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The Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe:
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A Thesis Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master in Literature and Writing Studies

By
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I. Introduction

Dead at the age of forty under mysterious circumstances, Edgar Allan Poe is an enigma to readers and scholars alike. Rumors surround his life, as they do his death, leaving room for speculation and criticism—and the truth of his life is sometimes as lurid as the rumors. Poe’s morbid choice of topic combined with his enigmatic and unusual biography combine to make his work and his name familiar to most Americans. While not everyone has read his work, they are at least familiar with it and with some reported aspect of his life, true or untrue. Among the most frequently repeated allegations about Poe are that he was an alcoholic addicted to opium, that he bought and sold slaves, and even that he was mad. Indeed, one of my students, in an essay about Poe’s poem, “The Raven,” referred to Poe as “an irredeemable atheist.”

Poe’s work, like his life, seems always to generate contradictory reactions. Scholars either love him or they hate him. Those who dislike his work suggest that his preferred topic, death, is tawdry or base. In 1937, Yvor Winters argued that despite the extensive popularity of Poe studies in his time,
those critics who found greatness in the author’s works erred, calling Poe “a bad writer accidentally and temporarily popular” (55). As far as Winters is concerned, Poe’s work is too crude to be taken seriously. He dismisses the author as simply a hack with an obsession with death, what J. Gerald Kennedy calls “an unsound and morbid sensibility, a neurosis rooted in traumatic early experience” (“Writing” 3).

In contrast, Poe’s fans argue that his appeal is the very rawness of his topic, its ability to connect to others. Edward H. Davidson argues that death “restores that totality of being with which one began existence” and the “tragedy” of Poe’s narrators is “they suffer from a war between their own faculties, body and mind, or mind and soul; and once that struggle has begun, it ends only with death” (203). Poe’s reader observes the struggle within his protagonist and develops some connection to that person and his efforts. As Richard Wilbur put it in a 1959 lecture, “Poe’s mind may have been a strange one; yet all minds are alike in their general structure; therefore we can understand him, and I think that he will have something to say to us as long as there is civil war in the palaces of men’s minds” (277). While Poe does indeed focus on the macabre, he does it in such a way that the willing reader is moved by emotion.

Poe tells us in his “Philosophy of Composition” that he wishes his work
to be globally accepted, essentially that he wants to write for every man: “My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable [Poe’s emphasis]” (Poe 16). Despite Poe’s fantasy of universal appeal, this oft-repeated notion provides insight into the writer’s outlook and objectives. His continuous crusade to build his own magazine with its espoused aim that it should chiefly be “to *please* [Poe’s emphasis],” suggests that Poe was unsatisfied with the literary fare provided by magazine publishers of his day (A. Quinn 307). In the position of magazine editor, Poe moved between various magazines, including the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham’s Magazine*. In each case, according to Poe, the magazine circulation increased dramatically during his time as editor, suggesting that not only his writing was popular, but also his editorial viewpoint (Allen 157).

By applying modern reader response theory, specifically that of Stanley Fish, in a historical context, we can draw conclusions about public opinion of Poe. Fish explains his theory of interpretive communities:

> Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties. In other words these strategies exist
prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of
what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way
around. (14)

In essence, our assumptions about how texts should be structured affect the
process of reading and interpretation. Interpretive communities shape our
interpretations, and help determine what it is we pull out of any given text and
each person belongs to multiple communities that affect his or her
perspectives. In the case of Poe, scholars too often ignore Poe’s ability to
manipulate his reader’s emotions and his deliberate efforts to do so, focusing
instead on their own interpretations of the work and making judgments about
Poe based on what they bring to the stories, rather than what he does. By
acknowledging the deliberation of effect that Poe used in his work and being
aware of our own interpretative acts, we more clearly see his skill as a writer
and can speculate about the core meaning in the text without being blinded by
our own interpretations.

Using Fish’s theory of interpretive communities, we can posit the
reason for Poe’s continued popularity: by playing on the Western world’s
fascination with death, Poe reaches multiple communities of readers. The end
of the eighteenth century marked a change in the way people viewed death and,
not surprisingly, Poe and his stories of murder, loss of life, and bereavement
reflect the attitudes about mortality in his day. During the medieval and renaissance periods, mortality rates were so high and life expectancies so short that death was accepted as a natural part of life, a “constant, natural presence” (Kennedy, “Writing” 6-7). But as mortality rates lowered and people lived longer due to advances in technology, attitudes changed. J. Gerald Kennedy quotes Lawrence Stone: “There was an intensification of grief in the eighteenth century, and it was expressed not only more openly, and more bitterly, but also less ritually, in a more personal, more introspective manner” (8). The practice of burying the dead in church graveyards declined, and public cemeteries on the outskirts of towns became popular. Graveyard poetry also came in vogue creating what Kennedy describes as a “cult of melancholy,” which explored “the physical sensations of death, introduced fantasies about dead spirits, and conferred upon the tomb and the cemetery an irresistible fascination” (9). This idea of death as a shadow looming over us, waiting to take us, persists even today. The interpretive community of those who share this idea of death as an ever-present grim reaper – whether they live in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first centuries – will find elements in Poe’s works to which they can relate. And while these elements to which the twenty-first century reader can relate may not be the same as those of his nineteenth century audience, the fact remains that readers still find Poe’s work of interest.
A look into Poe's audience of the nineteenth-century world shows us a man who was well known in both America and Europe, both to critical audiences and to the general public. And while he never achieved financial success in the U.S., he was respected by American readers of his day, provoked his fellow American critics, and provided the world with stories and poems that continue to be discussed and introduced to young readers today. Indeed, while his place in the canon of American writers is still argued in American academia, there are few doubts about his literary value in Europe. According to Patrick F. Quinn, Edgar Allan Poe shares a place in the French literary canon with such writers as Shakespeare and Plato (13).

But Poe's popularity goes beyond his appeal to multiple interpretive communities. By applying reader response scholar Peter J. Rabinowitz's theory of the narrative audience – the hypothetical reader who treats the text as if it were real, something to be experienced (Rabinowitz 410) – and authorial audience – that hypothetical reader who reads the text as a piece of writing, something to be analyzed (Rabinowitz 410) – we see another reason for Poe's popularity. Rabinowitz suggests that

"[n]o matter how fantastic a novel’s premises, the narrative audience and the authorial audience must share some beliefs about reality in order for the situations and actions to have the
consequences they do [...] No novel, no matter how avant-garde, can succeed without engaging its readers’ desires and expectations, and readers cannot desire or expect anything in a world totally alien from their own” (412-413).

When the world of the authorial audience and that of the narrative are too different, the reader finds fewer connections within the text to grab onto, and thus remains separate from the text. Conversely, when the “realities” of both audiences are closely aligned, the reader finds him or herself relating more closely to the story and its events. With his strong imagery and first-person style of narrative, Poe is able to close the gap between the two “realities,” melding the two audiences into one for a time, and in some cases, provoking his readers’ narrative audience into overcoming the authorial audience for a time, thus allowing them to experience the strong emotions elicited by his writing. Poe’s work generates an emotional response in his readers that is based in the narrative audience’s reaction to his text; the visceral response of the narrative impedes the authorial audience. Critical readers ultimately return to the authorial audience for interpretation of the text’s meaning and their own, but for that brief period made up of the work’s first reading, the narrative audience takes charge. In a biography published in Graham’s Magazine in February, 1845, Poe’s peer and friend, James Russell Lowell, wrote that Poe’s
ability to influence his reader with “impalpable shadows of mystery” and his attention to detail defines Poe as an artist. And this artistic aspect of Poe’s personality makes him desire to influence his readers: “Having resolved to bring about certain emotions in the reader, he makes all subordinate parts tend strictly to the common center” (13). Even Poe’s peers noted his skill at manipulating words to create an effect, one specifically calculated to influence his readers’ emotions.

Some critics, like Winters, have dismissed Poe as a hack because he focuses on seemingly melodramatic scenes of death in his works. But Poe chooses to focus on death, not because of a pathological obsession with death, but rather as a sure way to elicit a response, a way to manipulate his readers, as others like Lowell noticed. Poe uses the first person narrative, strong imagery, and fantastic situations to evoke the base emotions of horror or terror in his readers in an effort to make his works more powerfully moving and more “universally appreciable” (Poe, “Philosophy” 16). In some cases, he further combines these elements with satire to provoke a reaction of revulsion in an effort to provide a biting commentary on nineteenth-century American society. And while Poe claims to be writing to all mankind, he frequently targets the nineteenth-century literary world in his commentary; in some instances this earned him enemies within that targeted community.
II. Biography: Who was Poe Really?

In order to delve into Poe’s means for affecting his readers, we must first examine the man himself, sifting through the rumors to determine who he really was and what his motivations may have been. Sadly, the blame for many of the rumors about Edgar Allan Poe rests with Poe’s own literary executor, Rev. Rufus W. Griswold, a successful editor and prior Baptist minister. Upon Poe’s death on Oct. 7, 1849, Griswold wrote a letter to the New York *Daily Tribune* which appeared in the Oct. 9, 1849 edition of that periodical, and because he was considered “authoritative” the letter was widely republished (Carlson 28). Of Griswold’s assertions, Eric W. Carlson writes, “[...] it was the effect of Griswold’s own deliberate distortions, further magnified in his 1850 ‘Memoir,’ which, in spite of the efforts of Poe’s friends to come to his defense, blackened Poe’s reputation as a man and a writer here and abroad for decades to come” (28). In Griswold’s letter to the *Tribune*—now known as “The ‘Ludwig’ Article” because he signed it with the name Ludwig—he suggests that while many readers would be surprised by the news of Poe’s death, very few people would grieve for the loss of the author. He proposes that any mourning felt would be due to the loss of his talent, rather than his person. The implication that Poe possessed no friends and would be
unmourned is contradicted by numerous published responses to Griswold’s letter from Poe’s friends and peers.

Griswold moves from disparaging Poe’s friendships to casting doubt on the writer’s lifestyle. On Poe’s gambling debts at the University of Virginia, the good reverend wrote:

[... ] in 1825 [Poe] went to the Jefferson University at Charlottesville, in Virginia, where he led a very dissipated life, the manners of the college at that time being extremely dissolute. He took the first honors, however, and went home greatly in debt. Mr. Allan refused to pay some of his debts of honor [...].

(29)

On the surface, this statement is difficult to argue with. Poe did attend the University of Virginia and did leave after incurring gambling debts. And at that time, the University suffered from multiple scandals, including students dueling and rioting. The climax of this turmoil was the 1840 murder of a professor while he was trying to “quell a disturbance” (A. Quinn 107).

However, Griswold’s emphasis on the word “honor” at the end of the quotation suggests sarcastic, rather than idiomatic use of the phrase “debts of honor.”

Not satisfied with casting aspersions on Poe’s life, Poe’s executor proceeded to disparage the man himself. Griswold describes the writer as “a
dreamer – dwelling in ideal realms – in heaven or hell, peopled with creations and the accidents of his brain” (33). He goes on to describe Poe wandering the city streets, blind to those around him, and oblivious to rain and wind. He paints Poe as a madman wandering aimlessly, mumbling to figments of his imagination, dwelling always in a hellish dream world. The commonly held misconception that Poe was mentally ill can be traced back to Griswold’s misinformation.

Griswold then attempts to convince his readers that Poe was a villain who despised others, a misanthropic lunatic. To that end, Griswold quotes a passage from Edward Bulwer Lytton’s novel *The Caxtons: A Family Picture* that describes one of his characters, Francis Vivian. In the section quoted, Bulwer Lytton describes Vivian as vain, envious, arrogant, quick to anger, and possessing a “cold repellent cynicism” and desirous of “the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit” (Griswold 33-34). While Griswold identifies Bulwer Lytton’s words in the “Ludwig Article,” a later reprint of the passage in his *Memoirs* fails to use quotation marks. Carlson notes the discrepancy between the two editions of the Ludwig Article, commenting in his reprint of the letter: “When reprinted without quotation marks in Griswold’s ‘Memoir’ of Poe, this verbatim description of Bulwer’s Vivian seemed to describe Poe’s character” (Carlson 35). While this may have been
an oversight, the sheer venom of the description which is unremarkable in a work of fiction paints an ugly picture of Poe when read as a description of him.\textsuperscript{vi}

Eleven days after the publication of Griswold’s letter in the New York Daily Tribune, Nathaniel Parker Willis published a defense of Poe in the Home Journal, in which he starts out with references to Griswold’s letter.\textsuperscript{vii} Willis goes on to quote six paragraphs from the “Ludwig Article,” and then proceeds to rebut them by providing his own impressions and experiences with Poe. He explains how rumor circulated about Poe’s nature before he was hired on at the Mirror, but that instead the author was hard working, courteous and cooperative. With regard to Poe’s critical pieces, Willis notes that Poe was always ready to tone down a too-acid criticism.\textsuperscript{viii} He also addresses allegations of Poe as an alcoholic, saying that while he had never seen Poe under the influence of alcohol, he had heard from reliable sources that with one glass of wine the author became intoxicated, almost to the point of madness.\textsuperscript{ix} Willis’s statement rebuts Griswold’s allegations of Poe’s misanthropy and supposed quickness to anger when criticized – “‘You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler’ ” (Griswold 34). Willis goes on to include copies of two letters from Poe he still retained that support his views of the writer, which clearly define some of Poe’s more attractive, more positive traits,
such as his humility, perseverance, and friendliness.\textsuperscript{x} Willis, like many others of Poe's peers, spoke adamantly in defense of this supposedly friendless and unloved author.

Having examined Griswold's distortions and cleared them away, let us now determine what facts of Poe's life can be substantiated. Born in 1809 to stage actors, David Poe Jr. and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, young Edgar spent the first years of his life following the vagaries of the theater with his two siblings.\textsuperscript{xi} At the time of Eliza Poe's death in 1811 of tuberculosis, records indicate that David Poe was no longer a part of his children's life and it is not known if he left due to death or other circumstances. Edgar was fostered out to John Allan, an upstanding Richmond, Virginia merchant, and his wife Frances, who raised the boy as their son, taking him to Europe, educating him, and making him their heir. By all accounts, Edgar and his foster mother were very close until her death in 1829, while the relationship with his foster father fluctuated. The males appear to have gotten along until Poe reached adulthood, then for unknown reasons Allan's feelings toward his foster son cooled. George Seelye, in his introduction to Poe's \textit{The Complete Stories}, suggests that one possible reason for this change is that Allan, a self-made man, resented giving money to an heir who took his foster father's generosity for granted. This resentment on Allan's part may then have resulted in "the kinds of back-
handed generosity that rankled for the sensitive and gifted boy’’ (xv-xvi).

While we can speculate as to the validity of Seelye’s hypotheses, scholars cannot positively confirm or deny them. We do know that the final break between the two men occurred around the time of Allan’s second marriage in 1830.

From February 1826 to March 1827, Poe attended the University of Virginia and did well scholastically, but was forced by Allan to leave following a gambling scandal. In a letter to Allan dated “Jany [sic] 3, 1830”xii, Poe chides his father for removing him from his studies at the University of Virginia, saying that Allan “would not let [Poe] return because bills were presented [to him] for payment which [Poe] never wished nor desired [him] to pay” (A. Quinn 110) and insisting that he had reformed despite his father’s inability to see that.xiii At this point, Poe begins to define some of the financial hardships to which Allan’s tightfistedness subjected him. He points out that the school estimated the students’ yearly expenses at $350, but Allan sent his son to school with only $110. Poe then proceeds to detail what was and was not paid with this $110 and the abuse that he received when he could not pay the $150 in accrued expenses, which were listed on a report sent to Allan, out of the aforementioned $110 (A. Quinn 110).xiv Poe goes on to relate other expenditures that needs must be purchased on credit and explains how Allan’s
miserliness forced him to gamble in order to make ends meet. Arthur Hobson Quinn corroborates Poe’s statements of the expenses required by the school: “Poe’s statements concerning the charges of the University are correctly given, and indeed are understated. During the first four years, 1825-1829, one hundred and fifty dollars was always expected from the student for his board” (111). Clearly, while Seelye may be correct about Poe’s “whining requests for more money” (xvi) and Griswold spoke the truth about Poe having gambling debts from his time at the University of Virginia, John Allan – Poe’s father since the age of four – must bear some of the responsibility for making him the man he became, good or bad, and his close-fistedness led to some of Poe’s less endearing qualities.

Poe spent much of his life bouncing around—from one city to another, from one job to another—always in an attempt to achieve success. After leaving the University of Virginia, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served from May of 1827 to April 1829. Apparently deciding that there was nothing for him in the Army, he withdrew and spent the next year splitting his time between Baltimore, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Washington getting to know his paternal relatives and attempting to find a publisher for Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems, which was finally published in December 1829. It was during this time that he met his future wife, seven-year-old Virginia
Eliza Clemm. Beginning in June 1830, Poe served as a cadet at West Point, until January 1831, when he arranged his own courtmartial in an effort to leave the academy. In the spring of 1831, Poe’s second book of poems appeared, *Poems by Edgar A. Poe, Second Edition*. Shortly thereafter, Poe settled in Baltimore and moved in with his aunt, Maria Clemm, mother of Virginia, and this household arrangement persisted for much of the rest of his life. He spent the next few years struggling to make ends meet by writing for newspapers and magazines and scrabbling for other work. While he had been published numerous times, Poe was in constant need of funds, a condition that was never to change.

Finally, in the summer of 1835, Poe left his family in Baltimore to return to Richmond to join the staff of Thomas Willis White’s *Southern Literary Messenger*. From Poe’s letters to Maria Clemm during this period, we see his attachment to her and Virginia and the strain of separation. This anxiety may account for Poe’s apparent “lapses in sobriety,” which occurred during his stint at the *Messenger* (A. Quinn 228). Finally, on May 16, 1836, Edgar Poe and fourteen-year-old Virginia Clemm were married, and Poe’s family was back together.

Over the next thirteen years, Poe worked as an editor for several literary magazines and became a well-known critic and writer. In January of 1837,
Poe left the *Messenger* to head back to New England. In the summer of 1839, he finagled an editorial job with William E. Burton on *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, where he stayed until the following June. 1841 saw Poe working at *Graham's Magazine*, where he stayed until May 1842. He left to pursue his dream of starting up his own magazine, *The Stylus*, a dream that he held until his death but never achieved. February 1845 marked the start of Poe’s career as editor of the *Broadway Journal* and in October of that year, Poe purchased the journal in an attempt to make his dream of running his own magazine come true. Sadly, because of Poe’s continual want of money, the *Broadway Journal* died in January 1846.

Also during this time, Poe published some of his most well known works in book format. In 1840, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* was issued. This collection of his short stories contained such notables as “William Wilson,” “Morella,” “Ligeia,” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The volume received favorable reviews from critics, but, as usual, did not sell well. Another of his short stories, “The Gold Bug,” won first prize in a June 1843 contest in the *Dollar Newspaper*, was published in that periodical on June 21st and 28th, and was reprinted in the June 24th, July 1st, and July 8th editions of *The Saturday Courier*. In the spring of 1845, a volume containing twelve of his stories – many of which had been published elsewhere previously – was
issued under the title *Tales*, and later that year, a book of revised poems was published: *The Raven and Other Poems*.

While Poe never succeeded financially, his married life appears to have been rewarding. All evidence suggests that despite Virginia Poe’s age at the time of their marriage, the couple were devoted to each other. This devotion makes the events of January 1842 even more tragic. While singing at her piano, Virginia “broke a blood vessel” (A. Quinn 347). She recovered to a point, but for the remainder of her short life she suffered from ill health, and finally in January 1847, Virginia Poe died. In a letter to George Eveleth, written a year after her death, Poe writes of his beloved wife’s illness, explaining the agony he suffered during the roller coaster of her illness as she repeatedly improved and then worsened. He points out that his depression over her ill health led him to drink and that with his “sensitive” constitution the alcohol led to periods of insanity. He goes on to note “my enemies referred the insanity to the drink rather than the drink to the insanity” (A. Quinn 347).

Given the love he had for Virginia and the length of her illness, is it any wonder Poe believed that death was the most likely of topics to stir one’s emotions? In his Philosophy of Composition (1846), Poe tells us,

> Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself – “Of all melancholy topics, what,
according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most*
melancholy?” Death—was the obvious reply. “And when,” I said, “is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?” […] the answer […] is obvious—“When it most closely allies itself to

*Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world […]” (19)

To this man who suffered the agony of the loss of his wife again and again, there was no subject more likely to stir his readers than death, especially the death of a beautiful woman. Clearly his relationship with his wife and his loss of that relationship impacted his attitudes about death.

During the final two years of his life, Poe continued his efforts to establish his own magazine, and tried desperately to fill the hole in his life left by Virginia’s death. Fall of 1848 found him engaged to Mrs. Sarah H. Whitman, a poet with whom he had developed a favorable literary relationship. He wooed her ardently and she finally consented to marry him, provided he abstained from drinking alcohol. Mrs. Whitman’s mother was opposed to the union, which led to friction between her and Poe, and the engagement was finally ended in late December 1848 when Mrs. Whitman accused him of violating his vow not to drink and a confrontation occurred between Poe, Mrs. Whitman, and her mother. Letters from the following September indicate that
Poe and Mrs. Elmira Royster Shelton, a childhood love, had reestablished contact and were engaged to be married. Poe’s death in October prevented the wedding from taking place.

The strange circumstances surrounding Poe’s death add to the macabre aura that envelops Poe’s life, as readers know it today. According to a letter from Mrs. Shelton, Poe arrived at her house on September 26th, complaining of feeling sick, and when she went to check on him the next morning, he was gone. Friends believe that Poe left Richmond on an early morning boat to Baltimore on September 27th, which arrived in Baltimore on the 28th. He was dead in Baltimore on October 3rd, but his whereabouts for the six days in between is unclear. Thomas H. Lane, a friend of Poe’s, claimed that Poe visited associates in Philadelphia during this time and because of illness was taken to the home of James P. Moss, another friend. He left the next morning, ostensibly to take a train to New York. Unfortunately, Lane gave no dates, so researchers are unable to clearly establish Poe’s movements based on this story. The next record of Poe’s whereabouts is the discovery on Wednesday, October 3rd by Jos. W. Walker of the semi-conscious Poe on the ground outside of Ryan’s Fourth Ward Polls. His clothing had been taken and he wore a “poor suit of thin texture” (A. Quinn 639). Walker summoned Dr. J.E. Snodgrass, a friend of Poe’s, who took him to the hospital. Poe did regain partial
consciousness, but was unable to explain what had happened to him. He next became violently delirious and remained so until Saturday, October 6th. At three a.m. on October 7th, Poe settled into sleep and at about five a.m. Sunday morning, he died.

III. Poe’s Historical Audience

Any inquiry into Edgar Allan Poe’s work and his relationship with his readers must delve into the identity of those readers, both real and imagined. An examination of Poe’s statements regarding his readers clarifies the author’s targeted audience, while exploration into his actual readership allows us to compare the reality to Poe’s hopes.

Poe’s essay, “Philosophy of Composition,” written in April 1846, ostensibly explains the how and why behind the creation of his most famous poem, “The Raven.” In this essay, the author goes into great detail about his philosophy of writing and the steps taken to formulate this particular poem. Poe later admitted that the essay was not meant to be taken as the literal truth (Mabbott 359). Many scholars dismiss the essay’s value based on this admission, arguing that because Poe used creative license with some of it, it must all be fiction. Some, like Scott Peeples, argue that it should be viewed as
a work of irony: “although Poe sets out to represent poetry as the result of hard work and trial and error rather than some sort of divine madness, he carries the point to such an extreme that it is impossible to take the essay entirely seriously” (134). Yet others argue that while Poe’s descriptions of the poem’s origins may be fictitious, his account of his philosophy was seriously meant (Mabbott 359). From my own explorations into Poe’s life and works, I have to agree with the latter opinion. The beliefs espoused in the “Philosophy” too closely reflect the content and emotional manipulation found in Poe’s tales.

As mentioned previously, Poe tells us in this essay that he wishes his work to be universally accepted, essentially that he writes for everyman:

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable.

[...] Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation – and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones. (16-17)
Poe chooses melancholy because he sees it as the ultimate manifestation of art and the most universally accessible. All of humanity feels sadness and loss, and therefore, with these feelings as the foundation of his works, all of humanity can relate to his stories.

In addition, his continuous crusade to build his own magazine with its espoused aim that it should chiefly be "to please," suggests that Poe was unsatisfied with the literary fare provided by magazine publishers of his day (A. Quinn 307). Kenneth Silverman, author of one of the most well respected biographies of Poe available, argues that Poe believed the literary world of his day corrupt, made up of "literary cliques, incompetent editors, and publishers willing to pay for puffs" of writing, and the author used his critical writing to "right this perceived injustice, relentlessly exposing the deficiencies of the mediocre, and teaching American readers what to appreciate in the best" (6-7). Poe held strong opinions on literary matters and never hesitated to share those views. In some cases, this outspokenness led to literary feuds and burned bridges, but he seldom let that restrict him. Indeed, "[c]ontemporaries often compared him to an American Indian wielding a tomahawk and a scalping knife" (Silverman 6).

The combination of dissatisfaction with nineteenth-century literary offerings and a dream of running his own magazine led to Poe's idea for The
While the periodical itself never developed, he did publish a prospectus for it, which provides insight into Poe’s thoughts and intent. He wanted his journal to “enlist the loftiest talent, but employ it not always in the loftiest—at least not always in the most pompous or Puritanical way” (A. Quinn 376). And while it would appeal to the interests of “the Republic of Letters” it would also “insist upon regarding the world at large as the sole proper audience for the author” (A. Quinn 376). Furthermore, The Stylus “will eschew the stilted dulness (sic) of our own Quarterlies, and while it may[Poe’s emphasis], if necessary, be no less learned, will deem it wiser to be less anonymous, and difficult to be more dishonest, than they” (A. Quinn 376). Poe makes it clear that he wants The Stylus to be unlike the current fare offered, a work that combines the refined tastes he values with an appeal to the general population. At the same time that it “support[s] the general interests” of the literary world, he wants it to appeal to “the world at large.”

Some scholars, like Michael Allen, have argued that Poe’s tastes were too elitist, hence his lack of financial success and the failure of his dream of The Stylus. Allen argues that “its variations in tone, its proliferations of kind and superiority of attitude were completely inconsistent with the growing ‘homogenisation’ of material” (184-185). While I agree that Poe’s style is strongly intellectual and this turns some readers away, I disagree that Poe
deluded himself with the idea of *The Stylus*. If that were truly the case – that his work was too highbrow for the average reader – the “average” American today would not know Poe’s name and would be unable to identify any of his works. Indeed, given this familiarity and the expansion of the reading public in today’s society, I find it hard to believe that he would not have found a readership for his magazine within the more limited reading masses of the nineteenth-century.

Contrary to what some scholars suggest about Poe, he exhibited keen insight into the literary and economic world of his day. His oft-repeated desire to write for broad audiences reflects his awareness that literature was a commodity to be bought and sold like any other. The only way to achieve financial success was to cater to public tastes. Even though poetry was his first love, Poe instead chose to focus on writing short stories, since those were more marketable (A. Quinn 481-482). Terence Whalen emphasizes the relationship between capitalism and the literary world for Poe, pointing out not only Poe’s choice to focus on his stories instead of his first love, poetry, but also his admissions that some of his most extreme tales were composed to address demand. Whalen goes on to point out Poe’s use of “commercial phrases,” such as “‘literary commodities,’ ‘literary enterprises,’ ‘the general market for literary wares,’” and to “the saleableness of literature” (7). Despite the rumors
of Poe’s muddled head and artistic temperament, his work indicates an awareness of writing as more than just a creative endeavor. For Poe, audience provides the primary measure of success. And to reach his audience, Poe knew that he must work within the literary industry. As he put it in a letter to T. W. White: “To be appreciated you must be read [Poe’s emphasis]” (A. Quinn 211).

A discussion of Poe’s target audience begs the question of who made up those reading masses. While our knowledge of the specific faces of the time remains blurry, we can speculate based on history. The early nineteenth-century marked the birth of the urban working class in America, “a working class that was expanding, literate, and politically active” (Whalen 86-87). So, in addition to the educated wealthy to whom literacy was a given, we see the literary industry moving to embrace those individuals whose lives revolved around commerce – not only the middle class merchants, but also the “craftworkers [sic], factory operatives, domestic servants, and domestic workers” (Denning 27). And this increasingly literate American working class expanded the publishing industry’s product, resulting in the popularity of the sensationalist penny press for the masses and a desire for the publication of commercially oriented texts (Whalen 78-80).

In the position of magazine editor, Poe moved between various
magazines, including the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham's Magazine*. In the case of these two publications, the magazine circulation increased dramatically during his time as editor, suggesting that not only his writing was popular, but also his editorial viewpoint. In a letter to Charles Anthon, Poe claims that during his tenure as editor at the *Southern Literary Messenger*, circulation increased from 700 to 5,500 subscribers, and while he was at *Graham's* the numbers rose from 5,000 to 50,000. He goes on to say that since his departure from *Graham's* two years previously, the number of subscribers has dropped to no more than 25,000 (A. Quinn 424-425).

As is to be expected with regard to Poe, these figures are a topic of contention. According to George R. Graham, publisher of *Graham's Magazine*, the circulation figures from Poe's time as editor were actually from 5,000 to 37,000 subscribers, not 50,000 as Poe claimed (Allen 157). Even if Graham is correct about the figures, we still see an increase of more than seven hundred percent.

In his book, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America*, Whalen argues the validity of any of the figures previously cited, arguing that the source for circulation data is too obscure:

Circulation numbers for antebellum magazines [...] might refer
to copies sold in a given month, copies of specific issue sold in a year or in several years, copies distributed, copies printed, or total copies read, a figure that was obviously subject to manipulation. In other words, the _Messenger_ story is riddled with ambiguities and inconsistencies, ranging from the number (3,500, 5,000, or sometimes 5,500), to the object counted (issues printed, distributed, sold, or read), to the method of counting (monthly figures, annual reports, exact statistics, estimates, or averages), to the cause of the purported increase (by which I mean the assumption that every new purchaser was attracted by Poe’s book reviews and reprinted tales rather than by the material that made up the bulk of each issue). (60)

While I agree with Whalen that we cannot assume that Poe was the sole reason for any increase in circulation and that magazine publishers were going to spin circulation numbers in their best interests, I find it hard to believe that one publisher would use so many assorted methods to measure subscriptions. Those may have been some of the ways used within the industry, but a good businessman will choose one standard of measurement. Otherwise, there is no accurate means of comparison. And nothing I have seen suggests that Graham was a poor businessman. While I might accept that Poe inflated figures to
influence prospective investors, I see no reason that Graham himself would exaggerate figures to falsely reflect the magazine’s success during Poe’s time there. Furthermore, in a review published in *Graham’s Magazine* in February 1845, James Russell Lowell attributes much of the *Southern Literary Messenger*’s “success and reputation” to Poe’s stint as editor of the magazine (15). Lowell also suggests that the readers of *Graham’s* can vouch for Poe’s editorial skills. As a fellow writer and publisher, one must presume that Lowell held some knowledge of the literary world of his day. Surely if Poe was the lackluster editor that Whalen implies, Lowell would have heard rumors of it, if nothing else.

Despite Poe’s apparent popularity as an editor and critic, he never achieved financial success during his lifetime. Over the course of his life, he collected and published his many short works, both poems and short stories, in what added up to six different volumes: *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827), *Poems of 1831*, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), *The Prose Romances of Edgar Allan Poe* (1843), *Tales of 1845*, and *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845). Of these volumes, the most critically well received was *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. In the New York *Mirror* on Dec. 28, 1839, Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro reviewed *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. According to Tasistro, Poe possesses “great intellectual capacity, […] a power
for vivid description, an opulence of imagination, a fecundity of invention, and a command over the elegance of diction which have seldom been displayed, even by writers who have acquired the greatest distinction" (4). While the book was "favorably reviewed, [it] did not sell rapidly" (A. Quinn 290). Arthur Hobson Quinn reports that *Tamerlane and Other Poems* "made practically no impression upon the critical or popular reader" (128) and calls the reviews of *The Raven and Other Poems* "inadequate" (482). While Poe did achieve some notoriety during his life, he never achieved the success or the financial stability for which he was constantly striving.

Even in Great Britain, home of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Poe achieved only modest success. *Blackwood* provided a precedent for Poe's gothic tales by publishing – among others – sensational stories involving some "strange, horrific, or morbid situation" (Allen 30). The "Blackwood pattern" can be broken down into three types: that of the discontented working-class man who turns to sin and is either punished or repents; the burlesque, which mocked some literary success or mode, or some popular philosophic idea; and the sensation story (Allen 31-2). These elements can all be found in various Poe tales, and he even went so far as to title one of his stories, "How to Write a Blackwood Article." Nevertheless, Poe's English reception – like his American – was lackluster. This review of Poe's works appeared in the
London *Literary Gazette* on Jan. 31, 1846. While overall it is a favorable review, it still reflects the British censure of horror and terror tales. Martin Farquhar Tupper precedes his “coming praises” with “a light and wholesome touch of censure,” describing “The Black Cat” as “impossible and revolting” and calling “The Fall of the House of Usher” a “juvenile production” (19).

Yet despite this lack of “success,” Poe did achieve “immortality.” Scholars may debate his qualifications for entry into the American literary canon, but his name and works continue to be familiar to the American public.

In his introduction to *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*, J. Gerald Kennedy writes:

> Despite persisting disagreement about Edgar Allan Poe’s literary achievement, no American writer of the antebellum period enjoys greater current popularity and recognizability (sic). One hundred fifty years after the author’s death, cartoon characters Garfield and Bart Simpson entertain young television viewers by reciting ‘The Raven,’ and the new National Football League team in Baltimore owes its team nickname and logo to that famous poem. The compact disc ‘Tales of Mystery and Imagination’ by the Alan Parsons Project has dazzled rock fans with its pulsating interpretations of Poe texts; such Roger
Corman films as The Fall of the House of Usher and The Masque of the Red Death (both featuring Vincent Price) have become cult classics; and Generation-X readers, especially those attracted to the ‘Goth’ counterculture, revel in Poe’s dark fantasies. Apart from Frederick Douglass, he is the only American writer of his era yet featured on the popular Arts and Entertainment ‘Biography’ series. (3)

Literary scholars like Yvor Winters may dismiss Poe as a “bad writer” who was only “temporarily popular,” but I find it difficult to agree when even a twentieth-century cultural icon such as Bart Simpson quotes him.

An exploration of Poe’s popularity to modern American readers reveals multiple reasons for the continuing fascination with his work. Just as modern audiences flock to see the latest horror movie, so too do they read Poe’s stories and poems (Kennedy 4). In our safe, sane everyday world, Poe allows us to experience sensations with which we are not normally faced. He has the ability to scare us, to make us feel. Poe’s interest in the qualities of madness and perversity “resonates with our heightened Western, post-Freudian awareness of the unconscious and the irrational. From the Holocaust to Jonestown and Kosovo, much of the century’s history seems inspired by mass insanity” (Kennedy 6). His insight into the sensations and skewed logic of
insanity reflects the curiosity of modern students with regard to the human psyche. Another aspect of Poe’s work that reverberates within modern readers is the element of doubt and estrangement (Kennedy 8). Most Americans, especially teens, have at one time or another felt alienated, separated from the superficiality of modern American culture. The too-frequently seen news reports of school shootings – the alienated student, the outsider, who takes a gun and targets teachers and fellow students – reflect this feeling of isolation. In contrast, Poe is also credited with inventing the modern genre of science fiction, with such stories as “Hans Phall: A Tale” and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (Kennedy 13). Instead of isolation and separation, these readers are swept away on journeys of exploration and “scientific conquest” (Kennedy 14). On the appeal of Poe’s work, Kenneth Silverman states: “[...] much of their power lies in their ability to reawaken magical beliefs we all had as children and have never wholly abandoned, uncanny feelings that dumb objects can come to life, that we may be eaten and devoured, that the dead can return” (24).

Unlike the ambivalence of American scholars, French critics have welcomed Poe into their literary canon with enthusiasm. In his book, The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe, Patrick F. Quinn suggests that French writers embraced Poe so wholeheartedly that a near-religious cult has resulted (13).
Baudelaire decided that Poe could act as an “intercessor between himself and God,” and so prayed to him (Weightman 203). Mallarmé claimed that he went to England only to learn English, so that he could “read Poe in the original” (Weightman 203). The French actor/producer Aurélien-François Lugné allegedly “invented a fictitious blood-relationship (sic)” with Poe in order to justify changing his name to Lugné-Poe (Weightman 203). Quinn suggests that one reason for Poe’s appeal to the French audience is the overwhelming evidence of reason and logic in his works, citing French scholar Régis Messac’s writings on Poe. Messac compares Poe to French writer Honoré de Balzac, calling Poe “the more rational” and stating, “It is in his work that one finds the greater regard for order, clarity, and coherence. In a word, it is he who is the more French” (P. Quinn 34). Quinn further argues that Poe’s tales are the works that hold the most interest for the French public at large, and the criticism and poetry are primarily of interest to French scholars and poets (35). He goes on to suggest that the primary reason for Poe’s appeal was timing. French literature in the early nineteenth-century was stagnant, and when Baudelaire brought Poe to the French masses, he provided them with new possibilities. He connected the French appreciation for form and intellect with what Quinn calls “the ability to move as in dreams through the depths of the mind and to illuminate the kind of verities the reason knows not of” (44-45).
Poe managed to combine the French sense of artistry and mystique found in the more fanciful tales with the deductive reasoning that made the Dupin tales — “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” and “The Purloined Letter” — so exceptional. The new inspiration that Poe’s work provided to French writers gave literature in France a new direction, and helped it to regain the standing in European literature which had been lost with its earlier doldrums.

IV. Fear and Madness: the Gothic Tales

Among the most well known of Poe’s tales are the gothic tales, those stories that conjure up a visceral reaction to the horror or terror that is elicited. Readers, influenced by Griswold’s disinformation, usually attribute these stories to a fixation with death and madness on Poe’s part. By doing so, though, they ignore the simple fact of Poe’s manipulative writing style. One of the early theories about the inspiration for Poe’s subject matter is that Germanism — the German Romanticist’s style of writing, which tended to the gothic at that time — is to blame, but Poe’s response gives us further proof of the deliberation of his actions. In his preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe addresses the subject of his supposed “Germanism,” and rebuts
those critics who label his subject “Germanic” and deem that he must write
terror simply because of some alignment with Germanic writers. Indeed,
further delving into the preface to Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque
provides us yet another statement by Poe that his choice of topic is a calculated
attempt to move his readers:

[...] I cannot conscientiously claim indulgence on the score of
hasty effort. I think it best becomes me to say [...] that if I have
sinned, I have deliberately sinned. These brief compositions are,
in chief part, the results of matured purpose and very careful
elaboration. (Poe, Preface 8)

Once again, we see Poe claiming a deliberate, purposeful direction in
his writing. In the case of the terror tales, Poe uses the topic of death – often,
the death of a beautiful woman – to create a bond with the reader based on
feelings of loss and fear: loss at the death of the lover and fear at the madness
that leads to it. Strong imagery, fantastic situations, and a first-person
narrative characterize these fantasies – like most all of Poe’s tales – and
combine to create that bond with the stories’ readers.

In Poe’s tale “Berenice,” he uses the first-person narrative to develop
this bond between the narrator and his readers, a bond in which our role as
narrative audience overshadows that of authorial audience. Our narrator,
Egaeus, is afflicted with the “disease” of monomania, in which he can spend
days consumed by daydream-like fits and awaken with only hazy memories of
these dreams. He becomes engaged out of pity, rather than love, to his cousin
Berenice, and finds himself obsessed with the teeth of his sickly fiancée. Poe
ultimately reveals to us that Berenice has been prematurely buried and the
narrator has ripped the teeth from her still living body while consumed by one
of his fits of monomania. In this tale, the overwhelming emotion inspired in us
is one of horror, that feeling of intense repugnance mixed with fear. Through
Poe’s use of the first-person narrative, we identify with the “author”:

> It was a fearful page in the record of my existence, written all
over with dim, and hideous, and unintelligible recollections. I
strived to decypher [sic] them, but in vain; while ever and anon,
like the spirit of a departed sound, the shrill and piercing shriek
of a female voice seemed to be ringing in my ears. I had done a
deed – what was it? And the echoes of the chamber answered me
“what was it?” (Poe, “Berenice” 82)

The narrator knows something horrific has happened, but cannot connect with
it, and by dint of our bond with him, we readers feel his horror and confusion.
When all is revealed at the end, that horror is made concrete, and repugnance at
the reality of his/our actions overwhelms us.
By contrast, the overwhelming emotion provoked by Poe in “Ligeia” is terror, an intense, underlying feeling of dread. Again, Poe uses the first-person narrative to create a bond with his readers, to bring us into the story as participants, as if we are sitting face to face with the narrator as he relates his experience. He tells us of how he married his first love, the strong, dark, passionate Ligeia, and is inconsolable upon her death. In time he remarries the pale, timid Rowena Trevanion, despite the fact that he loathes her and still yearns for Ligeia. Shortly after the wedding, Rowena becomes ill and eventually dies, and while our narrator sits by her deathbed, she begins to stir. He attempts to help her rouse, all the while preoccupied with visions of Ligeia, and when the enshrouded figure finally does stand before him, the shroud is disarranged to reveal the lady Ligeia. At one point during the struggle between Rowena and Ligeia, he tells us, “[...] again I sunk into visions of Ligeia – and again, (what marvel that I shudder while I write?) again there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed” (314). Poe brings us into the story, not as a reader looking at a page, but as a rapt listener being told of an event in a speaker’s life. This ability to diminish the reality of the piece of paper before us into the sound of a human voice is what allows the narrative audience to briefly take over in the willing reader’s mind.

Poe’s use of the first-person narrative goes beyond writing from the
narrator’s point of view. He converses with his reader, including woeful or marveling exclamations and at times even addressing the reader directly.

“Ligeia’s” nameless narrator reflects on his love’s eyes:

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact – never, I believe, noticed in the schools – that, in our endeavours [sic] to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves upon the very verge [Poe’s emphasis] of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus, how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia’s eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of the secret of their expression – felt it approaching – yet not quite be mine – and so at length utterly depart. And (strange, oh strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression. (Poe 304)

While musing upon the distant, evanescent memory of Ligeia, our narrator exclaims in wonder at his discovery of some similar thought or feeling. By providing a narrator who mutters exclamations, Poe adds the feeling of a human voice to his written words.

Similarly, in “Berenice,” Egaeus addresses the reader: “[…] it is mere
idleness to say that I had not lived before – that the soul has no previous existence. You deny it? – let us not argue the matter. Convinced myself, I seek not to convince” (Poe 76). By engaging us directly, Poe pulls us in, involves us in the tale. Instead of reading words on a page written by a faceless author, we listen to a speaker telling us his story, a man whose face our imagination conjures, just as it does his voice. Jonathan Auerbach points out that the majority of Poe’s fiction is written in the first person and speculates that Poe “cannot even conceive of a story without first imagining someone, from within, to tell it” (20). However, I disagree with Auerbach’s phrasing. I don’t believe that Poe consistently uses the first-person narrative because he cannot “conceive” of a story without it, but rather I think Poe believes the first-person to be more useful in seducing the reader into the tale. It’s easier to remain outside the story when you’re reading about “him” or “her,” than about “I” and “me.”

Furthermore, Poe’s oft-noted propensity for using foreign and archaic references and phrases provides his narrators with a pretentious – and yet, somehow lifelike – feeling, that of the well-educated fellow who never hesitates to show you that he’s well educated. This grandiloquent speech pattern moves Poe’s words beyond text on the page. Instead, we are presented with a stereotype of the intellectual character, musing upon his life with us,
sharing it. But rather than feeling as if we are conversing with a caricature, Poe uses these references in such a way that it feels natural. In “Berenice,” he gives us a narrator who lives for his scholarly pursuits. Egaeus discusses the texts he involved himself with in the time before Berenice’s illness:

I well remember, among others, the treatise of the noble Italian, Cælius Secundus Curio, “De Amplitudine Beati Regni Dei [On the Magnitude of the Happy Kingdom];” St. Austin’s great work, the “City of God;” and Tertullian’s “De Carne Christi [On Christ’s Flesh],” in which the paradoxical sentence “Mortuus est Dei filius; credible est quia ineptum est: et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile est [The Son of God has died: this is believable because it is silly; buried, he has risen again: this is certain because it is impossible],” occupied my undivided time, for many weeks of laborious and fruitless investigation.xxii (78)

In “Ligeia,” our narrator makes references to mythology in the course of describing his beloved to us: “[...] here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fullness and the spirituality, of the Greek, the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian” (Poe 304). In either case, the erudition of the narrator fits the context in which Poe sets it, in the story of wealthy, educated men. And in
both stories, later events demolish this idea of the supposedly intelligent, cultured narrator, providing the foundation for some of the reader’s emotional response. Just as we judge people by appearance—serial killer Ted Bundy relied on his attractive appearance to lure his victims in—so too do we judge characters. When this deceptively pleasant facade shatters to reveal violence and madness, we can’t resist that figurative shiver of fear.

Poe’s use of fantastic situations, too, sets us up for the strong emotions he wishes to elicit. While “Berenice” provides us with the recollections of a man whose bizarre psychosis leads to his horrific assault upon his fiancée, in “Ligeia,” Poe relates the story of a man’s loss and his dead wife’s efforts to return to life. In the case of “Ligeia,” Poe provides clues that supernatural forces—what we ultimately believe is Ligeia—are at work in the world. Throughout the night of Rowena’s death, as the narrator sits by her side, Poe provides us with hints of otherworldly activity that are dismissed by our narrator as opium-induced daydreams.

It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle foot-fall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and, in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or
four large drops of a brilliant and ruby coloured fluid. [...] I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must, after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour. ("Ligeia" 312)

These hints of supernatural involvement that build to the final revelation of Ligeia's presence provide us with a sense of dread, an intense assault to the imagination, which has led many critics and Poe himself, in a letter to Philip Pendleton Cooke, to name "Ligeia" his "best tale" (A. Quinn 515). Poe's ability to give the narrative audience power over the authorial audience is a cornerstone of the fascination with his work.

As much as Poe's hints of the supernatural foster a sense of fear, his use of imagery and diction guarantees that fear. Poe not only describes events and settings, but also uses words that add an eeriness to the overall description. For example, in describing the bedchamber in which Rowena Trevanion is ensconced, Poe describes the "capacious" room with a single window, "an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon, passing through it, fell with a ghastly luster upon the objects within" ("Ligeia" 309). The room's ceiling, made of "gloomy looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and
elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device” ("Ligeia" 309). From this “melancholy vaulting” hangs “a huge censer of the same metal, Arabesque in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-coloured fires” ("Ligeia" 309). In each corner of the room, Poe provides “a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture” to add to the ghastly feeling of the room (“Ligeia” 309-310). In addition to the architecture of this bridal chamber and the morbid decorations, Poe describes the fabric – a “heavy and massy-looking tapestry” – that drapes the walls and floor, as well as upholstering the room’s furniture, providing an overwhelming sense of bizarre uniformity and unease.

This material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with Arabesque figures of about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the Arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in
aspect. To one entering the room they bore the appearance of ideal monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance suddenly departed; and step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Northman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies—giving a hideous and uneasy vitality to the whole. ("Ligeia" 310)

Poe’s diction includes words such as “ghastly,” “phantasmagoric,” “gloomy,” and “monstrosities” to add an element of the macabre to the description. The eerie feeling that this description conveys would not be present if Poe had just said “the room was huge, with a big dark window, a wooden ceiling from which hung a vessel for burning incense, some sarcophagi, and everywhere a lot of rich fabric with weird designs that seemed to move.” In addition, Kenneth Silverman points out Poe’s use of flat, declarative sentences in his writing as a contrast to the savagery depicted within the sentence, and thus increasing the horror element (14).

In addition to creating a mood for the reader, this description serves to
reinforce the narrator’s instability. His choice of décor for his “bridal chamber” (Poe, “Ligeia” 309) reminds us that this man still mourns his late wife obsessively, despite his remarriage. In his article, “Poe, ‘Ligeia,’ and the Problem of Dying Women,” J. Gerald Kennedy tells us that “By evoking terror, the morbid décor also partakes of a scheme of symbolic retribution, for the narrator has prepared this Gothic room expressly to torment himself and the woman who would presume to replace Ligeia” (123-124). So in addition to serving as a reminder of the lost Ligeia, the room’s grim interior further acts as a means of self-flagellation for the narrator and punishment for Rowena. This impression of the narrator as obsessive and unstable increases the readers’ feelings of tension and fear. How can we not feel building terror when we “see” an innocent woman married off to a man that we believe is mentally unbalanced? This terror builds until we find out that it is not necessarily the narrator we need fear, but rather his dead wife, who is determined – no matter who pays the price – to take back the life she once had.

In “Berenice,” too, Poe deliberately chooses words and phrases that set up a mood in the reader, a feeling that whatever happens in the story will not be something pleasant. When describing Egeaus’ reaction to Berenice’s sickly appearance, Poe asks, “Was it my own excited imagination—or the misty influence of the atmosphere—or the uncertain twilight of the chamber—
or the gray draperies which fell around her figure—that caused it to loom up in so unnatural a degree?” (“Berenice” 79). He then describes “his” reactions to her appearance: “An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me; a consuming curiosity pervaded my soul; and, sinking back upon the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, and with my eyes riveted upon her person” (“Berenice” 79). Poe moves from the narrator’s vague impressions and reactions on to the specific details of Berenice’s sickly and disturbing appearance: “The eyes were lifeless, and lusterless, and seemingly pupilless [sic], and I shrunk involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips” (“Berenice” 80).

Poe uses phrases like “icy chill” and “insufferable anxiety” to communicate a feeling of uncertainty and tension to the reader. And his descriptions of Berenice, her “lusterless” eyes and emaciated appearance, add to the disquiet.

As we continue reading this passage, Poe’s continuing description of Berenice again suggests the incipient madness of our narrator. Poe elaborates on the specifics of her teeth:

The shutting of a door disturbed me, and, looking up, I found my cousin had departed from the chamber. But from the disordered chamber of my brain, had not, alas! departed, and would not be driven away, the white and ghastly spectrum of the
teeth. Not a speck upon their surface—not a shade on their enamel—not a line in their configuration—not an indenture in their edges—but what that brief period of her smile had sufficed to brand in upon my memory. I saw them now even more unequivocally than I beheld them then. The teeth!—the teeth!—they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first terrible development. Then came the full fury of my monomania, and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of the external world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. [...] They—they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their characteristics. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. [...] I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason. ("Berenice" 80)

As the passage proceeds, the sentence structure also changes to suggest the development of our narrator's instability. Poe moves from using complete
sentences to stringing fragments together, then later to short, choppy sentences that convey a sense of urgency to the reader. The imagery of the teeth combined with the franticness of Poe’s writing lends itself to the suggestion of Egeaus’s madness. Louise Kaplan addresses Poe’s methods of description in her article, “The Perverse Strategy in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” arguing that Poe used figurative language and imagery to “engender abnormal states of mind” in hopes that readers would “suspend disbelief and accept as true something patently untrue” (52). Rather than spend his time attempting to portray things as realistically as possible, Poe’s priority was to influence his readers, to make them feel what best fit his intent.

In addition to examining the texts themselves, we must look at how those works were revised for additional evidence of Poe’s machinations. Over the course of his lifetime, Poe repeatedly revised his works in an attempt to better suit his intentions, be it to conjure a specific mood or to convey a potential meaning. In the case of “Berenice,” Poe admitted that the original draft was in poor taste, and subsequent revisions attempt to rectify the situation. However, it should be noted that yet again we see Poe’s belief that his work was a commodity to be brokered. In a letter to Southern Literary Messenger editor, T. W. White, after “Berenice’s” publication in that magazine in March 1835, Poe argues that “those [magazines] which have attained
celebrity were indebted for it to articles *similar in nature to Berenice* [emphasis Poe’s] […] To be appreciated you must be *read*, and these things are invariably sought after with avidity” (A. Quinn 210-211).xxiii Poe acknowledges White’s statements about the story, yet once again we see his treatment of his writing as a commodity. He does not play the artist with the divine creation, but rather the builder constructing something to be sold.

Yet in considering the opinions of others and his own intentions, Poe revised to better further his goals for the tale. The original draft of “Berenice” includes a scene in which Egaeus stands beside the bed on which rests Berenice’s body in its lidless coffin. In this scene, our narrator thinks for a moment that he sees her finger stir: “God of heaven!—is it possible? Is it my brain that reels—or was it indeed the finger of the enshrouded dead that stirred in the white cerement that bound it? Frozen with unutterable awe I slowly raised my eyes to the countenance of the corpse” (“Berenice” 81-82). Once again, we see the narrator’s compulsive response to Berenice’s teeth:

> There had been a band around the jaws, but, I know not how, it was broken asunder. The livid lips were wreathed into a species of smile, and, through the enveloping gloom, once again there glared upon me in too palpable reality, the white and glistening, and ghastly teeth of Berenice. I sprang convulsively from the
bed, and, uttering no word, rushed forth a maniac from that
apartment of triple horror, and mystery, and death. ("Berenice"
81-82)

Apparently feeling that the horror conveyed by the paragraphs that make up
this scene was excessive and unnecessary, Poe excised them in later drafts.
They remain in the version included in Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque,
but in the story’s third publication – this time in the Broadway Journal – Poe
had removed that segment of the story (Mabbott, vol. 2 208). While we cannot
know for sure what it was about this scene that made Poe decide it in particular
should be cut, we can speculate. Perhaps he felt that the description of the
corpse is unnecessary, given the horror of the final scene in which Egaeus’s
actions are revealed. Possibly Poe felt that the suggestion that Berenice might
not be dead, hinted at in the question of the finger twitch, was too horrible to
let stand. Whatever his reasons, it seems that Poe decided that there was such
a thing as evoking too much horror in his readers.

"Ligeia," too, underwent revision during Poe’s life, but in its case Poe
added, rather than subtracted. First published in the American Museum in
1838, "Ligeia" was revised five more times by Poe. The first, second, fourth,
and fifth revisions correct punctuation errors and contain minor word
alterations, but the third revision, published in the New World in 1845, contains
the most striking change: the addition of Poe’s poem, “The Conqueror Worm” and the minor adjustments he used to make it fit his purposes (Mabbott, v. 2 309). With or without the revision, we see a woman’s struggle against death. This struggle is emphasized by Poe’s repeated use of a quote he attributes to Joseph Glanvill: “Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will” (Poe, “Ligeia” 308). In the drafts prior to the 1845 revision, this quote appears in an extended version twice, once as an epigraph and again shortly before Ligeia becomes ill. Poe repeats the quote yet again in the post-1845 revisions of the story, further reinforcing the idea of the struggle between human will and death (Porte 70). After “Ligeia’s” first publication, Poe sent a copy of it to his friend Cooke for an opinion, and while Poe’s letter has not survived, Cooke’s response does: “I of course ‘took’ your ‘idea’ throughout...your intent is to tell a tale of the ‘mighty will’ contending with and finally vanquishing Death” (Mabbott, v.2 307). But while Cooke understood Poe’s intended meaning, he also indicated some dissatisfaction with the story’s resolution: Rowena’s transformation into Ligeia. Poe’s response indicates that because he had already written “Morella,” a story in which there is a complete transformation of a daughter into her mother, he wanted instead for the reader to sense that Ligeia’s return ultimately fails (Mabbott, v.2 307). In an attempt to suggest this failure, Poe
added his poem – first published two years prior – which paints life as a play whose hero is the “Conqueror Worm” (Mabbott, v. 2 307). The final two stanzas of the poem provide the vivid imagery Poe frequently used to convey his ideas:

But see, amid the mimic rout

A crawling shape intrude!

A blood-red thing that writhes from out

The scenic solitude!

It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs

The mimes become its food,

And the angels sob at vermin fangs

In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!

And, over each dying form,

The curtain, a funeral pall,

Comes down with the rush of a storm,

And the seraphs, all haggard and wan,

Uprising, unveiling, affirm

That the play is the tragedy, “Man,”
And its hero the Conqueror Worm. (Poe, “Ligeia” 308)

In addition to providing more of the mood-enhancing imagery we expect from Poe, the poem emphasizes the inevitable human surrender to death. Whether or not we agree that the poem influences our reading of “Ligeia’s” ending, Poe clearly felt that he had accomplished his goal. In a letter to Cooke written in August 1846, Poe wrote that he had “improved the story” (Mabbott, v. 2 307).

Whatever scholars may argue about the reasons for Poe’s choice of topic in the horror tales, clearly Poe deliberately used vivid imagery, fantastic storylines, and the first-person narrative to manipulate his readers’ emotions. Not only were the original drafts written with this idea in mind, but revisions were also performed under the same premise.

V. Satire as Social Commentary

Edgar Allan Poe’s enduring popularity with the masses undoubtedly rests with his gothic tales and poems; most Americans, if asked to name a Poe work, will probably offer “The Raven,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” or even “The Tell-Tale Heart.” But in addition to causing thrills and chills in his readers, Poe engaged in literary criticism that often infuriated his literary peers and wrote stories that used satirical humor to
comment on society’s foibles.

Critics frequently condemn Poe’s humor, claiming that it lacks true social commentary, attacks its own audience, or is too specialized. In 1957, Edward H. Davidson wrote that “[..] anyone looking for profound or caustic social commentary in Poe’s tales is bound to be disappointed” (211). He suggested that Poe’s upbringing might be partly to blame for this, that Poe felt society denigrated artists, and so, “the artist’s only avenue was to reduce to the ridiculous what relegated him to a condition of inconsequence” (211). While this practice of lampooning those who angered him may not be the most gentlemanly or well bred of behaviors, I find it a very human reaction. Indeed, for a man whose target audience consists of the popular audience, the choice seems inspired. Humans frequently enjoy seeing their opponents in embarrassing situations. Indeed, political cartoonists have lampooned those they oppose for decades. Why then should a writer who wants to appeal to a broader audience not do the same?

Forty years later, John Bryant criticizes Poe’s humor for being mean-spirited, aggressive, and aimed at his own readers. “He strains to attack the very audience he might otherwise hope to convert. In consequence, the mean-spiritedness of his satiric intent seems rhetorically self-destructive and politically trivial” (19). He goes on to say that while Poe may be “[..]
America’s chief Romantic ironist, that achievement is made at the expense of readers. Poe may aim at transcendent detachment, but invariably his self-abnegation builds off of audience annihilation” (20). While I see Bryant’s point, he assumes one interpretive community for Poe’s audience, rather than a literary audience and a separate popular audience. When the target of Poe’s satire is the literary audience, I fail to see how he alienates the popular audience. Most of Poe’s satires aim at more pretentious groups – usually the more educated or wealthy individuals – rather than the popular American audience, the masses.

Bryant also complains that Poe refuses to give his readers pertinent information in his stories, so that they are unable to anticipate events: “Such rhetorical gambits are little more than Gothic posturing and claptrap plotting that prevent real psychological penetrations. [...] Poe [...] reveled in it, making the contrivances (and his readers’ falling for them) the mark of his intellectual superiority” (34). However, this ability to prevent the reader from predicting the tale’s outcome is a refreshing change for modern society, in which we can frequently predict the ending of a movie when only halfway through. By maintaining that aura of mystery, whether via the filmmaker’s use of light and dark or the writer’s deliberate doling out of detail on a need to know basis, the artist keeps his audience involved and engaged.
In the introduction to a volume of Poe’s tales, T. O. Mabbott suggests that “Poe’s humorous work has relatively little appeal today” and only the specialized reader still finds Poe’s satires of interest (Introduction xiii). While I must agree with Mabbott that the some of Poe’s humor in these stories will not translate for modern readers in the same way that it would for nineteenth-century audiences, I hardly think that negates their comedic value to modern audiences. Even a modern expert in nineteenth-century literature will likely miss some of the nuances that would be perceived by one of Poe’s contemporaries. We are separated from his original audiences by time and worldview, and that cannot be changed. However, Poe’s ability to provide us with stereotypes that persist today – and that still make us laugh– is what makes his stories so enduring.

In the tale “The Spectacles,” Poe uses a ludicrous situation to point out the absurdity of society’s fascination with money and appearance – a fascination that has not changed in one hundred and fifty years. He presents us with a narrator who admits to changing his surname in order to inherit money and to a severe nearsightedness that he refuses to correct because he doesn’t find glasses at all attractive. This preoccupation with money and refusal to make allowances for his vision at the expense of his appearance lead him to devotedly pursue and marry a wealthy, “young” widow who turns out to be his
eighty-two-year-old great-great-grandmother. In his first sighting of her, our narrator, Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Simpson, describes Mme. Eugenie Lalonde:

[...] here was grace personified, incarnate, the beau ideal of my wildest and most enthusiastic visions. The figure, nearly all of which the construction of the box permitted to be seen, was somewhat above the medium height, and nearly approached, without positively reaching, the majestic. Its perfect fullness and tournure were delicious. The head, of which only the back was visible, rivaled in outline that of the Greek Psyche, and was rather displayed than concealed by an elegant cap of gaze aerienne, which put me in mind of the ventum textilem [woven wind] of Apuleius. [...] The admirable roundness of the wrist was well set off by a bracelet which encircled it, and which also was ornamented and clasped by a magnificent aigrette [egret feather] of jewels – telling, in words that could not be mistaken, at once of the wealth and fastidious taste of the wearer. (Poe 594-5)

Poe, in describing Mme. Lalonde, actually tells us nothing except that his narrator is a bit silly, as well as greedy and superficial. Scott Peeples suggests that Simpson’s choice of a relative may indicate that he seeks his double,
someone just like himself. As evidence of the pair’s similarity, Peeples points out that Mme. Lalonde perpetuates the misunderstanding by going to great lengths to disguise her age through the use of makeup, wigs, and such. Indeed, when asked for a token, she gives Simpson a miniature of herself painted when she was twenty-seven (93). Through both characters, Poe clearly lampoons so-called polite society’s fascination with bank accounts and personal looks.

The satire, “The Signora Psyche Zenobia [How to Write a Blackwood Article],” combines two short stories. Buried within “The Signora Psyche Zenobia [How to Write a Blackwood Article]” is a second tale, “The Scythe of Time [A Predicament]” which our narrator, the aspiring writer Signora Psyche Zenobia – previously known as Suky Snobbs – ostensibly wrote using the tenets provided by her mentors, Mr. Blackwood and Dr. Moneypenny of the “Philadelphia, Regular, Exchange, Tea, Total, Young, Belles, Lettres, Universal, Experimental, Bibliographical, Association, To, Civilize, Humanity [also known as] P.R.E.T.T.Y.B.L.U.E.B.A.T.C.H.” (317). Poe blatantly uses Dr. Moneypenny’s association to spoof such literary organizations as the Royal Society of the Arts, the R.S.A.

Together, these two stories spoof the literary world of Poe’s day with emphasis on Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, and Poe’s own style of writing in particular. The Signora explains how the political articles are
created for publication in *Blackwood's*, as Dr. Moneypenny detailed it to her:

Mr. Blackwood has a pair of tailor's shears, and three apprentices who stand by him for orders. One hands him the *Times*, another the *Examiner*, and the third a *Gulley's New Compendium of Slang-Whang*. Mr. B. merely cuts out and intersperses. It is soon done—nothing but *Examiner*, *Slang-Whang*, and *Times*—then *Times*, *Slang-Whang*, and *Examiner*—then *Times*, *Examiner*, and *Slang-Whang*. (318)

Essentially, Poe suggests that *Blackwood's* non-fiction compositions are nothing more than words and phrases randomly thrown together from more respectable newspapers and what one presumes is supposed to be a slang dictionary.

When the Signora visits Mr. Blackwood to learn how to write for a publication of *Blackwood's* caliber, he details what must be done to write a sensation tale of the kind frequently printed in his magazine:

"The first thing requisite is to get yourself into such a scrape as no one ever got into before. The oven, for instance,—that was a good hit. But if you have no oven, or big bell, at hand, and if you cannot conveniently tumble out of a balloon, [...] you will have to be contented with simply imagining some similar
misadventure. I should prefer, however that you have the actual fact to bear you out. Nothing so well assists the fancy, as an experimental knowledge of the matter in hand. [...] However, my instructions will apply equally well to any variety of misadventure, and in your way home you may easily get knocked in the head, or run over by an omnibus, or bitten by a mad dog, or drowned in a gutter. (319-320)

Through Blackwood, Poe spoofs the idea that to be able to relate feelings and sensations truly one must experience them. Poe refrained from having his ears cut off, and being hanged and entombed before writing his tale, “Loss of Breath,” in which all of these things happen to the narrator, and yet the tale fascinates and thrills readers.

Blackwood continues on to the issue of tone:

“Having determined upon your subject, you must next consider the tone, or manner, of your narration. There is the tone didactic, the tone enthusiastic, the tone sentimental, and the tone natural—all commonplace enough. But then there is the tone laconic, or curt, which has lately come into use. It consists in short sentences. Somehow thus. Can’t be too brief. Can’t be too snappish. Always a full stop. And never a paragraph. [...]
"The tone mystic is also a good one—but requires some skill in the handling. The beauty of this lies in a knowledge of innuendo. Hint all, and assert nothing. If you desire to say 'bread and butter,' do not by any means say it outright. You may say any thing and every thing approaching to 'bread and butter.' You may hint at 'buckwheat cake,' or you may even go as far as to insinuate 'oat-meal porridge,' but if 'bread and butter' is your real meaning, be cautious, my dear Miss Psyche, not on any account to say 'bread and butter.'" (320)

Here, Poe makes fun of not only other writers who employ tone as a tool, but also himself, since he employed the "tone mystic" himself in the description of Mme. Lalonde in "The Spectacles."

Blackwood moves from event and tone on to filler:

"The most important portion,—in fact the soul of the whole business, is yet to be attended to—I allude to the filling up. It is not to be supposed that a lady or gentleman either has been leading the life of a bookworm. And yet above all things is it necessary that your article have an air of erudition, or at least afford evidence of extensive general reading. [...]" (pulling down some three or four ordinary-looking volumes, and opening
them at random.) “By casting your eye down almost any page of any book in the world, you will be able to perceive at once a host of little scraps of either learning or bel-esprit-ism, which are the very thing for the spicing of a Blackwood article. You might as well note down a few while I read them to you. I shall make two divisions: first, Piquant Facts for the Manufacture of Similes; and second, Piquant Expressions to be introduced as occasions may require. Write now!—” and I wrote as he dictated. (321)

Poe offers random tidbits of classical lore for these similes, then proceeds on to foreign expressions which can be used for further “filler”:

“PIQUANT EXPRESSIONS. ‘The venerable Chinese novel Ju-Kiao-Li.’ Good! By introducing these few words with dexterity you will evince your intimate acquaintance with the language and literature of the Chinese. With the aid of this you may possibly get along without either Arabic, or Sanscrit [sic], or Chickasaw. There is no passing muster, however, without French, Spanish, Italian, German, Latin, and Greek. I must look you out a little specimen of each. Any scrap will answer, because you must depend upon your own ingenuity to make it fit into your article. Now write! (321-322)
This passage on filler especially lampoons Poe himself; his stories are scattered frequently with terms from languages like Latin and French, and references to Greco-Roman mythology. A glance back at the previously mentioned passage from “The Spectacles” provides an example of this particular practice. Taken in total, Mr. Blackwood’s instructions clearly refer to Poe’s own habits of detailing sensations felt by characters found in bizarre situations and frequently using foreign terms and classical references.

In his book *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited*, scholar Scott Peeples comments on Poe’s satire of himself, noting that “The ridiculous central action of Psyche Zenobia’s *Blackwood* article […] reminds modern readers not of *Blackwood* articles, most of which were never republished, but of other Poe stories” (44). In doing so, Poe “includes himself in this satire that decries the debasement of literature in the magazine age, the pandering of authors and editors to the public’s appetite for sensation at the expense of good writing” (Peeples 44). As with “The Spectacles,” Poe satirizes society, but in this case he is criticizing a literary world that he may have felt limited American writers by encouraging the imitation of English authors and subjectively favoring mediocre writers because of who they knew rather than because they had talent (Moss, *Poe’s Literary Battles* ix).

This penchant for lampooning the literary world of his time, as he did in
stories like “The Signora Psyche Zenobia [How to Write a *Blackwood* Article],” “X-ing a Paragraph,” and “The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, esq., Late Editor of the *Goosethrumfoodle*,” and his occasional failure to curb his sometimes too-acidic tongue in his criticisms spawned some hard feelings in the literary world. One of Poe’s peers, James Russell Lowell, wrote of Poe’s harsh criticisms:

[...] Mr. Poe is at once the most discriminating, philosophical, and fearless critic upon imaginative works who has written in America. It may be that we should qualify our remark a little, and say that he *might be*, rather than that he always *is*, for he seems sometimes to mistake his phial of prussic-acid for his inkstand. (“Edgar Allan Poe” 6)

He goes on to say that while he does not always agree with Poe’s opinions, he is confident that the author writes “what he thinks, and knows well what he is talking about” (“Edgar Allan Poe” 6). Lowell notes that while he “suspect[s] [Poe] for a man who has one or two pet prejudices on which he prides himself,” he also believes that when these “do not interfere, [he] would put almost entire confidence in [Poe’s] judgments” (“Edgar Allan Poe” 7). At the time that Lowell – at Poe’s request – wrote this biography of Poe (1845), Lowell and he had exchanged several friendly correspondences beginning in
1842. While Lowell’s article indicates that they had not met personally, an examination of their letters indicates that the two shared an amicable working relationship. Unfortunately, their friendship dissolved after “Poe made an unfortunate statement in the Broadway Journal concerning an alleged plagiarism of Lowell from Wordsworth, in which he was wrong” (A. Quinn 462). Lowell’s lines on Poe in his A Fable for Critics, a text in verse which comments on various authors of Lowell’s time, clearly illustrates the death of their friendship and provides one of the most frequently used verses about Poe:

There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of iambics and pentameters,
In a way to make people of common sense damn metres [sic],
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind, [...].

(78)

James Russell Lowell provides an example of Poe’s ability to alienate his literary peers through his outspoken criticisms.

These two particular traits, outspokenness and a love of spoofing others, led to several literary battles between Poe and other critics. One of these well known literary feuds began in 1838, at which time Poe established an ongoing
rivalry between himself and Lewis Gaylord Clark, owner of the *Knickerbocker* and defender of the New York literary clique (Moss, “Poe and His Nemesis” 102-3). Sidney Moss suggests four primary reasons for Clark’s continued hostility toward Poe: Poe targeted the literary clique that Clark represented, the New York authors; Clark favored only New York authors, ignoring those from other parts of the country; Clark’s twin brother, Willis Gaylord, frequently targeted Poe; and Clark was involved with Locke’s moon hoax to which Poe frequently directed denigrating comments because of it’s similarity to his own “Hans Phaal” (102-104).xxv Whatever the reasons, Clark’s attacks against Poe continued past the author’s death, and his final blow came in 1860, when the publisher reviewed Sarah Helen Whitman’s defense of Poe, entitled *Edgar Poe and His Critics* (Moss, “Poe and His Nemesis” 120). Of the literary world of Poe’s day, Moss writes: “the age as a whole was incredibly mediocre. […] To borrow a phrase of George E. Woodberry, no quotation can do sufficient justice to the writers of this period—they must be read to be properly damned” (“Poe and His Nemesis” 120). Moss explains that “Poe began his career as a critic of high principles, and fearlessly asserted those principles, whatever the occasion, the author, the publisher, or the coterie involved” (“Poe and His Nemesis” 120). While Poe refused to pander to the literary world that he considered mediocre or subjective, Clark chose to punish him for that
steadfastness.

Poe's other famous feud became known as the War of the Literati and led to a slander suit filed by Poe against Hiram Fuller of the New York Evening Mirror and the New York Mirror in 1846 (Dedmond 137). Problems arose when Hiram Fuller took exception to the second installment of Poe's The Literati of New York series, which began in 1846, and criticized it harshly, including an unflattering description of Poe's appearance. Thus began a verbal war that involved not only Fuller and Poe, but also Poe's one-time friend Thomas Dunn English. English penned the article on which Poe's slander suit was based and published it in the New York Evening Mirror. Poe filed suit against Fuller and his partner Augustus W. Clason in July 1846, and English, fearing that he would be "criminally involved," fled New York for Washington D.C. (Dedmond 142). Sidney Moss notes "Despite the number of Poe's enemies, the degree of their animosity, and the frequency of their attacks, the defense could not produce a single witness to testify under oath either against Poe's conduct or his character (English was still in hiding)" (Poe's Literary Battles 238). In contrast, three witnesses emerged to support him: "the merchant [Edward J.] Thomas, who cleared Poe of the charge of forgery, and Judge Noah and Freeman Hunt, who never 'heard anything against him except that he is occasionally addicted to intoxication" (Poe's
In February of 1847, the court vindicated Poe and awarded him a monetary settlement of $225.06 in damages (Moss, *Poe’s Literary Battles* 238).

While Poe never hesitated to pen his thoughts on others’ writings – sometimes overly harshly – and his own philosophy, he also never hesitated to stand his ground on those views. He used as weapons in his battles with the nineteenth-century literary world not only his critical writings, but also his short stories. While the satires are not as commonly known as the darker tales, their humor still invokes laughter in modern readers through Poe’s use of stereotypes that still exist today.

VI. Conclusion

Through a close reading of the horror tale, “Berenice,” the terror tale, “Ligeia,” and the satires, “The Spectacles” and “The Signora Psyche Zenobia [How to Write a Blackwood Article],” we ultimately see revealed the way in which Poe’s use of the first-person narrator, intense imagery, fantastic situations, and sometimes satire plays on the emotions of his readers. He empowers the reader’s narrative persona and sublimes that reader’s authorial persona. This ability, combined with subject matter that appeals to multiple
interpretive communities, makes him a powerful writer.

An examination of Poe reveals not a madman obsessed with death, but rather a canny writer who directs his reader in such a way that his goals for those readers are achieved. Indeed, an examination of his works indicates that throughout his life one philosophical ideal held true: his goal as a writer was to impact his reader, and without that impact no literary or commercial success could ever be achieved. We see this philosophy repeated time and time again, from his 1835 letter to White about “Berenice” to the 1846 essay “Philosophy of Composition.” Poe espouses this ideal once again in a review of Nathaniel Hawthorne published in the May 1842 edition of Graham’s, in which he writes: “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.” (572).

Poe believed that an author should have a specific design in mind for a story and should choose his or her words accordingly. Unlike the popular nineteenth-century belief that artistic creation could only be achieved through divine inspiration, Poe argued that the writer or artist combines elements to create art based on his or her own particular genius.

Furthermore, an examination of Poe’s audience reveals that while Poe never achieved the financial success that he sought, he succeeded in carving a niche for himself in the hearts of readers over the last one hundred fifty plus
years. While some like Winters may argue the fleetingness of Poe’s popularity, the length and extensiveness of Poe’s celebrity contradicts them. And Poe’s appeal to popular audiences as well as the literary elite further suggests that he successfully crosses the boundaries between interpretive communities. This ability to bridge both time and communities argues for the talent and power of Poe’s work.

In an effort to get some idea of the breadth of Poe’s current popularity, I went to the Internet and browsed around. While my results are hardly scientific, they do provide a gauge of Poe’s relationship to modern culture. The very feature of the Internet that makes me dub this search “unscientific,” its constantly changing content, is also what makes it a good measure. That dynamic nature means that as the world changes, so too does the Internet. Using Yahoo’s search engine, I typed in “Edgar Allan Poe” and was informed that there were 203,000 matches. When I entered “Edgar Allan Poe” and “poetry,” I received 34,900 matching sites, and when I substituted “tales” for “poetry,” I came up with over 27,000 websites. Then I found 52,600 matches after I replaced “tales” with “stories.” One of the matches for Poe’s name was a hit on eBay, an online auction site and marketplace, and when I looked to see what Poe could possibly have to do with eBay, I discovered that on that particular day there were 176 items for auction that had to do with Poe. Most
of them were assorted editions of his poetry and stories, or copies of movies based on his works. And a quick check on the Internet Movie Database for “Edgar Allan Poe” provided a list of 115 movies based on Poe’s short stories and poetry, from as long ago as 1908 and as recently as 2003. What this superficial exploration of Poe and the Internet showed me was that his presence is still very much felt in the world today. Even if only fifty percent of the websites that Yahoo said matched my search are actually related to Poe, that means that over 100,000 sites are devoted to this much-maligned author.

Once I had a general grasp of Poe’s relationship to today’s culture, I began to look for specific uses of and references to Poe, beginning with his life. I found two episodes of The Simpsons featuring references to Poe’s life, one in which Homer Simpson destroys the house in which Poe was born and one where a detergent on an infomercial is used to clean Poe’s tombstone (Nilsson). Then I found two one-man plays about Poe’s life: Edgar Allan Poe: Once Upon a Midnight (Clemens and Astin) and A Touch Of The Poe (Martin). And probably the oddest use of Poe’s life is in the proposed movie, “The Nightmare of Edgar Allan Poe.” This movie is currently stuck in limbo and may never be made, but what makes it of interest is the plan to cast Michael Jackson as Poe (Osborne). Not only is this pairing of Poe with Jackson strange because the caucasian Poe would be played by an African-American, but also
because Jackson himself is noted for his decidedly unusual personal life.

Numerous references to Poe’s poetry and stories can also be found in modern pop culture. In the 1967 movie, *El Dorado*, James Caan recites Poe’s poem “El Dorado” to the “clearly unappreciative” John Wayne (Nilsson). And once again, *The Simpsons* use Poe as fodder for the show. In two separate episodes, Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” is the basis for the show’s storyline. One, entitled “The Tell-Tale Head,” loosely follows Poe’s story, and the other involves a diorama of “The Tell-Tale Heart” made by one of Lisa Simpson’s peers (Nilsson). Famed horror director Roger Corman also utilized Poe – his first foray into directing was the movie version of “The Fall of the House of Usher” (M. Moss).

In addition to movies and television, Poe’s work has been used frequently in the music industry. Musician Lou Reed, like the previously mentioned Alan Parsons Project, has used Poe’s work as the basis for an album, entitled *The Raven*. In Reed’s case, however, not only did he put Poe’s poems and tales to music, but he also got other acclaimed singers to perform on his album, including David Bowie in the role of Hop-Frog, the murderous jester from Poe’s story “Hop-Frog” (Fricke). Like Reed, singer Joan Baez put Poe’s poem “Annabel Lee” to music, and heavy metal band Iron Maiden has a song called “Murders in the Rue Morgue” (Nilsson). I even found the website
of a Canadian band called Quoth the Raven (mASON).

As Reed’s album title and the band Quoth the Raven indicates, “The Raven” is probably the most frequently referenced of Poe’s poems. A Yahoo search for the phrase “quoth the Raven” turned up almost 10,000 matches, among them an episode of the 1970’s TV show Night Gallery, entitled “Quoth the Raven” (Shandor). The poem turns up again in the movie The Crow, when actor Brandon Lee walks into a pawnshop and recites the poem to the shop’s owner (Nilsson). And yet again The Simpsons raid Poe in the Halloween episode entitled “Treehouse of Horror: the Raven.” This time James Earl Jones reads the poem, while Homer Simpson plays the poem’s narrator and Bart Simpson acts the part of the raven (Chen). One of the most amusing homages to Poe’s poem is that of the television cooking show Good Eats. In the episode “Fry Hard II: The Chicken Transcript,” host Alton Brown acts out the roll of the narrator of the poem, while a voice over provides the show’s version of the poem’s text and a papier-mâché chicken plays the poem’s corvid star.

[…] Leapt a back I then with a stutter, as the phantom bird did with a flutter

Mount the folk-art bust of Julia Child there upon my kitchen floor.
Perched and sat and nothing more.

Then the palled poultry most perplexing did set my meager mind to guessing…

AB: From whence did you come to perch upon the bust of Julia on my kitchen floor?

Quoth the chicken,

C: Fry some more. (Menninger)

Clearly, this excerpt demonstrates the writer’s desire to mimic Poe’s “The Raven” in an amusing manner that fits with the show’s culinary theme.

In addition to references to Poe’s work and life, we can see Poe’s impact on the Western world through the many different miscellaneous uses of his name, titles of his works, and representations of him. On the cover of the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* is a photomontage of a crowd standing around a grave, and among the famous individuals gathered is Edgar Allan Poe (“Time”). And while it was previously mentioned that Baltimore’s professional football team, the Baltimore Ravens, takes its name from Poe’s poem, I should also mention that the team’s mascots are three ravens named Edgar, Allan, and Poe *(Baltimore Ravens)*. Another unusual use of Poe can be found on Raven beer, a German beer brewed by a Baltimore brewing company. According to their website,
The Raven was brewed in honour of the great American writer, Edgar Allan Poe, who, through his pen, eloquently expressed himself like no other. Through his exquisite poems, short stories and criticisms, Poe captured the imagination of the world. The Raven is brewed in Baltimore, the home of Poe, in honour of this classic poem. A master of the macabre, Poe is captured in The Raven. (B. W. Beer Works)

And like this Baltimore-based brewery, the Baltimore Naval Yards created their own tribute to Poe in 1998 when the U.S.S. Raven was commissioned (Phillips). Quite obviously all of these reflect Poe’s influence.

In addition to the general pervasiveness of Poe in American culture, we see a heightened enthusiasm for the man and his works in the Gothic subculture. The Goth culture defies clear description because it means different things to different people, but among its most frequently noted characteristics are black clothing contrasted with very pale makeup, and numerous body piercings. Goth art and literature tends to be angst-ridden and depressing, and often exhibits an interest in medieval, Victorian, and Edwardian history (Robinson). One Gothic site lists among the favored literature of Goths, “Everything by Edgar Allen Poe” (Porter). And aspiring, self-proclaimed Gothic writer, Raven on his personal web page lists Poe as one
of his favorite authors. Goths, like millions of others, are fascinated by Poe’s genius.

Too often critics – both scholars and laypeople – read Poe’s work with the idea that he was simply a “horror writer” not worthy of their time or a mad genius tormented by demons that inspired him to write tales of torment and death. However, these individuals allow themselves to be blinded by Poe’s subject matter and unusual biography and fail to consider the skill of the writer behind the macabre tales. They see only the stories and their own interpretations of them. But to really understand and appreciate Poe, we as critics must look at the intent behind the words. Only in that way can we truly judge the writer and the works.

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1 Poe clearly dreamed big, but those visions ignore the reality of the world. While Poe’s works appeal to those who share the Western European worldview, they may or may not strike a chord with readers of non-Western cultures.

2 “[Poe] combines in a very remarkable manner two faculties which are seldom found united: a power of influencing the mind of the reader by the impalpable shadows of mystery, and a minuteness of detail which does not leave a pin or a button unnoticed. Both are, in truth, the natural results of the predominating quality of his mind, to which we have before alluded, analysis. It is this which distinguishes the artist. His at once reaches forward to the effect to be produced. Having resolved to bring about certain emotions in the reader, he makes all subordinate parts tend strictly to the common center” (Lowell 13).

3 “Edgar Allan Poe is dead. […] This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it [emphasis by Griswold]. The poet was well known personally or by reputation […], but he had few or no friends [emphasis by Griswold]; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art lost one of its most brilliant, but erratic, stars” (Griswold 28).

4 “He was at times a dreamer – dwelling in ideal realms – in heaven or hell, peopled with creations and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayers (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned), but for their happiness who at that moment were objects of his idolatry; or with his glance introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms wildly beating the wind and rain, he would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be
evoked by him from that Aidenn close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjected him [..."] (Griswold 33).

"Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantage of this poor boy – his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere – had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudice against him. Irascible, envious – bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellant cynicism while his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed – not shine, not serve- succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit" (Griswold 33-34).

"Arthur Hobson Quinn spends some time on the subject of Griswold’s slanderous campaign against Poe, and paints a not very flattering picture of Dr. Griswold as a man looking to inflate his own reputation by tearing down another. Among the evidence Quinn gives is a side-by-side comparison of a letter from Poe to Griswold (446-448), showing the version published by Griswold and the original of the letter. He even includes a copy of the original from the Boston Public Library’s collection. The two are substantially different and, in Griswold’s version, “Poe” flatters the man endlessly.

"Our own impression of the nature of Edgar A. Poe [from time spent together working on the Mirror], differs in some important degree, however, from that which has been generally conveyed in the notices of his death. Let us, before telling what we personally know of him, copy a graphic and highly finished portraiture, from the pen of Dr. Rufus W. Griswold [..."] (Willis 36).

"[...] we were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and occasionally a scene of violence and difficulty. Time went on, however, and he was invariably punctual and industrious. With his pale, beautiful and intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him always with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a passage colored too highly with his resentments against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented – far more yielding than most men, we thought, on points so excusably sensitive. [...] [T]hrough all this considerable period, we had seen but one presentment of the man – a quiet, patient, industrious, and most gentlemanly person, commanding the utmost respect and good feeling by his unvarying deportment and ability" (Willis 36-37).

"[...] We heard, from one who knew him well, (what should be stated in all mention of his lamentable irregularities), that, with a single glass of wine [emphasis by Willis], his whole nature was reversed, the demon became uppermost, and, though none of the usual signs of intoxication were visible, his will was palpably insane [emphasis by Willis]. [...] In this reversed character, we repeat, it was never our chance to see him. We know it from hearsay, and we mention it in connection with this sad infirmity of physical constitution, which puts it upon very nearly the ground of a temporary and almost irresponsible insanity.

The arrogance, vanity and depravity of heart, of which Mr. Poe was generally accused, seem, to us, referable altogether to this reversed phase of his character. Under that degree of intoxication which only acted upon him by demonizing his sense of truth and right, he doubtless said and did much that was wholly irreconcilable with his better nature; but, when himself, and as we knew him only, his modesty and unaffected humility, as to his own deservings, were a constant charm to his character" (Willis 36-37).

"Brief and chance-taken, as these letters are, we think they sufficiently prove the existence of the very qualities denied to Mr. Poe – humility, willingness to persevere, belief in another’s kindness, and capability of cordial and grateful friendship! Such he assuredly was when sane [emphasis by Willis]. Such only he has invariably seemed to us, in all we have happened personally to know of him, through
a friendship of five or six years. And so much easier is it to believe what we have seen and known, than what we hear of only [emphasis by Willis], that we remember him but with admiration and respect—these descriptions of him, when morally insane, seeming to us like portraits, painted in sickness, of a man we have only known in health" (Willis 39).

xi The bulk of the bibliographic information on Edgar Allan Poe's life came from Arthur Hobson Quinn’s biography of Poe. Unless otherwise specified, Quinn is my source.

xii Quinn argues convincingly that this letter was actually written in 1831.

xiii “You may probably urge that you have given me a liberal education. I will leave the decision of that question to those who know how far liberal educations can be obtained in 8 months at the University of Va [sic]. Here you will say that it was my own fault that I did not return—You would not let me return because bills were presented you for payment which I never wished nor desired you to pay. Had you let me return, my reformation had been sure—as my conduct the last 3 months gave every reason to believe—and you would never have heard more of my extravagances. But I am not about to proclaim myself guilty of all that has been alleged [sic] against me, and which I have hitherto endured, simply because I was too proud to reply” (A. Quinn 110).

xiv “I will boldly say that it was wholly and entirely your own mistaken parsimony that caused all the difficulties in which I was involved while at Charlottesville. The expenses of the institution at the lowest estimate were $350 per annum. You sent me there with $110. Of this $50 were to be paid immediately for board—$60 for attendance upon 2 professors—and you even then did not miss the opportunity of abusing me because I did not attend 3. Then $15 more were to be paid for room-rent—remember that all this was to be paid in advance, with $110.—$12 more for a bed—and $12 more for room furniture. I had, of course, the mortification of running in debt for public property—against the known rules of the institution, and was immediately regarded in the light of a beggar. You will remember that in a week after my arrival, I wrote to you for some more money, and for books—You replied in terms of the utmost abuse—if I had been the vilest wretch on earth you could not have been more abusive than you were because I could not contrive to pay $150 with $110. I had enclosed to you my letter (according to your express commands) an account of the expenses incurred amounting to $149—the balance to be paid was $39—you enclosed me $40 leaving me one dollar in pocket. In a short time afterwards I received a packed of books consisting of Gil Blas, and the Cambridge Mathematics in 2 vols: books for which I had no earthly use since I had no means of attending the mathematical lectures” (A. Quinn 110).

xv “[...] Six years ago, a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel [sic] in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever & underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again—I went through precisely the same scene. Again in about a year afterward. Then again—again & even once again at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death—and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly & clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive—nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank, God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink rather than the drink to the insanity. I had indeed, nearly abandoned all hope of a permanent cure when I found one in the death of my wife. This I can & do endure as becomes a man—it was the horrible never-ending oscillation between hope & despair which I could not longer have endured without total loss of reason. In the death of what was my life, then, I receive a new but—oh God! how melancholy an existence” (A. Quinn 347-8).

xvi “The new journal will endeavor to be at the same time more varied and more unique;—more vigorous, more pungent, more original, more individual, and more independent. It will discuss not only the Belles-Lettres, but, very thoroughly, the Fine Arts, with the Drama; and, more in brief, will give, each month, a Retrospect of our Political History. It will enlist the loftiest talent, but employ it not always in the loftiest—at least not always in the most pompous or Puritanical way. It will aim at
affording a fair and not dishonorable field for the true intellect of the land, without reference to the mere prestige of celebrated names. It will support the general interests of the Republic of Letters, and insist upon regarding the world at large as the sole proper audience for the author. It will resist the dictation of Foreign Reviews. It will eschew the stilted dulness (sic) of our own Quarterlies, and while it may, if necessary, be no less learned, will deem it wiser to be less anonymous, and difficult to be more dishonest, than they” (A. Quinn 376).

\textsuperscript{xvi} In an attempt to find concrete data on the Messenger’s circulation — statistics that are “notoriously difficult to obtain, especially for antebellum publishing” (Whalen 65) — Whalen goes to publisher Thomas White’s “List of Payments” to determine the magazine’s number of paying subscribers. According to these numbers, the Messenger’s circulation increased from 1,298 to 1,814 during Poe’s stay at the magazine (66). This clearly suggests that Poe adjusted circulation numbers to enhance his reputation during his search for investors for The Stylus. However, it does not refute the figures from George R. Graham with regard to his magazine.

\textsuperscript{xvii} “[Poe] edited the Southern Literary Messenger during its novitiate, and by his own contributions gained most of its success and reputation. He was also, for some time, the editor of this magazine [Graham’s], and our readers will bear testimony to his ability in that capacity” (Lowell 15).

\textsuperscript{xviii} Some early scholars have suggested that Poe’s darker stories stem from German horror literature. However, T. O. Mabbott points out that Poe’s German was rudimentary, so while scholars may argue the influence of German writers, it would only have been possible through translated copies. Instead Mabbott suggests that the only tale truly influenced by Germanic authors is “Loss of Breath,” which is analogous to Peter Schlehmieel’s loss of his shadow in Chamisso’s story (v.2 xxiii-xxiv).

\textsuperscript{xx} “[...] the truth is that, with a single exception, there is no one of these stories in which the scholar should recognize the distinctive features of that species of pseudo-horror which we are taught to call Germanic, for no better reason than that some of the secondary names of German literature have become identified with its folly. If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul, — that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results” (Poe, Introduction 7-8).

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\textsuperscript{xxii} The citation indicates that this bit of information was from Mabbott’s 1978 edition of The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe.

\textsuperscript{xxiii} Translations provided in State Street Press edition of the Works.

\textsuperscript{xxiv} “If we do not always agree with him in his premises, we are, at least, satisfied that his deductions are logical, and that we are reading what he thinks, and knows well what he is talking about. [...] We
do not know him personally, but we suspect him for a man who has one or two pet prejudices on which
he prides himself. These sometimes allure him out of the strict path of criticism, but where they do not
interfere, we would put almost entire confidence in his judgments” (Lowell, “Edgar Allan Poe” 6-7).

Shortly after “Hans Phaal” was published in 1835, Richard Adams Locke published his moon hoax
in New York. Apparently, Locke consulted Clark as to what he should write about and Clark
suggested the idea, which was the basis of Locke’s story. Therefore, Poe’s repeated suggestion that
the idea for Locke’s tale was stolen from Poe was an insult to Clark.

Dedmond’s article, “‘The Cask of Amontillado’ and the War of the Literati,” makes a fascinating
correlation between “The Cask of Amontillado” and the events surrounding Poe’s feud with Fuller and
English.

The Internet Movie Database, IMDB.com, is an easily searchable and comprehensive movie
database, which provides information about “over 250,000 movies made since the dawn of cinema plus
even more on over 900,000 people who helped make them. That 900,000 includes over 500,000 actors
and actresses, nearly 50,000 directors, over 70,000 writers and a wide variety of other folks from
producers to gaffers and everything in between” (IMDB)
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