide, heavy folding doors of the apartment were all at once thrown open, to their full extent, with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity that extinguished, as if by magic, every candle in the room" (Poetry and Tales 351-52). The double again appears and exposes Wilson as a cheat at cards. Humiliated and abased, the narrator flees Oxford for the continent "in a perfect agony of horror and shame" (Poetry and Tales 353).

However, no matter where he travels, his double thwarts his schemes until he again flees and tells readers that "to the very ends of the earth I fled in vain" (Poetry and Tales 353-54). Wilson admits that those things the double thwarted "might have resulted in bitter mischief," but this makes him no less frustrated and angry. During this time the narrator is "forced to notice" that his double never reveals his face, and the original Wilson tells readers that he "saw not, at any moment, the features of his face." For Wilson, seeing his rival's face is not necessary, he says he could not "fail to recognize the William Wilson of my school-boy days,--the namesake, the companion, the rival,--the hated and dreaded rival at Dr. Bransby's" (Poetry and Tales 354).

Ultimately, in Rome, after his rival has again frustrated Wilson's desires, this time in the person of a young woman, with his "ever-remembered, low, damnable whisper," Wilson corners his double and demands satisfaction. The original Wilson prevails and stabs his rival. He then turns away to prevent an intrusion. When he turns back, he sees a mirror showing only his own reflection "features all pale and dabbled in blood." The narrator insists still that it is Wilson and that "his mask and cloak lay, where he had thrown them, upon the floor," and sees that "not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments

of his face . . . was not, even in the most absolute identity, mine own!" Wilson has confronted his shadow and it is he. Poe then concludes with a speech by the double.

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--and, in my death, see by this image, which  
is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered  
thyself. (Poetry and Tales 357-58)

Jung's shadow image, and its various forms, whether in the form of the conscience or the trickster, is a part of the whole being. Just as Wilson cannot escape his shadow, so also can the narrator of "The Imp of the Perverse" not escape the trickster image of the shadow that compels him to confess to a crime committed many years before.

### "The Imp of the Perverse"

In "The Imp of the Perverse," first published in Graham's Magazine for July of 1845, Poe again deals with Jung's Shadow image. In contrast to "William Wilson" in which the Shadow takes the form of conscience, in this story the image exhibits the traits of the Trickster. Poe's source was a passage from Ellen middleton (1844), by Lady Georgiana Fullerton, and the method of the murder "was probably suggested by an article in the New Monthly

Magazine" (Mabbott 1218). As Kenneth Silverman points out in his biography, Poe was familiar with the "imp of the perverse" (Silverman 263). He neglects to mention, however, that the vast majority of humankind are also familiar with the impish side of the nature that causes people to act in direct contradiction to their own best interests.

This tale begins much in the manner of a philosophical discussion centered on the impulse of the human species to act against their own best interests. In this philosophical discussion, the narrator tells the reader that humankind has overlooked this impulse because we fail to understand its necessity. Nor can we understand how "it might be made to further the objects of humanity, either temporal or eternal" (Poetry and Tales 826).

He points out that humankind has determined what God's will should logically be and classified their actions and ideas accordingly when it would be wiser to base our ideas of God's will on what people actually does. However, since human actions are quite often not logical we overlook those that do not fit into our preconceived ideas of God's will. On numerous occasions, those actions that do not fit our idea of God's will are brought about by what he terms perverseness. Carl Jung would later call this the trickster, or the darker aspect of the shadow image that forms one part of the bi-partite soul. With both the



trickster aspect of the soul and the "imp of the perverse," it is quite often the very wrong of an act that is "the one unconquerable force with impels us, and alone impels us to its prosecution" (Poetry and Tales 827).

That Poe understood the universality of this force is demonstrated in the narrator's discussion of the fact that "there lives no man who at some period has not been tormented, for example, by an earnest desire to tantalize a listener by circumlocution" (Poetry and Tales 827), one of the most prevalent examples of the "imp of the perverse" at work. He follows this with numerous other examples of this force in action, and gradually leads readers into his tale, that of a man overcome by this spirit of perverseness to the point that he confesses to a murder of which he has been unsuspected for many years. At this point, readers discover the narrator to be a man awaiting execution for a murder to which he has compulsively, and in direct contrast to his own best interest, confessed.

The narrator gives details of how he planned the murder and tells the reader how carefully thought out and carried out his plan was, preventing any chance of discovery. After some time, however, his conscience begins to haunt him, and the trickster aspect of his shadow image comes into play. While on one hand, he has committed a moral wrong that he cannot live with, confession to his wrong will prevent him

from living at all, and is therefore in direct contrast to the best interests of his bodily welfare. For the peace of his soul, however, the confession is absolutely vital.

In his fantasy fiction, Poe often deals with the various aspects of Jung's shadow image, exploring one and then another, painting for his readers detailed portraits of the many sides of the soul of humankind. The discussion of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and Eureka in Chapter V shows that this use of archetypal imagery carries over into his longer works as well.

## CHAPTER V

### PYM AND EUREKA

Poe continues his use of archetypal images in his longer works, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838) and Eureka (1848), as well. Both works explore humankind's desire for forbidden knowledge, whether of our world or of the cosmos. However, as Poe demonstrates throughout his works centering on the quest for forbidden knowledge, "we are both subject and object of our own quests" (Irwin 11). In Pym Poe explores this quest in the person of a young man going to sea for the first time. In Eureka, he advances the idea of "Original Unity as the source--as the principle of the Universal Phenomena" (Poetry and Tales 1288), and states that "Attraction and Repulsion are Matter" because "Matter is manifested to Mind," through these properties (Poetry and Tales 1355). He also discusses man's inability to perceive and understand the nature of God and God's Will (Poetry and Tales 1272-73).

#### The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838)

In The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, first published by Harper's in July of 1838, Poe introduces his narrative with a disclaimer. As is customary for Poe, whenever his tales contain elements he feels some readers will have

trouble accepting, he points out that Pym is writing from memory since he kept no journal and that his assertions can only be verified by one man, "and he a half-breed Indian." This allows his readers to discount or explain away any events or incidents in the tale which they question. Poe also writes that he suggested to Pym that the novel be published "under the garb of fiction," and allowed Pym to put Poe's name on it to ensure its being accepted as such (Poetry and Tales 1008). In the "Note" at the end of this book, Poe writes of himself that he declined to finish the narrative of Mr. Pym because of the "general inaccuracy of the details afforded him and his disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narration" (Poetry and Tales 1180).

Following these disclaimers, Poe begins the tale proper by introducing readers to the people with whom Pym will sail, and tells how he came to be on board the Grampus. His own sail boat, Pym has named the Ariel. In "The Tempest," by William Shakespeare, Ariel is the spirit who aids Prospero by managing a storm so that the passengers abandon ship yet preserving the ship and crew, unharmed. Pym uses one of his experiences with Augustus on board the Ariel as an introduction to the longer narrative of their adventures on the Grampus and his adventures on the Jane Guy.

After much drinking one evening, August and Pym take the sailboat out. As Pym has little knowledge of sailing,

Augustus is at the helm; however, as Pym discovers, Augustus is "beastly drunk" (Poetry and Tales 1011). A storm begins gathering and as the storm increases, Pym fails to see the whaling-ship that runs over them. His next memory is reviving on the whaling-ship (Poetry and Tales 1013). Here he discovers that two of the crew from the ship were responsible for saving both he and Augustus. In Augustus' description of his rescue, Poe foreshadows the remainder of the story with a type of journey to the underworld as Augustus finds "himself beneath the surface, whirling round and round with inconceivable rapidity, and with a rope wrapped in three or four folds tightly about his neck" (Poetry and Tales 1016). This image is also reminiscent of the birth experience with the rope taking the place of the umbilical cord, and by using it here, Poe foreshadows Pym's journey to the underworld of the ship where he begins his sea travels, and his return to the world of the living when Augustus reveals Pym's presence to Peters, their only ally in re-taking the Grampus from the mutineers that have seized the ship and set the captain, Augustus' father, adrift.

As stated, Pym begins his travels with a journey to the underworld, here represented by the hold of the ship. Poe uses biblical allusions and mythological allusions to strengthen this image. The narrator was originally to have remained below only three days; however, at the end of those three days, Augustus comes to him with the news that the

ship will set sail shortly. During this conversation, Augustus states "I suppose you can't tell how long you have been buried--only three days" (Poetry and Tales 1024). The precise duration of Christ's interment in the tomb. Christ, however, rose on the third day. Immediately following Augustus' visit, Pym falls into a sleep which he finds "must have lasted for more than three entire days and nights" (Poetry and Tales 1040).

Pym's release, however, comes many days later. Poe sustains his image of the underworld by having Pym joined by his dog, Tiger, while Pym is troubled by dreams of nature gone awry. The dog, while friendly in this case, brings to mind images of Cerberus, the hound that guards the entrance to the underworld.

Again Poe introduces elements which will allow his readers to accept the tale. During much of the voyage, Pym suffers from starvation and dehydration that produce hallucinations. This device, commonly used by Poe, of having the narrator subject to some type of mental aberration, allows skeptical readers to accept events that may seem miraculous or supernatural in the context of the narrator's state of mind and physical condition.

Throughout the journey, Poe presents readers with images of birth, death, and regeneration. Seven times Pym is faced with death; seven times he survives, although we know of the seventh only through the preface and the end

note. As in "Ligeia," Poe uses the mystical number seven to emphasize the effect he wishes to create. In each subsequent brush with death Pym's health is seen to improve as he recovers and he gradually struggles through the seven phases of his own personal hell. By the time they must draw lots, on board the hulk of the Grampus, to see who shall die that the others might live, Pym is by far the healthiest of the four.

In The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Poe again uses the motif of vengeance from beyond the grave as Pym, Augustus, and Peters take the Grampus back from the mutineers. By disguising himself as one of the crew who has been poisoned by the mutineers, Pym scares the murderer to death which give himself, Peters, and Augustus the element of surprise they need to defeat the remaining mutineers, as vengeance is exacted from beyond the grave through Pym (Poetry and Tales 1071).

Perhaps because of the length of this work, Poe increases his use of symbols to emphasize effect. Throughout the novel, Poe uses color to accentuate the contrast between good and evil. The natives who betray the captain and crew of the Jane Guy are black, even to their teeth, and while this could easily be explained away by skeptical readers, his continued use of the contrasting colors of black and white reinforce his symbolism. The dog's fangs are white, emphasizing his innate goodness. The

cook aboard the Grampus whom Pym refers to as "in all respects. . .a perfect demon" was black. Peters whose dual nature allows him to take part in both the mutiny and the subsequent rescue of Augustus and Pym is a half-breed indian.

The birds, whose mating habits he describes in his long digression while describing the Jane Guy's encounter with the inhabitants of the island, are primarily of two colors, black and white, emphasizing also their dual interpretations. The contrast between the two interpretations brings to mind images not only of the white dove of peace, but also of the harpies of greek mythology as they circle overhead with their cries of Tekeli-li. The only other colors he mentions in this section are the blue of beginnings, and the red of endings (Mabbott 677).

In the final image in this novel Poe re-emphasizes both the journey to the underworld, death and regeneration, and the Christ figure as they sail through the progressively hotter and more violent seas only to find themselves ultimately confronted with

a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow. (Poetry and Tales 1179)



## Eureka

In Eureka, first presented as a speech on February 3, 1848, Poe expounds on his theories of cosmological development and unity. Poe begins and ends Eureka with his theory concerning the nature of God's Will and humankind's inability to perceive that will. He discusses the philosophers with which he is familiar and how their ideas coincide, or fail to coincide, with his ideas concerning the unified nature of God and humankind's further inability to conceive of "Infinity" (Poetry and Tales 1274). In Fables of Mind, Joan Dyan states that what Poe "does know and what he writes Eureka to prove is that there is a way to accommodate the form of his fiction (or revelation) to the demands of knowledge" (24). Here, in his final work, Poe expounds on his theory of unity, not only as it applies to drama and fiction, but also as it applies to the cosmos and the "Godhead" which to Poe is the original First Cause of matter. For Poe, "Oneness" is all he attributes to the First Cause, or original matter, from which all subsequent matter issues. (Poetry and Tales 1277), and their can be "but one principle, the Volition of God" (Poetry and Tales 1289).

In Eureka, readers are told that Body and Spirit are but attraction and repulsion, and the natural tendency of all matter is toward unity, reunification with the original matter, or Godhead. While Poe critiques the methods by

which the Transcendentalists arrive at their ideas concerning the oneness of the universe, he reaches essentially the same conclusions. For Poe, however, analysis is a key to understanding; therefore, he approaches the subject from a mathematical and psychological standpoint rather than a philosophical one.

Throughout Eureka, Poe discusses the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, Bacon, Kant, Newton, Kepler, and Von Humboldt and lesser known philosophers as they relate to his theory of the unity of the cosmos and man's understanding of God's Will. Poe, however, examines the various theories about the nature of God from the viewpoint of the astronomer as he draws parallels between the inner and outer worlds of man and their relationship to the heavenly bodies that make up the entirety of the universe. Through his examination and analysis of humankind's conception of the nature of God and God's Will, he presents the theory of unity which runs throughout his works. As John T. Irwin points out in American Hieroglyphics,

For certain intellectuals, Eureka performs a mythological function akin to what Poe's tales continue to do for hosts of readers. Eureka is unevenly written, badly repetitious, and sometimes opaque in its abstractness, but like the tales it seems not to have been composed by a particular

individual. The universalism of a common nightmare informs it. (Irwin 6)

Poe uses this same approach to his fiction, and as shown throughout this study, Poe carefully crafts his works of fiction through his studied analysis of not only what he writes, but also what he reads. Archetypal images and themes presuppose a "Oneness" much as Poe predicates in Eureka. For these to be universal images, there necessarily must be a common source of some type. Humankind has not conclusively determined what that source might be; for Poe however, it is the universal oneness of the universe. That Poe believes this applies to fiction is clear from his statement in Eureka regarding plot.

In the construction of plot, for example, in fictitious literature, we should aim at so arranging the incidents that we shall not be able to determine, of any one of them, whether it depends from any one other or upholds it. (Poetry and Tales 1342)

Poe applied this principle to his own fiction during the entirety of his career. Although he refined his methods over the course of his career, the basic images underlying his fiction do not change, nor does his basic premise. Unity, as it pertains to Poe's fiction, becomes the guiding force that informs his works.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Throughout his career, Edgar Allan Poe used the archetypal images of the Anima, the Shadow, and the Trickster and the archetypal motifs of the journey to the underworld and death and regeneration as the underpinning for his work. Space limitations prevent discussion of these images and motifs in his entire body of work; however, the works discussed in this study do show his consistent use of these themes in all phases of his work. Poe states in "The Philosophy of Composition," and textual evidence supports this statement, that he first chooses a specific effect and then determines which elements will best help him create that effect.

That he uses autobiographical elements, no one familiar with the process of creating fiction can deny. All authors use not only autobiographical elements, but also biographical elements from the lives of people they have know as well as ideas gathered from reading material whether from their own or previous times. This does not preclude an author's knowledge or understanding of the elements with which he or she works.

In the latest Poe biography, Kenneth Silverman takes the approach that Poe is more his characters themselves than

the creator of those characters. While few would argue that Poe was a stable personality, we have the evidence of his own words, and the evidence in his works, of his craftsmanship. These same sources also provide evidence that Poe was extremely conscious of that craftsmanship throughout his career.

From his earliest works of poetry and fiction, through his final work, Eureka, Edgar Poe explores Jungian motifs and images although he predates Jung's work by fifty years. Poe's genius is acknowledged, even by his detractors; however, this aspect of his work has only recently begun to be explored. Examining Poe's crafting of characters, events, and situations in this light provides a new way to view the character of the entire body of Poe's works. It also sheds new light on the opposing viewpoints prevalent concerning his work. Poe's concern with being "universally appreciable" (Essays and Reviews 16) gives scholars an insight into the character of Poe's creations. As he stated in his letter to T. W. White, on April 30, 1835, "To be appreciated you must be read." (Letters v.1 58) Poe understood this extremely well, and as we can tell from his letters to John Allan, T. W. White, and others, Poe very much wanted to be appreciated as a man of letters.

Jung states that "the psyche is not only of today. It reaches right back to prehistoric ages." He questions whether humankind has changed over the intervening time

period. The effect of Poe's work on readers of his own and subsequent eras indicates that humankind's deepest fears, and some of its most basic impulses, at least have not. Poe's work continues to affect readers and some of the most popular writers of genre fiction today (King 63).

To Jung, this is because mind, like the body, "has its pre-established individual definiteness; namely, forms of behavior" (Psyche and Symbol xv). Poe understood that the images he worked with continually affected people on a deep psychological level. He also understood how to manipulate those images and use them in conjunction with the reading tastes of his day to reach his audience. As Margaret Allerton points out in Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, the literary criticism of his day "was doubtless one source from which Poe drew the idea that philosophy was an important factor in attaining excellence in writing" (95).

As Poe developed his philosophies, he used them in his work. His belief in the necessity of unity can be traced through his poems, his tales, his criticism, and finally found as an ultimate Unity in Eureka. Allerton believes it to be the "outgrowth of a combined study of Schlegel and Aristotle (Origins 75). However, regardless of its origin, this unity provides a thread that can be traced throughout the entirety of Poe's works.

Most critics make no attempt to deny Poe's craftsmanship, although Bloom calls "his thoughts

commonplace and his metaphors dead" (9), and in The Rationale of the Uncanny, Sybil Wuletich-Brinberg states that "Poe's characters were his doubles" (5). Both Bloom and Wuletich-Brinberg, however, acknowledge Poe's contribution to literature, and Bloom acknowledges Poe's ability as a mythmaker. Very few critics have attempted to consider the scope of Poe's craftsmanship in all of his writing, although critics now often argue in favor of a more unified approach to Poe's works than did previous critics. When examined closely, the works of Edgar Allan Poe show a continuity of thought and approach that extends throughout both his fiction and his poetry.

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