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Edgar Allan Poe's Criticism of the Novel

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PREFACE

Edgar Allan Poe wrote forty-three critical reviews of novels during the period 1835 to 1848 that he was associated with the various literary journals in the East. And, although his best known critical works concern themselves with the tale and with poetry, his statements regarding the novel are of sufficient quantity to merit scholarly research. Yet investigation of the major bibliographic sources reveals this to be not at all the case. Thus, this thesis shall endeavor to place some substance in the void of scholarship concerning Poe's criticism of the novel with the hope that this substance might provide ample material for additional scholarship and the eventual filling of the void.

INTRODUCTION

It is felt that to begin *in media res* would not best serve the purpose of this paper. It would seem more profitable to develop a suitable foundation, the purpose of which would be to illuminate and add depth to Edgar Poe's criticism of the novel. Thus this survey will consider Poe's reputation as a reviewer, the demeanor of criticism prior to and contemporary with Poe, the complexion of the novel slightly before and during the first half of the nineteenth century, the critical ideologies pre-existing Poe which contributed to his critical principles, his critical principles at large and his reviews of novels as they evinced a theory of the novel, and, finally, his own attempt at a novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, as it serves to examine the consistency of his theory in practice.

Because the student of American literature is generally acquainted with Poe's biography, this paper will purposely avoid lengthy discussion of pure biographical matter. There will be, however, sections in this study which will presuppose a knowledge, on the reader's part, of Poe's familiarity with the language and the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and of his career as an editor and contributor to several contemporary journals. Thus, to insure the reader of having cognizance of these presuppositions,

and at the same time to keep the body of the paper free from the tedium of unessential biographical details, these presuppositions will be dealt with briefly in this introduction.

Edgar Poe was born on January 19, 1809, to David and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, both of whom acted professionally in the major cities of the East. Both parents died in 1811. It was not unusual at that time for complete strangers to take in an orphan, and so, John Allan, a wealthy Scottish merchant residing in Richmond, welcomed young Poe into the family.[1]

John Allan had business to attend to in England in 1815. The Allan family accompanied him and Edgar was enrolled at an academy in Scotland where several months were spent enduring the strict discipline and medieval traditions of the school.[2] In 1816 Edgar was placed at a school in Stoke Newington, a London suburb, where he lived during the week under the watchful eye of the headmaster, the Rev. Dr. Bransby. Under the direction of Dr. Bransby Poe gained some ability to read French and Latin (pp. 10-13). The

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[1] John H. Ingram, Edgar Allan Poe: His Life, Letters, and Opinions (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965), pp. 4-7. Because this work will supply much of the information contained within this introduction, the usual footnote will be avoided in favor of indicating the page number within the text. All other sources will be noted in the usual manner.

[2] Allen Herver, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1934), pp. 55-60.

Allans returned to America in 1821. Edgar spent the first few months considering the art of writing poetry--in fact, much of Tamerlane and Other Poems was written during this time. In 1822 Allan had Poe placed in a Richmond academy in which great emphasis was placed on a classical learning. John Preston, a fellow pupil of Poe's at the academy, attests that Poe excelled at French and Latin and that his fondness for the Odes of Horace manifested itself in his reciting of them for pleasure (pp. 15-20).

In 1826, at the age of eighteen, Poe entered the University of Virginia. He was enrolled in the schools of Ancient and Modern Languages and attended lectures on Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian. His former schoolmates have reported that he was among the best of the French and Latin scholars. He was, in fact, generally successful at the university and probably would not have felt inclined to leave were it not for gambling debts he had incurred and his unrequited courtship of Elmira Royster (pp. 35-43).

In early 1827 Poe left Richmond for Boston and joined the army. While stationed at Fort Independence in Boston Harbor, he made the acquaintance of Calvin Thomas, a local printer, resulting in the appearance of a forty-page pamphlet entitled Tamerlane and Other Poems.[3] After two years in the army Poe again sought higher education. Allan used his influence to secure a discharge for Poe and an appointment

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[3]William Bittner, Poe A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), pp. 47-49.

to the military academy at West Point. He quickly found the academy's atmosphere not to his liking and quit after a few months (pp. 65-74). He journeyed to New York where, in 1831, a collection entitled Poems was published in which was contained his first published critical statement, the "Letter to B---."[4]

Poe's whereabouts from 1831 to 1833 is a matter of conjecture. Poe himself says that he spent that time in Europe participating in the Greek war for independence, but there is no evidence to bear him out on this and many scholars believe his European jaunt to be a fabrication. At any rate, nothing is heard from Poe from the time of his 1831 collection of poems until the autumn of 1833 when the Saturday Visitor, a weekly literary journal published in Baltimore, offered a prize of 100 dollars and 50 dollars respectively for the best story and best poem submitted. Poe selected six of his tales and sent them to the editors of the Saturday Visitor. The editors were tremendously excited about all of Poe's stories, indicating that the most difficult decision to make with regard to the contest was which of Poe's tales to select. They finally decided upon the MS. Found In A Bottle which won not only the contest for Poe, but also a great deal of recognition from the editor and readers of the journal. Poe suddenly found his name widely known in literary circles and consequently he gained friends and opportunities in the literary world (pp. 87-89).

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[4] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

In 1834 the Southern Literary Messenger,[5] a publication which was to become closely connected with Poe's success, was started in Richmond. Poe's new friends encouraged him to submit material to this journal. During 1834 and 1835 Poe published a number of tales and poems in the Messenger. Thomas White, the publisher of the Messenger, was quite pleased with the response his magazine was getting with regard to Poe's contributions, and he therefore sought the services of the young writer on a full time basis. In August, 1835 Poe was hired to assist in editorial duties and by December he had assumed the editorship. Due to Poe's skillful managing and contributions, the magazine's circulation increased from 700 copies to 5000 copies in a mere twelve months. Poe held the post of editor of the Messenger until 1837 during which time he published many of his own stories and began his reputation as a literary critic through reviews and critical essays published therein (pp. 92-105).

The January, 1837 Messenger, the last under Poe's editorship, contained the first part of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. The second part appeared in the following issue, after Poe had left Richmond. His reason for leaving was simple: White was not paying him enough money. He had by this time married and was not receiving ample remuneration to support himself and his wife (pp. 114-115). In 1838 Arthur Gordon Pym was published in book form. Though it met

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[5]Hereafter the Southern Literary Messenger will be referred to as the Messenger.

with little success in America, it was highly successful in England where it went through several editions (p. 119).

In 1839 Poe assumed the editorship of Burton's Gentleman's Magazine in which he soon published the "Fall of the House of Usher" and numerous critical works (pp. 127-130). In 1840 Poe published a volume entitled Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, contributed critical articles to Alexander's Weekly Messenger, began the installments of "The Journal of Julius Rodman" in the Gentleman's Magazine, and wrote a critique of Moore's "Alciphron" (also in the Gentleman's Magazine) in which he discussed his views on "fancy" and "imagination". His association with Burton ended abruptly in 1840 when a dispute arose concerning an alleged debt owed Mr. Burton. After his departure from the staff of the Gentleman's Magazine Poe attempted to fulfill an ambition to organize his own magazine. He called upon his friends to aid him in the proposed Penn Magazine but was forced to abandon the project for lack of funds (pp. 132-145).

Burton's Gentleman's Magazine was purchased by Mr. Graham late in 1840. Realizing that the success of the Gentleman's Magazine was very much the result of its former editor, Graham sought and secured the services of Poe as editor of the new Graham's Magazine. During the next two years Graham's circulation increased from 5,000 to over 50,000 copies due to Poe's "daring critiques, his analytical essays, and his weird stories." (pp. 146-147).

Poe had never abandoned his ambition to head his own magazine, so in 1843 he left Graham's with the intention of starting a magazine to be called The Stylus. Unfortunately he again faced the difficult task of soliciting sufficient funds and The Stylus did not become a reality. In the meantime he won a 100 dollar prize in a contest run by The Dollar newspaper for his tale "The Gold Bug," wrote reviews for J. R. Lowell's The Pioneer and for Graham's, and translated innumerable French essays and tales for the New York New Mirror. In fact most of 1843 and 1844 were spent writing reviews, for the publishers of periodicals found Poe's reviews to be the products of his pen evoking the most reader response (pp. 193-200).

In 1844 Poe moved to New York to become the sub-editor of the Evening Mirror in which he published critiques and, in January, 1845, "The Raven." New York became his residence for a considerable period of time, although he did not remain in the employ of the Evening Mirror for long. He joined the staff of the Broadway Journal in July as assistant editor and remained with this journal for several years, rising from assistant editor to editor and eventually to proprietor. During this time he continued primarily the writing of critiques--the exceptions being a volume of tales in 1845 and his lengthy philosophical essay "Eureka" in 1848. "Eureka" was the last major work he published.

The preceeding biographical material was selected to point out two basic facts to the reader: first, that Poe's

education provided him with at least some knowledge of Greek, Latin, and French, and their respective literatures; secondly, that despite the relatively short length of his literary career he managed to produce a sizeable body of material of which, though he wrote many tales and poems, literary criticism--in the form of essays and reviews--most demanded the attention of his pen.

CHAPTER I

THE CRITICAL MILIEU OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

This chapter will investigate the literary environment into which Poe entered as a critic. Its design will be to note Poe's varied reputation as a literary critic, to provide a brief sketch of the state of literary criticism shortly before and contemporary with his activity on the literary scene, to examine the novel as it existed during this same period, and to consider the ideas, the men, and the institutions influential in determining the direction and complexion of Poe's critical principles.

Poe's Reputation As A Literary Critic

Poe scholar Killis Campbell maintains that it was as a critic that Poe was best known to his contemporaries in America,[1] and Joseph Wood Krutch points out that while it was in Europe that Poe's first real prominence as a writer of tales was attained, in his own country he was thought of primarily as a book-reviewer and editor.[2]

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[1] Killis Campbell, The Mind of Poe and Other Studies (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 54.

[2] Joseph Wood Krutch, Edgar Allan Poe, A Study in Genius (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 214.

Poe's reputation as literary critic is varied. Many of those whose works were the target for Poe's critiques, or those whose sentimental favorites came under attack from his scathing pen, were quick to derogate his worth as a critic, or even as a human being. But those who have been either large enough to transcend the pettiness of affrontery by Poe's critical opinions or fortunate enough to have the protection of time from Poe's biting pen regard Poe as the first legitimate critic produced in America. He is seen as the first American critic to develop and maintain rigorous criteria, along analytical lines, to which literature must be subjected.[3] If Poe at times offended his readers' tastes or made an occasional error in judgment, it was not out of a desire to be eccentric but an effort

> to curb the tendency of the Americans to overrate or overpraise their own books, and at the same time he is fighting a rear-guard action against the over-inflation of British reputations and the British injustice to American writers.[4]

Poe, as a literary critic, excited a good deal of attention on the American literary scene, for he represented a drastic change in the complexion of American criticism. The literary criticism of his predecessors and his contemporaries in America were little more than flowers of praise intended to aid the publishers' sales. Poe deviated from

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[3]George Snell, "First of the New Critics," Quarterly Review of Literature, II (1946), p. 33.

[4]Edmund Wilson, "Poe as a Literary Critic," Nation, CLV (October 31, 1942), pp. 452-453.

this practice to become far more analytical than any other American critic had been. He became quite impressed with the rigors of good British criticism and its peculiar analytical approach.[5]

Edmund Wilson, a modern scholar, sees Poe as having great skill as a literary critic, placing him in such company as T. S. Eliot and George Bernard Shaw. Wilson states that,

> Poe as a critic has points of resemblance both with Eliot and with Shaw. He deals vigorously and boldly with books as they come into his hands. . .and manages to be arresting about works of no interest; he constantly insists, as Eliot does, on attempting. . .to formulate general principles. His literary articles and lectures, in fact, surely constitute the most remarkable body of criticism ever produced in the United States.[6]

And in another work, Wilson pays Poe the honor of being indispensable to the Symbolist Movement in France:

> Poe's critical writings provided the first scriptures of the Symbolist Movement, for he had formulated what amounted to a new literary programme which corrected the Romantic looseness and lopped away the Romantic extravagance, at the same time that it aimed, not at Naturalistic, but at ultra-Romantic effects.[7]

Poe scholar George Snell has seen fit to pay homage to the genius of Poe's criticism saying that as a critic

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[5]Robert L. Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. xii-xiii. The matter of Poe's interest in British criticism, its sources and influence on his own critical principles, will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

[6]Edmund Wilson, "Poe as a Literary Critic," pp. 452-453.

[7]Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 12.

> it is the power of rationality as well as the clinical approach which give Poe pre-eminence. His attempt to synthesize irreconcilables suggested the apothegm of "unity of effect" at all costs; and his sharply deductive mental processes fixed themselves in a mold that makes Poe's criticism, as a whole, the most consecutive in the annals of literature.[8]

There were those among Poe's contemporaries who realized his stature as a critic, as evinced by an article in the American Review (1852) which awarded him the distinction of being the foremost American critic of his time.[9] And later, an article in the Edinburgh Review (January, 1910) states that for his tales and his reviews Poe is better known in England and on the continent than any other of his countrymen, and that his works are more likely to be found on out of the way Italian or German bookshelves than many great European writers.[10]

Poe's reputation as a literary critic has not everywhere or at all times been as impecable as the preceding sources would seem to imply. Poe's criticism incurred the wrath and undying hostility of many of the leading literary figures of the time. Edmund Wilson says that Poe's irreverant observations on the works of such icons of New England literati as Emerson, Longfellow, and William Ellery Channing "seems to have worked against the acceptance of

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[8]George Snell, "First of the New Critics," Quarterly Review of Literature, II (1946), p. 337.

[9]Hough, Literary Criticism of Poe, pp. xii-xiii.

[10]"Edgar Allan Poe," (Anonymous), Edinburgh Review, CCXI (January, 1910), pp. 207-209.

his criticism." It was Emerson who, when the matter of a piece of criticism Poe had done on Channing came into a conversation, labled him contemptuously "'the jingle-man.'" The New England prejudice against Poe was given duration "by the bad reputation that had been given him by Griswold's mendacious memoir." This prejudice still exists to some extent. We are reminded that Poe's criticism is "spiteful and pretentious," and that Poe was a drunkard and a debtor.[11]

Poe's negative reputation as a reviewer (as a human being for that matter) plummets to incredible depths in this remarkably hostile review of the 1857 edition of his works:

> Edgar Allan Poe was incontestably one of the most worthless persons of whom we have any record in the world of letters. Many authors have been as idle; many as improvident; some as drunken and disipated; and a few perhaps as treacherous and ungrateful; but he seems to have succeeded in attracting and combining, in his own person, all the floating vices which genius had hitherto shown itself capable of grasping in its widest and most eccentric orbit.[12]

This reviewer, having tasted blood, continues to attack Poe with great lust:

> To say the truth, we do not estimate his powers as a critic very highly. His essays on criticism were, we imagine, written on the spur of the moment, without sufficient consideration, and were more than sufficiently imbued with those prejudices with which he was so apt, we are told, to view the works of contemporary writers.[13]

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[11]Edmund Wilson, "Poe as a Literary Critic," p. 452.

[12]"Edgar Allan Poe," (Anonymous), Edinburgh Review, Vol. 107 (April, 1858), p. 419.

[13]Ibid., p. 441.

It is obvious, as has been previously stated, that Poe's reputation as a literary critic is varied. Most modern scholars, however, concur that Edgar Poe was the first critic in America to subject literature to any rigid set of criteria.

The State of Criticism During the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

George De Mille says that for all practical purposes literary criticism in America had its birth with the North American Review in 1815. Prior to that time Brockden Brown and Joseph Dennie had done some critical work, but it was largely unimportant and uninfluential. The North American Review was begun in Boston as a reaction to what scholars in and around Harvard considered the British arrogance of the Edinburgh Review. Most of the critical work was penned by its editor William Tudor and represented an American bias and arrogance to equal the British. It devoted its pages to attacks on the Edinburgh Review, the proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, occasional sermons, and constant pleas for a native American literature unbound to British models. The only British poets it considered were Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Scott. The only British novelists considered were Scott and Edgeworth.[14]

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[14]George E. De Mille, Literary Criticism in America (New York: Russell and Russell, 1931) pp. 17-22. A glance at the North American Review will bear out De Mille's contention that though the "North American" was a beginning, it was a long way from being truly critical. For instance, Volume X, 1820 indicates that the North American Review had

Norman Foerster, in his book American Criticism, begins his discussion with Poe and gives no more than one sentence in this opening chapter to American critics and criticism prior to Edgar Poe. "They [the entire lot of American critics preceeding Poe] judged in accordance with petty provincial instincts instead of sovereign reason."[15]

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little to say relative to criticism. The table of contents indicates articles on the reformation of criminals, computing the path of a comet, commerce and navigation of the Black Sea, and sermons by Buckminster. The nearest thing to criticism is a review of An Appeal from the Judgements of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America by Robert Walsh, Jr. However, upon perusal, it shows itself to be little more than a spiteful snarl at British literary journals. Another example of the sort of criticism to be found in the North American Review is an article in Volume XXXI entitled "Tone of British Criticism." It shows itself to be anglophobic as it accuses the Edinburgh Review, Blackwood's, and the Quarterly Review of bullying Americans, too indiscriminately lavishes praise on such Americans as Cooper, Franklin, and Channing, and defends American letters by attacking the smallness of England's island.

[15]Norman Foerster, American Criticism (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 4. Foerster's dismissal of American criticism preceeding Poe is given some credence by the Literary History of the United States, ed. by Robert E. Spiller and others (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 35-36. It notes the existence of several early journals (The Pennsylvania Magazine; or American Monthly Museum, Philadelphia, 1775, the United States Magazine, Philadelphia, 1779, which introduced Phillip Freneau to the public, the Columbian Magazine, Philadelphia, 1786-1792) and an essay by Phillip Freneau entitled "Advise to Authors," but it points out, agreeing with Foerster's opinion, that these journals and early critical statements confined themselves to decrying the imitation of foreign themes and models in order to achieve a literary as well as political independence. As an additional substantiation of the contention that criticism per se did not exist in America prior to Poe, Charles Evans' American Bibliography (14 Vols.; New York: Peter Smith, 1941) indicates that the only work published in criticism prior to 1800 (the most recent date in the series) was a 1790 American edition of an Edinburgh publication on MacPherson's "Ossian."

In England the state of criticism was far different. By the turn of the nineteenth century the English and German Romantic Movements were well under way. The germinal critical statement of the brothers Schlegel (August and Friedrich), Das Athenaeum (1798-1800), had initiated the movement in Germany as did Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads (1798), with its critical preface in 1802, in England. Coleridge was well acquainted with the literature and the philosophical movements in Germany as well as the Platonic tradition which stood behind the Germans. He in turn influenced Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and later Carlyle.[16]

Saintsbury contends that criticism in England from 1830 to 1860 can be divided into three main divisions:

> The great band of periodical critics, mostly Romantic in tendency, of whom Coleridge is the generalissimo and Hazlitt the rather mutinous Chief of Staff. Then come the mighty pair of Carlyle and Macaulay; and then a rear-guard of more or less interesting minor and transition persons.[17]

The Romantic Movement and the development of periodical literature in nineteenth century England gave rise to a new era of criticism in which critical works, many of them exhibiting a tendency for the Romantic, were placed before an increasingly large audience which would become

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[16]Rene Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 (4 Vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), II pp. 1-2.

[17]George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism (3 Vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1906), III, p. 472.

influenced by these periodicals. The Edinburgh Review was founded in 1802. Its founder and editor for some years was Francis Jeffrey whose critical doctrines and tastes are reflected in the magazine. The Quarterly Review was founded in 1809 and enjoyed the editorship of several notable English men of letters including Scott and Southey. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was founded in 1817 and boasted as two of its frequent contributors John Gibson Lockhart and James Hogg. Another of the more successful (though short-lived) literary journals was the London Magazine (founded in 1820) to which Lamb and DeQuincy contributed some of their best critical efforts.[18]

The Novel During the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

As Alexander Cowie has pointed out, a market for the English novel was well established in America early in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin was responsible for introducing Robinson Crusoe to the bookstalls in 1734 and he issued a printing of Richardson's Pamela in 1744. Fielding's Joseph Andrews was available in Philadelphia by 1744. As the popularity of fiction increased in America so did the number of books exported to the colonies, so that by the 1770's the Vicar of Wakefield (Goldsmith), Sentimental Journey (Sterne), and Smolletts' Humphrey

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[18]Raymond M. Alden, Critical Essays of the Early Nineteenth Century (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), pp. xxiii-xxvi.

Clinker were almost as popular in America as they were in England. These books created an appetite for fiction which must eventually result in the appearance of American novelists. Before 1820 America had produced ninety novels, but of these, only those of Brockden Brown, Cooper, and a few others achieved any real stature.[19] It remained for England to supply the majority of the novels read both at home and abroad.

The English novel during the period immediately preceding and contemporary with Poe's professional life can be divided into three recognizable types: the Gothic novel, marked by an overshadowing propensity for gloom and terror and exemplified by works such as Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto, Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Matthew Gregory Lewis' The Monk, William Godwin's Caleb Williams, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein;[20] the novels of manners, typified by the novels of Jane Austin (Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Persuasion) which depict men and women in their personal relationships, going about "the dreary intercourse of daily life," and coming into contact with and reacting to moral issues;[21] and the

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[19]Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York: American Book Company, 1948), p. 4.

[20]Albert C. Baugh, gen. ed., A Literary History of England, Book IV: The Nineteenth Century and After (1789-1939), by Samuel C. Chew and Richard D. Altick (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1949), pp. 1192-1198.

[21]Ibid., pp. 1200-1206.

historical novel, a type in which "history, romance, scenery, folklore, and humor are blended as they had never been before in prose fiction, and best represented by the novels of Walter Scott (Waverly, The Heart of Midlothian, Ivanhoe).[22]

This last type, the historical novel, was subject to extensive imitation once Walter Scott made available "such a satisfactory pattern,"[23] and many of these imitations of Scott's historical novels comprise the bulk of material reviewed by Edgar Poe. Among the authors whom Poe cites as imitators of Scott are Edward Lytton Bulwer, G. P. R. James, W. H. Ainsworth, and Captain Frederick Marryat.

One of Charles Dickens' novels, Barnaby Rudge, was reviewed by Poe as were a number of his tales. Dickens experienced immediate popularity with his novels from the time of his Sketches by Boz (1836) to his later novels David Copperfield and Great Expectations. Dickens'novels represented the combination of "urbanized Gothic devices" with the historical.[24]

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[22] Ibid., pp. 1207-1212.

[23] Ernest A. Baker, History of the English Novel, Vol. VIII: From the Brontes to Meredith: Romanticism in the English Novel (8 Vols.; London: H. F. and G. Witherby Ltd., 1936), p. 62.

[24] Baugh, Literary History of England, pp. 1344-1350.

The Men, The Ideas, And The Institutions Influencing the Development of Poe's Critical Principles

In attempting to explore the possible sources Poe might have been exposed to in the gathering together of his own peculiar critical position, it would prove valuable to consider the readings he did as a student, both in the United States and in Europe. Somewhere in the course of his readings he must surely have come in contact with classical appraisals of art for, as Robert Jacobs points out,

> the Romanticism in Poe's theory is more patent than real. If we examine the total mass of his achievemen. . .we shall find implicit within the body of his criticism an essentially classic world view which affirms the limitation of man and the supremacy of nature.[25]

J. P. Pritchard feels that because Poe's brief Scottish education stemmed from medieval tradition he would have learned Latin, and that this early exposure to Latin must surely have involved Horace and his Ars Poetica. Pritchard also feels that they both agree that the success of the poet is, in part, dependent upon his ability to choose a suitable theme and that a major Horatian influence

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[25] Robert D. Jacobs, "Poe and the Agrarian Critics," in Southern Renascence, ed. Louis D. Roberts and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953) p. 35. Although there appears to be no scholarship to support this contention, Poe, the Romantic, would seem to be essentially Neoclassical in method--notably in his "Philosophy of Composition," which, in its carefully organized development of a Romantic theme, exhibits a Neoclassical approach to poetry.

is shown through Poe's concern for consonance of action and speech in characterization. Pritchard's example is Poe's essay on Charles Fenno Hoffman in which Poe says "'The author has erred. . .in putting into the mouth of the narrator language and sentiments above the nature of an Indian.'"[26]

While the fact that a five year old child spent a few months in a Scottish school hardly seems sufficient evidence to assert a knowledge of the Ars Poetica, and Poe's concern for consonance of action and speech in characterization could just have well come from another source (Aristotle says in the Poetics that characters should be appropriate--"it is not appropriate in a female Characterto be manly or clever"--and consistent throughout),[27] Pritchard is probably correct in assuming that Poe was familiar with Horace. John H. Ingram, a Poe biographer, has pointed out that while under the tutelage of Dr. Bransby, Poe did gain a satisfactory knowledge of Latin, and that during his short association with the University of Virginia he excelled among his classmates at Latin and French translation (see Introduction). It would seem highly unlikely that a fair Latin scholar would not have, at one time or another, come into contact with Horace. In addition, if

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[26] J. P. Pritchard, "Horace and Edgar Allan Poe," The Classical Weekly, Vol. XXVI (March, 1933) pp. 129-133.

[27] Aristotle De Poetica 1454a.

Poe, while a student at the University of Virginia, read the books on the prescribed reading list of that institution he would have read some Horace, Cicero's Epistles, Virgil's Georgics, the Annals of Tacitus, and selections from Terence, Plautus, and Juvenal.[28]

Killis Campbell finds in Poe's writings evidence that would suggest at least an acquaintance with several of the major Greek philosophers and dramatists among whom are Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripedes, Demosthenes, Plato, and Aristotle.[29] Campbell's findings are given additional credence by the knowledge that

> A list of Greek authors appears in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1836. It is signed "P" and gives information concerning the titles and numbers of works extant of Greek writers beginning with Homer. A second list, citing editions of the classics "fittest to enter a literary collection of the Roman and Greek authors" also appears in the Southern Literary Messenger of the same year. Poe had, without a doubt, called for the compiling of this list, since a letter indicating that it was in answer to the editor's request prefaces the article.[30]

The amount of Platonic thought emerging in the critical principles of Edgar Poe is not great, but it is significant. An instance of this Platonic thought can be seen in Poe's remark, from the "Poetic Principle," that "in regard to Passion, alas! its tendency is to degrade, rather

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[28]Killis Campbell, "Poe's Readings," University of Texas in English, V (1925) p. 191.

[29]Ibid., p. 192.

[30]Margaret Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1965), pp. 106-107.

than elevate the Soul."[31] More than twenty centuries before Poe's comment on "Passion," Plato, in an attack leveled at the position poetry held in Greece, maintained that passion impeded the course of reason and that it "fed" and "watered" the emotions rather than starved them.[32]

Far greater than that of Plato is the influence of Aristotle on Poe's critical principles. In another excerpt from the "Poetic Principle," Poe writes

> An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is. . .plainly, a sense of the beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, sounds, and colours, and odours, and sentiments, a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply. . .sing of the sights, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments which greet him in common with all mankind- he. . . has failed yet to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable to allay, which he has not shown us in the immortal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us--but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Lovliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone.[33]

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[31]Robert L. Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 55.

[32]Walter Jackson Bates, ed., Criticism: The Major Texts (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1952), p. 41.

[33]Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 39.

This statement by Poe suggests that he, like Aristotle, believes that poetry, as well as nature, takes on form and meaning in accordance with certain universal principles. Aristotle maintained, furthermore, that

> Poetry. . .although it imitates concrete nature. . . does not imitate _just_ the concrete. In fact, its focal point of interest--the process of which it is trying to offer a duplicate or counterpart--is _form shaping, guiding, and developing the concrete_ into a unified meaning and completeness. The word "form" here. . .applies to the _direction_ something would take if it were permitted to carry itself out to its final culmination.[34]

That is, Aristotle sees art in a state of _becoming_ towards ultimate perfection, towards the quintessence of its form. It would appear that Poe believes the same thing, for he says he who merely imitates just the concrete in nature is not a poet. The poet strives to order the "multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time" in an effort to reach the same quintessence, struggling in the same state of _becoming_.

Again indicating Aristotelian influence Poe expresses the concept, in the "Poetic Principle," that truth in artistic presentation is restricted by the effect necessary for artistic expression. He believes truth to be important, but that it must be limited, for it could place too severe a restriction on the act--thus denuding it of its artistry. "The demands of truth are severe. She has no sympathy with

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[34]Bates, _Criticism: The Major Texts_, pp. 14-15.

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the myrtles."[35] Poe's pronouncment on truth in poetry has precedents in these quotations from Aristotle:

> If the poet's description be criticized as not true to fact, one may urge perhaps that the object ought to be as described--an answer like that of Sophocles, who said that he drew men as they ought to be, and Euripides as they were.

And again, "For the purposes of poetry a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility."[36]

The influence of Aristotle on Poe's critical theory is manifold, but perhaps the area in which the two are most similar is in their respective discussions of plot. Aristotle says that the most important of the six formative elements of a tragedy is the plot, which is "the combination of the incidents of the story. . .it is the action in it, i.e., its Fable or Plot, that is the end and purpose of the tragedy."[37] He says also that

> to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible either (1) in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct as it approaches instantaneity; or (2) in a creature of vast size--one, say, 1,000 miles long--as in that case, instead of the object being seen all at once, the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder. Just as in the same way, then, as a beautiful whole made up of parts, or a beautiful living creature, must be of some size, but

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[35] Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 38.

[36] De Poetica 1460b, 1461b.

[37] Ibid., 1450a.

> a size to be taken in by the eye, so a story or plot must be of some length, but of a length to be taken in by the memory.[38]

Poe too gives the unity of plot a high position in the requisites he sets forth as being necessary in a literary composition. "The pleasure derived from the contemplation of the unity resulting from plot, is far more intense than is ordinarily supposed, and appertains to a very lofty region of the ideal."[39] Similarly, Poe is in agreement with Aristotle on the matter of a plot being limited to that size which would constitute a single kernel of effect upon the memory, although in his "Philosophy of Composition" he gives "size" the rigid definition of "one sitting."

> If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression--for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. . . It appears evident. . .that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art--the limit of a single sitting.[40]

Moving to another area of influence upon Poe's critical principles, one finds evidence to support the contention that he was very much influenced by his readings of periodical literature. Campbell maintains that because Poe's reading in his adult life was restricted by his

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[38] Ibid., 1451a.

[39] Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 19.

[40] Ibid., p. 23.

profession as a reviewer, his primary literary sources were the books and periodicals of his own time. Campbell notes that Poe makes repeated reference in his critical papers "to Blackwood's, to the North American Review, to Godey's, to Graham's, to the Democratic Review, to the Home Journal, to the Literary World, to the Saturday Evening Post."[41]

It is somewhat less than surprising then to find Margaret Alterton suggesting that among Poe's earliest influences were Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and other British periodicals. Miss Alterton reports that Poe

> testifies himself to his habit of "poring over foreign files." In the early days of his editorship of the Southern Literary Messenger, he published reviews from contemporary foreign magazines. . .it can be seen that he was following the trend of British criticism.[42]

Although Poe was quite familiar with many of the British periodicals of the time, it was probably with Blackwood's that he was most familiar, and Blackwood's no doubt offered suggestions to Poe with regard to both subject matter and technique.[43] There are several themes upon which both Poe and the writers in Blackwood agree. One of these is the idea of "coupling beauty with disease," the

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[41]Killis Campbell, "Poe's Reading," University of Texas Studies in English V (1925), p. 168.

[42]Margaret Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) pp. 7-8. Killis Campbell, in The Mind of Poe and Other Studies, agrees that Poe was indebted to the British reviewers.

[43]Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, p. 13.

observation of the horrors and repulsive, diseased conditions as they "work to the final destruction of some beautiful young woman." Poe may well have arrived at this idea through The Diary of a Late Physician, an article in which Blackwood's treats this duo of disease and beauty, and which created quite a sensation in London. Poe treated the theme in his portraits of Berenice, Ligeia, Madeline, and Eleanora, and expanded it in his "Philosophy of Composition."[44]

For our purposes however, far more important than the themes Poe may have derived from the British periodicals are the critical ideas he may have drawn from British periodical literature. Poe seems to have been influenced in his critical approach by the critical opinions of the brothers A. A. and Friedrich Schlegel. This influence, according to Alterton, was an indirect one, coming by way of Blackwood's tale writers who were made aware of the Schlegels' critical opinions when Mr. Blackwood furnished the funds for Lockhart (a novelist on the Blackwood staff) to go to Germany in order to translate Fredrich Schlegel's Lectures on the History of Literature. Walter Scott, who was a frequent contributor to Blackwood's, knew of August Schlegel and depended on his Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature for his "Essay on the Drama" which appeared in the fourth through the eighth editions of the Encyclopedia

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[44] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

Britannica. There are, in addition, indications that the critics writing for Blackwood's, as well as those writing for the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review, were acquainted with the critical papers of the Schlegels. These critics began to take into account August Schlegel's principle of effect which maintained that the object of the drama is to produce an impression or an effect upon the audience capable of commanding their attention and exciting their interest and sympathies. "They [Blackwood's critics] appear also to recognize a conscious method on the part of the writer to produce that impression."[45]

Poe's encounter with August Schlegel in the pages of Blackwood's ultimately led to his considering the unity of effect to be the principle most deserving of the artist's attention. One might assume that Poe's concern for effect went beyond Blackwood's to Schlegel's Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, which intensified this concern and gave him an understanding of the essential features of the drama.[46]

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[45] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[46] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, pp. 68-69. Albert J. Lubell qualifies Alterton's belief that Poe went beyond Blackwood in "Poe and A. W. Schlegel," J.E.G.P., vol. 52 (January, 1953), pp. 1-12: "in those germinal ideas which constitute Poe's philosophy of literary art. . .Schlegel's influence upon the American was of paramount importance . . .If there is any doubt that Poe knew the 1815 translation of the Lectures" there can be little doubt that he knew the 1840 edition with the introduction by R. H. Horne. For Poe, in a review of a poem by Horne, comments on the excellence of his introduction to the Lectures.

Poe seems to agree with Schlegel that unity is not dependent, as Aristotle maintains, on a sequence of connected events alone, nor is unity achieved, as Corneille sees it, through the relationship of cause and effect--though cause and effect is necessary for logical coherence. Schlegel feels that if this causal sequence becomes the sought after unity, it is at the expense of effect, and the possibility of excellence is greatly diminished. However, if the sought after unity in the drama is the gathering of all events under one point of view so that this conception of unity involves the idea of the whole, then the effect is greatly increased.[47]

Poe is also indebted to Schlegel for the belief "that while logical coherence in an argument is essential for forcing conviction, it is still not the main point of the writer's art." Poe indicates that the singularness of the argument, the understanding of "all the details under one head, the connecting of all parts into one whole, in short, the unity of piece, is the sole and rightful means of producing effect."[48]

That Poe, in both his creative and critical writing, was influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a matter generally agreed upon by scholars. One can scarcely read an article concerning the development of Poe's art or his

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[47] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, p. 76.

[48] Ibid., p. 70.

critical approach without finding lengthy mention of Coleridge. This association between Poe and Coleridge is most generally attributed to the latter's critical statements in his Biographia Literaria.

Floyd Stovall believes that Poe was ambitious to establish himself as a critic and as a literary leader in the United States, and that he realized that to do so he must familiarize himself with the literature and thought of communities outside of mid-nineteenth century America. However, he was a journalist with the typical journalist's bias for the contemporary, besides having, due to his duties as an editor and critic, little time to peruse the literature of the past. He therefore looked for shortcuts (encyclopedias, handbooks, and the like) to provide himself with an acquaintance with past literature and literary thought.

> Coleridge's Biographia Literaria was to him a treasure, for it contained not only a digest of an entire school of philosophy and criticism, but also made reference to a variety of sources to which he might not otherwise have been introduced.[49]

Another Poe scholar, Marvin Laser, agrees with Stovall completely. He feels there can be little doubt

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[49]Floyd Stovall, "Poe's Debt to Coleridge," University of Texas Studies in English X (1930), pp. 72-73. Robert L. Hough, in the preface to his collection of Poe's critical essays (Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, Lincoln, Neb., 1965, pp. xxi-xxiii.) agrees with Stovall on the matter of Poe's seeking outside the United States for his critical ideas. Hough says that Poe became impressed with the rigors of analytical, British criticism which led him to Coleridge who was responsible for much of Poe's critical opinions.

that Poe was deeply influenced by the Biographia Literaria. He says that "Poe's aesthetic doctrine, in its earliest form at least, has long been known to have been indebted to Samuel Taylor Coleridge," and that many critics feel that Coleridge dominated Poe's knowledge of poetic and aesthetic ideas to the extent that it was through the former that the latter was led to Schlegel, Schelling, and even Plato.[50]

George Snell has examined Poe's first critical statement, the "Letter to B---," which prefaced the third edition of his poems, and finds it to be "mostly Coleridge." Snell suggests that the Biographia Literaria provided Poe with ample ammunition in the battle for a "transplanted romanticism," and that from the Biographia Literaria he obtained many ideas concerning the "imagination."[51] Floyd Stovall agrees, suggesting that Poe derived the distinction between "imagination" and "fancy" from Coleridge and, for

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[50] Marvin Laser, "The Growth and Structure of Poe's Concept of Beauty," A Journal of English Literary History XV (1948), pp. 69-84. While few critics disagree that both Coleridge and Schlegel were important to the formulation of his critical theory, Floyd Stovall, in "Poe's Debt to Coleridge" (see above note) pp. 80-81, says that the critics do disagree as to who led who to whom first. Schlegel's Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature was translated into English in 1811, giving Poe the opportunity to have read either first. Furthermore, says Stovall, both Coleridge and Schlegel held many ideas in common, so when these ideas appear in Poe it is impossible to determine to whom he is indebted.

[51] George Snell, "First of the New Critics," Quarterly Review of Literature, II (1946), p. 336.

the most part, approved of this distinction.[52]

Margaret Alterton concurs with Snell on the matter of Poe's being essentially indebted to Coleridge for his definition of the "imagination." She offers as substantiation this quotation from Biographia Literaria,

> "The primary imagination I hold to be the prime agent and living power of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am."

[illegible] of the creative power in God."[53]

It does appear that at the time of his review of Drake's Culprit Fay Poe was in agreement with Coleridge on the definition of the "imagination." However, that at a later date Poe was willing to give such a supreme position to the "imagination," or that he agreed with Coleridge's distinction between the "fancy" and the "imagination," is another matter. For Coleridge says,

> Repeated meditations led me first to suspect. . . that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being. . .two names with one meaning, or. . .the lower and higher degree of same power.[54]

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[52] Stovall, "Poe's Debt to Coleridge," p. 73.

[53] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, p. 104. Alterton indicates that the review of Drake's Culprit Fay is to be found in The Messenger, Vol. 2 (1835), p. 329.

[54] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), p. 42.

while Poe, in 1845, maintained that

> The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination, and neither at all. Novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can imagine nothing that does not exist:--if it could, it would create not only ideally, but substantially--as do the thoughts of God.[55]

The fact is, Poe would seem to have arrived at, as his critical mind matured, a more Aristotelian concept of the "imagination" wherein the "imagination" does not create, as in the case of Coleridge's "primary imagination," nor imitate as in the case of "fancy," but, rather, combines in accordance with ordered principles to arrive at new arrangements--as in the case of Coleridge's "secondary imagination." "The secondary," says Coleridge,

> I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will. . .It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create. . .it struggles to idealize and to unify.[56]

While Poe agrees saying,

> The pure Imagination chooses. . .only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined;--the compound as a general rule, partaking (in character) of sublimity or beauty, in the ratio of the respective sublimity or beauty of the things combined--which are themselves to be considered as atomic--that is to say, as previous combinations.[57]

Poe shows additional influence by Coleridge in that it was Coleridge who led Poe to the early decision that

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[55] Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p.14.

[56] Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p. 144.

[57] Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 15.

pleasure, not truth, is the aim of poetry.[58] But more important for our purposes here would be the amount to which Coleridge determined Poe's conception of the function of the critic. Poe, like Coleridge, felt that critics were too inclined toward praise and generalization when a more valid course would be the establishment and application of a rigorous set of critical principles. Poe also, like Coleridge, condemned critics who would challenge greatness for the sake of notoriety alone and believed that the critic should remain aloof from prejudice and bias. The only important point that Poe and Coleridge differ on is that of dwelling on the defects of a work. Coleridge, while he would not omit mentioning a work's faults, felt that the critic should place the emphasis of his review on the beauty contained within the work. Poe on the other hand felt that the beauty could speak for itself while the critic's main concern should be pointing out the weaknesses and errors in judgment and in technical matters within a work.[59]

Poe was very much concerned with the matter of "verisimilitude," particularly in his critical reviews of novels. The very term "verisimilitude" brings to mind Coleridge and this important statement from Biographia Literaria:

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[58]Laser, "The Growth and Structure of Poe's Concept of Beauty," p. 69.

[59]Stovall, "Poe's Debt to Coleridge," p. 100-102.

> my endeavours [relative to the planning of the Lyrical Ballads] should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure from these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.[60]

Robert Hough assures us that when Poe "talked of verisimilitude as 'the most vitally important point in fiction' he meant the kind of accuracy which leads to Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief.'"[61]

In his "Letter to B--" Poe displayed a degree of hostility toward Wordsworth for whom he avowed to "have no faith in. . .That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe. . .but they have the appearance of a better day recollected."[62] However, at some period during the development of sophistication in his critical tastes, Poe must have had some admiration for the thoughts and writings of Wordsworth, for Alterton indicates that he was indebted, to some extent, to the famous Romantic poet:

> His [Poe's] early announcement that popularity is no test of literary merit bears a striking resemblance to Wordsworth's long discussion of the subject in his essay "Poetry as a Study," for he took Wordsworth's

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[60] Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p. 145.

[61] Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, p. xxii. The term "verisimilitude" seems to have first been applied to Coleridge by Keats in a letter to his brothers George and Thomas dated December 21, 27, 1817.

[62] Edgar Allan Poe, "Letter to Mr. B--," in The Works of Edgar Allan Poe (1 vol.; New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1927), p. 763.

> standpoint that the sale of a book was no proof of its value as a literary production.[63]

There is even reason to suspect that Poe was influenced by Francis Bacon inasmuch as he

> subscribed to Bacon's doctrine that all beauty must have in it some strangeness of proportion; hence the strangeness in Poe was a pre-conceived matter, and what to us seems strange in him was wholly premeditated.[64]

It is entirely possible that the so-called Christian philosophers had an influence on Poe's literary art in terms of fortifying his belief in the principle of unity. In an article on "The Classics" (Messenger, vol. 2, p. 232) Poe strongly advises the study of Christian philosophy, and in another instance refers to Christian philosophy as the "'truest of all philosophies.'"[65] Alterton explains the indebtedness of Poe to the Christian philosophers as a matter of their having, as did Aristotle, "explained to Poe the principle of unity in the sense of an unchanging law".

> Christian philosophers argue that God is the only creating power in existence. They conceive of the Supreme Being as governing the universe according to unchanging law, an idea which they explain with more or less elaboration in discussions on the intentions of the Deity, on his premeditated design, on divine law seen in terrestrial and astronomical adaptations,

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[63] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, p. 95.

[64] Snell, "First of the New Critics," p. 338.

[65] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, p. 112. By "Christian philosophers" Poe and Alterton in all probability intend Aquinas, Anselm, and Augustine though they do not indicate specifically whom they intend.

> and on reciprocity between cause and effect. In their opinion, the more one increases his scientific knowledge of the universe, the deeper will be his comprehension of the Maker's marvellous plan, and the deeper will be his appreciation of the Deity's power and intelligence.[66]

Poe expresses a cognizance of the principle of unity inherent to Christian philosophy when he says in his article "The Classics" (Messenger, vol. 2, p. 231), he "'who has trained his mind in Christian philosophy can understand how nature manifests God's unvarying law.'" He reaffirms this recognition in his review of Drake's Culprit Fay when he says

> To look upwards. . .from any existence, material or immaterial, to its design, is, perhaps, the most direct and the most unerring method of attaining a just notion of the nature of the existence itself.[67]

There is every reason to suspect that Poe was keenly interested in the rationale of logic, both as it increased the tight order of his critical writings and as it supplemented his rational approach to the universe. Vincent Buranelli says that Poe's committment to reason augmented his ability to know the truth and bound him to the world of reality despite the fantastic nature of his art. Poe's knowledge of logic, says Buranelli, was limited to what he found in the standard text of the period, John Stuart Mill's System of Logic.[68]

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[66] Ibid., p. 115.

[67] Ibid., p. 118.

[68] Vincent Buranelli, Edgar Allan Poe (New Haven: College and University Press, 1961), p. 45.

Alterton concurs with Buranelli's supposition that Poe was familiar with formal logic and utilized its severe demands for truth, particularly in his criticism. However, she produces convincing evidence that Mill was not the sole contributor to Poe's understanding and appreciation of logic:

> An examination of the Southern Literary Messenger, both before the time of Poe's editorship and during that period, leads one to entertain the probability that he may have used studied law methods to increase his critical ability and to give him in his own writing the power of convincing others. The evidence favoring this supposition is contained in a mass of material which apparently shows Poe asking advice of lawyers in literary matters; perusing law books with more than the casual reviewer's care; and, in his early critical comments, using a lawyer's phraseology.[69]

Alterton devotes attention, throughout the second chapter of her work, to a mass of correspondance between Poe and William Wirt, American statesman and Attorney General from 1817 to 1828, whose advice Poe sought on matters pertaining to both the legal profession and to literature. In this correspondance Wirt refers frequently to Chief Justice Marshall as an authority on matters both legal and literary. According to Alterton, Poe sees in both Marshall and Wirt "a consistent working of reason with imagination. Both illustrate, he [Poe] says, the 'entire compatability of such a love for elegant literature with severe logic and closeness of thought.'"[70]

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[69] Alterton, Origins of Poe's Critical Theory, pp. 46-47.

[70] Ibid., p. 52.

Patrick Quinn indicates that many critics have suggested that a major reason for Poe's popularity in France was that he reorganized--he phrased, lucidized--French thought of the eighteenth century. The awareness of this thought came to Poe indirectly, through Coleridge who was enmeshed with the ideas of Schlegel who in turn was somewhat indebted to the eighteenth century French. Quinn indicates that Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" bears striking similarity to Boileau's "L'Art Poetique," and that some of his tales ("Morella" and "Ligeia") are reminscent of Balzac.[71]

It is hoped that the labyrinth of material amassed in this chapter has provided a suitable survey of Poe's critical milieu, for it was from this milieu that Poe synthesized and supplemented the literary opinions that were to evince themselves in his critical reviews of novels. Poe's reputation as a critic, the demeanor of criticism and the complexion of the novel during the time of his prolificacy as a critic, and the ideological influences upon his critical principles should all illuminate the substance of the next chapter: the critical statements contained within Poe's reviews of novels.

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[71]Patrick Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), pp. 32-37. The possibility that Poe came under the influence of eighteenth century French scholars seems less surprising if one considers the known fact that Poe has been cited for his ability at translating the French. (See Introduction). The possibility that Poe may have been influenced by Boileau adds considerable weight to the contention that, while romantic in theme, he was Neoclassical in method.

CHAPTER II

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S COMMENTARY ON THE NOVEL: A HIDDEN THEORY

Edgar Allan Poe's regard for the novel is slight. Robert L. Hough points out that it was difficult for Poe to appreciate what the novel "could do with plot, character, tone, or theme or symbol" simply because he did not perceive how a work "whose strength did not lie exclusively in its power to affect" could "constitute a meaningful whole."[1] Poe himself says,

> We cannot bring ourselves to believe that less actual ability is required in the composition of a really good "brief article" than in a fashionable article of the usual dimensions. The novel certainly requires what is denomonated [sic] a sustained effort--but this is a matter of mere pereseverance, and has but a collateral relation to talent. On the other hand--unity of effect, a quality not easily appreciated or comprehended by an ordinary mind, and a desideratum difficult of attainment, even by those who can conceive it--is indispensable in the "brief article," and not so in the common novel. The latter, if admired at all, is

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[1]Robert L. Hough, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1956), p. xxi. One is reminded here of Poe's remark in his "Philosophy of Composition" (The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. by James A. Harrison, XIV [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1902] p. 196):

> "If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression--for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed."

> admired for its detached passages, without references to the work as a whole--or without reference to any general design--which, if it even exist in some measure, will be found to have occupied but little of the writer's attention, and cannot, from the length of the narrative, be taken in at one view, by the reader.[2]

In his review of Edward Lytton Bulwer's Night and Morning (Graham's Magazine, April, 1841), Poe says that Bulwer contrived a complex plot as the basis of unity in his novel, and still failed because the novel is "essentially" to be read to the unity derived from plot:

> In the wire-drawn romances which have been so long fashionable (God only knows how or why) the pleasure we derive (if any) is a composite one, and made up of the respective sums of the various pleasurable sentiments experienced in perusal. Without excessive and fatiguing exertion, inconsistent with legitimate interest, the mind cannot comprehend at one time and in one survey the numerous individual items which go to establish the whole. Thus the high ideal sense of the unique is sure to be wanting; for, however absolute in itself be the unity of the novel, it must inevitably fail of appreciation.[3]

While Poe considered the novel generally inferior because of its cumbersome length, he was compelled, as a

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[2]Edgar Allan Poe, The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. by James A. Harrison, IX (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1902), p. 46. Henceforth the James A. Harrison edition of Poe's works will be referred to as Works, followed by the appropriate volume and page designation.

[3]Works, X, pp. 121-122. In an earlier review of a Bulwer novel (Rienzi, The Last of the Tribunes), Poe paid Bulwer a high compliment, but expressed his contempt for the novel:

> "Viewing him as a novelist--a point of view exceedingly unfavorable (if we hold to the common acceptation of 'the novel') for a proper contemplation of his genius--he is unsurpassed by any writer living or dead." (Works, VIII, pp. 222-223.)

professional reviewer, to consider at some length many of the novels introduced to nineteenth century readers. Furthermore, inheriting a critical legacy spawned by Aristotle and developed through Horace, A. W. Schlegel, and Coleridge, Poe was compelled to synthesize from his critical background criteria to which the novel must be subjected. In his review of Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge (Saturday Evening Post, May 1, 1841), Poe refers to the "literary Zimmos" whose standards for determining the merit of a novel are based upon "results": "'Give us results' they vociferate, 'for we are plain men of common sense.'" The "results" here is popularity which Poe denies as a suitable standard for evaluating literature. He maintains, rather, that novels should be subject to the scrutiny of "critical precepts." Poe sees Barnaby Rudge as a novel which has recognized certain rules of composition and at the same time achieved popularity:

> The vast popularity of "Barnaby Rudge" must be regarded less as the measure of its value, than as the legitimate and inevitable result of certain, well-understood critical principles reduced by genius into practice.[4]

Though Poe himself considered the tale a more satisfactory vehicle for fiction, he discussed in his critical reviews those "critical precepts" which must be kept in view by the writer if his work were to be a critical success. From these discussions of the sought-after elements in the

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[4] Works, XI, pp. 39-41.

novel it is possible to infer a theory of the novel for Poe.[5] Thus, this chapter will examine Poe's critical reviews of novels as they evince an underlying theory. The scheme of the chapter will be to capsulate a typical Poe novel review, to demonstrate that Poe's reviews of novels exhibit a style which is in itself a sphere of interest, and to infer from the recurrence of certain critical concerns a theory of the novel.

Review of Night and Morning: A Novel By Edward Lytton Bulwer[6]

Poe's review of Bulwer's Night and Morning: A Novel (Graham's Magazine, April, 1841) has been selected to serve as the representative for all of Poe's reviews because it is typical in length (nineteen pages),[7] in methodology (Poe

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[5]Despite the fact that Poe did not, in any one volume, pronounce his theory of the novel, the inference of such a theory is legitimate because of his consistent concern in his critical reviews for the proper handling of plot, character, diction, and subject matter. While his estimate of the novel may have been diminutive, he went so far as to define its province in his review of Edward Lytton Bulwer's Zanoni:

> "A novel, in the true acceptation of the name, is a picture of real life. The plot may be involved, but it must not transcend probability. The agencies introduced must belong to real life. . .When authors cease to paint real life they cease to write novels." (Works, XI, pp. 122-123.)

[6]Works, X, pp. 114-132.

[7]There are of course exceptions to Poe's usually lengthy reviews. Clinton Bradshaw (anonymous) is dismissed within two pages, Robert M. Bird's The Infidel, or The Fall of Mexico, and Anna Mowatt's The Fortune Hunter: or the

offers a plot summary, and then makes his critical remarks, thus having the advantage of the plot summary to substantiate his remarks), and in content (Poe discusses Bulwer's use of plot, his delineation of character, his style, and grammar).

Poe begins his review of Bulwer's novel with an outline of its plot in order that the characters and incidents he later alludes to, and their relationship to each other, will be comprehended by the reader. His first statement following the plot outline is that, "The groundwork. . .is of no very original character--it is even absurdly commonplace."[8]

Poe next defines "plot" as "that in which no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole." He offers this definition because he feels Bulwer has erred in deciding "that plot to be a good one, in which none of the leading incidents can be removed without detriment to the mass." Bulwer's error has resulted in an excessively elaborated plot in which every page tends "to one point--a perfect adaptation of the very numerous atoms of a very unusually

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Adventures of a Man About Town are reviewed in five and three pages respectively. In the case of Mrs. Mowatt's novel Poe received it too close to press time. The other two he considered not worthy of lengthy critical discussion.

[8] Works, X, p. 116. The "ground work" to which Poe refers is that of a series of efforts to retrieve a rightful inheritance, or to establish the legitamacy of a will. Poe frequently criticizes the absence of originality in novels, in this demand for originality he aligns himself with the Romantics.

involute story." Poe, while he feels that all of the parts should tend to the whole, believes that in this case the too complex plot has resulted in too many incidents for the mind to contain at once.[9]

Poe continues his discussion of plot saying that while "well managed, within proper limits, it is a thing to be desired. . .it is not essential in story telling at all." He cites what he considers to be "the finest fictions in the world" which have been written without plot: "'Gil Blas,'" "'Pilgrim's Progress,'" and "'Robinson Crusoe.'" Plot, says Poe, is "An artistical merit," but one "for which no merit of a higher class--no merit founded in nature--should be sacrificed."[10] Poe maintains that Bulwer has sacrificed verisimilitude for his "overstrained effort at perfection of plot," particularly as regards the relationship of his characters to one another. The most insignificant characters, Poe finds, are ultimately shown to relate to one another through extraordinary coincidence after coincidence. Poe does not object to characters occasionally chancing, at precisely the correct moment, upon just the characters and situation necessary

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[9] Works, X, p. 117. On page 119 of his review Poe notes the few passages "which scarcely come within the category of matters tending to develop the main events."

[10] Works, X, pp. 120-121.

for their ends, but he does "think it excessively hard that [they] . . .should never happen upon anything else."[11]

The next point of discussion in this review is Bulwer's ability at characterization. Poe says that Bulwer has done nothing in his drawing of characters to merit "dispraise," the implication clearly being that he has drawn no characters particularly worthy of praise. The hero, Phillip, Poe describes as being "very much like all other heroes--perhaps a little more stiff, a little more obstinate, and a little more. . .unlucky than the generality of his class." Others are found by Poe to be stock characters who have "figured in every novel since the days of Charles Grandison," and who are "doomed to the same configuration till romance-writing will be no more." Poe finds one original character in Night and Morning: Fanny, the heroine. Her portraiture, says Poe, represents that class of originality which depicts

> qualities which, although unknown, or even known to be hypothetical, are so skilfully adapted to the circumstances around them that our sense of fitness is not offended, and we find ourselves seeking a reason why those things might not have been which we are still satisfied are not. . .the subsequent effects of love upon her mental development are finely imagined and richly painted; and, although reason teaches us their impossibility, yet it is sufficient for the purposes of the artist that fancy delights in believing them possible.[12]

Bulwer's "style" is next to come under Poe's scrutiny. Poe says that Bulwer has been frequently criticized

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[11] Works, pp. 124-125.

[12] Works, X, pp. 125-126.

for defects in style but that these charges more often than not confuse "the idea of mere language with that of style itself, although the former is no more the latter, than an oak is a forest, or than a word is a thought." Poe does not define style but says that its primary constituent is "what artists have agreed to denominate tone." Bulwer's tone, says Poe, "is always correct;" thus he can scarcely be labled a "bad stylist."[13]

Bulwer's English Poe finds to be unnecessarily "involved and ungrammatical." Poe attests that the pages of Night and Morning abound with sentences ill-constructed and proceeds to offer example:

> "And at last silenced, if not convinced, his eyes closed, and the tears yet wet upon their lashes, fell asleep." Here, strictly speaking, it is the eyes which "fell asleep," and which were "silent if not convinced." The pronoun "he" is wanting for the verb "fell."[14]

The use of allegory, metaphor, and personification by Bulwer is noted and attacked by Poe. "Pure allegory," says Poe, "is at all times an abomination. . ." Metaphor he allows to have "indisputable force when sparingly and skilfully applied." But Bulwer, charges Poe, is nearly "all metaphor or all allegory. . ." Furthermore, Poe considers Bulwer's propensity for personification a point of ludicrousness:

> The simplest noun becomes animate in his hands. Never, by any accident, does he write even so ordinary a word

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[13] Works, X, pp. 126-127. [14] Works, X, p. 127.

> as time, or temper, without the capital T. . .for the most part it is Time, Temper, and Talent. . . This absurdity.. . .springs only from a rabid anxiety to look wise,. . .[15]

Poe concludes this review with the opinion that Bulwer is inferior to Walter Scott, unequal to Charles Dickens, more than equal to G. P. R. James, and far superior to Benjamin D'Israeli. Night and Morning displays many defects; yet "its merits beyond doubt overbalance its defects. . .". If those merits which the novel in question possesses are not treated as extensively as the faults, adds Poe, "it is because the Bulwerian beauties are precisely of that secondary character which never fails of the fullest public appreciation."[16]

The Style of Poe's Critical Reviews of Novels

Edgar Allan Poe's reviews of novels evoke a high degree of pleasure in perusal, independent of an interest in his critical theory. This is made possible by two of Poe's fine gifts: his supremely logical mind, and his tongue-in-cheek humor.

Poe's logical mind manifests itself in the rational development of his critical reviews. His approach is to commence with a plot summary,[17] taking care to include all

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[15] Works, X, pp. 130-131. [16] Works, X, pp. 132-133.

[17] Interestingly enough, the first novel-review Poe penned for the Southern Literary Messenger, J. P. Kennedy's Horse-Shoe Robinson (May, 1835), contained this statement:

> "We do not wish to attempt any analysis of the story itself--or that connecting chain which unites into one proper whole the varied events of the novel. We feel

of the incidents, characters, defects in plot, language, and style which he will later comment on at some length. The methodology in Poe's reviews is not unlike that which he suggests in his "Philosophy of Composition." That is, in the "Philosophy of Composition" Poe insists that in the writing of fiction the end must be held in view at all times by the writer. "Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen."[18] Poe approaches the task of penning reviews in the same fashion. He has read the book, decided upon its defects and its merits, and has kept them always in mind while he elaborates his review towards its denoument. In a review of Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge, for instance (Graham's Magazine, February, 1842), Poe discusses the plot at great length, taking care to note several times the passage of five years between two major periods in the action. His plot summary completed, Poe criticizes Dickens for advancing the action five years for no other reason than to include an historical incident.[19]

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that in so doing, we should, in some measure, mar the interest by anticipation; a grievous sin too often indulged in by reviewers, and against which, should we ever be so lucky as to write a book, we should protest with all our hearts." (Works, VIII, p. 7.) Nevertheless, following this review it was Poe's practice to offer a plot summary--and frequently expansive commentary on it.

[18] Works, XIV, p. 193.

[19] Works, XI, p. 54.

No small amount of pleasure can be derived from Poe's critical reviews on the strength of their humorous content alone. Sometimes subdued, frequently wry, Poe's critical commentary is very occasionally not unlike that of a subsequent American literary critic, Mark Twain. In a letter to his fellow-Virginian, Judge Beverly Tucker, Poe defended the use of levity in his reviews. Poe said that ridicule was frequently justified by the absurdity of the work being treated, and maintained that to treat a ridiculous subject seriously would make the critic appear ridiculous himself.[20]

Poe initiates his review of William Gilmore Simms' The Partisan: A Tale of the Revolution with the comment that no allowances whatever will be made "on the score of deficient experience. Mr. Simms either writes very well, or it is high time that he should." Poe proceeds from this point to launch an hilarious satire on Simms' "Dedication," the transcription of which he offers in his review:

> "Dear Sir, my earliest, and, perhaps, most pleasant rambles in the fields of literature, were taken in your company--permit me to remind you of that period by inscribing the present volumes with your name."

Poe fabricates a scene, built around the text of Simms' "Dedication," in which the author of The Partisan presents a copy of his work to the recipient of the "Dedication," Richard Yeadon:

> We may suppose Mr. Yeadon. . .at home, and in his study. By and bye with a solemn step, downcast eyes, and impressive earnestness of manner, enters the

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[20]John Ward Ostram, ed., The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 100-103.

> author of "The Yemassee." He advances toward Mr. Yeadon, and, without uttering a syllable takes that gentleman affectionately, but firmly, by the hand. Mr. Y. has his suspicions,. . .but says nothing. Mr. S. commences as above. "Dear Sir," (here follows a pause, indicated by the comma after the word "Sir"--see Dedication. . .) Mr. S. proceeds, "My earliest," (pause the second indicated by comma the second,) "and," (pause the third,. . .) "perhaps," (pause the fourth, . . .) "most pleasant rambles in the field of literature," (pause fifth) "were taken in your company," (pause the sixth to agree with the dash after company! Mr. Y's hair begins to stand on end, and he looks occasionally towards the door,) "permit me to remind you of that period by inscribing the present volumes [illegible]." At the conclusion of the sentence, Mr. S. . . .turns slowly from Mr. Y. and advances to a table in the centre of the room. Pens and ink are there at his service. Drawing from the pocket of his surtout a pacquet carefully done up in silver paper, he unfolds it, and produces the two volumes of "The Partisan." With ineffable ease. . .he proceeds to inscribe. . .the name of Richard Yeadon Jr. Esq. The scene, however, is interrupted. Mr. Y. feels it his duty to kick the author of "The Yemassee" down stairs.[21]

A more subtle instance of Poe's humor is to be found in his review of Theodore Fay's Norman Leslie: A Tale of the Present Times (Southern Literary Messenger, December, 1835).[22] He says that in the Preface to Norman Leslie the author holds the art of novel writing to be as sophisticated as "the art of Canova, Mozart or Raphael. . ."[23] One expects at the turn of each page to find Poe's retort to Fay's claim, but this is not the case. It is only upon finishing the reading of Poe's review of Norman Leslie that one

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[21] Works, VIII, pp. 143-145.

[22] As in Chapter I, the Southern Literary Messenger will hereafter be referred to as the Messenger.

[23] Works, VIII, p. 52.

realizes Poe has been shrewdly countering Fay's remark all along by describing the book in question as anything but a sophisticated work of art.

In his review of The Swiss Heiress: or The Bride of Destiny (Messenger, October, 1836) Poe says that he has been patient and has "gone through the whole book with the most dogged determination. . ." His findings are that "The Swiss Heiress [my italics] should be read by all who have nothing better to do." The book is unquestionably "one of the most solemn of farces."[24]

Ending his review of William H. Ainsworth's Guy Fawkes; or The Gunpowder Treason (Graham's Magazine, November, 1841) Poe proclaims this novel to be scarcely worth the effort necessary for serious criticism, and bids Ainsworth's literary efforts adieu:

> Macte virtue my dear sir, --proceed and flourish. In the meantime we bid you a final farewell. Your next volume, which will have some such appellation as "The Ghost of Cock Lane," we shall take the liberty of throwing unopened out of the window. Our pigs are not all of the description called learned, but they will have more leisure for its examination than we.[25]

It was with the utmost levity that Poe reviewed Anna Mowatt's The Fortune-Hunter; or The Adventures of a Man About Town (Broadway Journal, August 2, 1845). He expressed regret that because he received Mrs. Mowatt's manuscript too late to allow a lengthy review in the August issue he

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[24] Works, IX, p. 185.

[25] Works, X, p. 220.

could do no more than offer an excerpt from the Fortune-Hunter for the reader's perusal. The excerpt presented to the reader smacks of Poe drollery. The hero and heroine are involved in a dialogue which ends with her addressing him endearingly. That night, when the hero "sought his pillow," the word she uttered resounded in his ear:

> "In his dreams they were re-uttered in the same tender, harmonious tone: and when the morning sun fell brightly on the placid countenance of the sleeper, he woke, to spring-up, repeating to himself, de--dear Edgar!"[26]

The Critical Content of Poe's Reviews

Poe's reviews of novels contain a body of critical statements which, when arranged categorically and viewed as a whole, constitute a theory for the art of the novel. These statements, which range from a consideration of the audience to whom a novel should be addressed, to discussions of originality, style, decorum, the unities of time and place, the role of truth in fiction, verisimilitude, character, plot, and the novel of narration, are for the most part to be found not in Poe's discussions of the various novels' merits, but rather in his comments on their faults.

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[26] Works, XII, pp. 209-210. The nature of this study does not permit further examination of Poe's reviews of novels for the humor contained therein; however, the extent to which Poe's sense of humor displays itself in his reviews of novels is far greater than the few instances cited above. Furthermore, humor in Poe's reviews is by no means limited to those concerned with novels. The entirety of his criticism (of tales, books of poetry, scholarly studies, travel-journals) is amply permeated by his wit.

This is primarily because Poe felt that the critic's task was to dwell on the faults of a work. In his review of Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge he says,

> To point out too particularly the beauties of a work, is to admit, tacitly, that these beauties are not wholly admirable. Regarding, then, excellence as that which is capable of self-manifestation, it but remains for the critic to show when, where, and how it fails in becoming manifest; and, in this showing, it will be the fault of the book itself if what of beauty it contains be not, at least, placed in the fairest light. In a word, we may assume, notwithstanding a vast deal of pitiable cant upon this topic, that in pointing out frankly the errors of a work, we do nearly all that is critically necessary in displaying its merits. In teaching what perfection *is*, how in fact, shall we more rationally proceed than in specifying what *is not*?[27]

It is necessary at this point to mention Poe's concern for the proper usage of the English language. Although it can not be considered a part of his theory of the novel, this concern manifests itself in all of Poe's reviews of novels. In his review of *Norman Leslie* Poe says that "the 'editor of the *New York Mirror*' [my italics] has either never seen. . .Murray's Grammar, or. . . [has] forgotten his vernacular language." Poe offers as an example of the grammatical errors to be found in *Norman Leslie* the use of

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[27] *Works*, XI, pp. 41-42. This is not to say, of course, that Poe does not give any attention to a work's beauties. He invariably points out, though briefly, the merits of all but the worst novels. In his review of *Norman Leslie*, for example, he indicates two scenes and one character that are well-drawn--despite his earlier comment that this novel is "the most inestimable piece of balderdash with which the common sense of the good people of America was ever so openly or so villainously insulted." (*Works*, VIII. pp. 59-60.)

"'fartherest'" as a superlative adjective. "Why not," says Poe, "say at once farthererthere st?"[28]

In his review of Professor Ingraham's Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf (Messenger, August, 1836) Poe says that Ingraham's English is generally quite good. "Sometimes, however, we meet with a sentence without end, involving a nominative without a verb."[29]

In his review of Dr. Warren's Ten Thousand A Year (Graham's Magazine, November, 1841) Poe offers a passage which he disperses with commentary:

> "In order, however, to do this effectually I must go back to an earlier period in history than has yet been called to his attention. If it [what?--attention? --history?] shall have been unfortunate enough to attract the hasty eye of the superficial and impatient novel-reader, I make no doubt that by such a one certain portions of what has gone before, and which [which what?] could not fail of attracting the attention of long-headed people as being not thrown in for nothing (and therefore to be borne in mind with a view to subsequent explanation) have been entirely overlooked or forgotten."[30]

In his review of Barnaby Rudge Poe criticizes Dickens' "employing the adverb 'directly' in the sense of 'as soon as.' For example,--'Directly he arrived, Rudge said,' C."[31]

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[28] Works, VIII, pp. 61-62. The editor of the New York Mirror and author of Norman Leslie was Theodore S. Fay.

[29] Works, IX, pp. 114-115.

[30] Works, X, p. 211. The brackets are Poe's and the comments are, if anything, not harsh enough--for the passage is unintelligable.

[31] Works, XI, p. 60. This use of the adverb "directly" (it is assumed that its use then, as now, was common among the masses) seems appropriate for the character of Rudge--he

In his review of J. P. Kennedy's Horse-Shoe Robinson (Messenger, May, 1835) the only defects Poe can find are those of punctuation--which, he allows, could be the fault of the printer.[32] Similarly, Poe implies that the frequently misspelled words in Miss Sedgwick's The Linwoods (reviewed in the Messenger, December, 1835) are the fault of her publisher.[33]

However deep Poe's concern for accuracy in grammar and spelling may have been, of far greater interest to this study is Poe's implied theory of the novel.

To Whom The Novel Should Be Addressed

Poe had very definite ideas as to whom a novel should be addressed if it were to pretend any artistic merit. Poe indicates, in his review of Harry Lorrequer's Charles O'Malley,

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is a scoundrel of the lower-class. Poe's objection to the use of the common vernacular implies a preference for elevated language, a neoclassical tendency.

[32] Works, VIII, pp. 9-10. Kennedy had befriended Poe early in 1835, and had used his influence to get him a position with the Messenger. (Hervey Allen, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe [New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927], p. 366) For this reason one might assume that were there excessive defects in Kennedy's book Poe would have overlooked them.

[33] Works, VIII, p. 100. The misspellings Poe cites are "'markee'" for "marquee," and "'denaement'" for "denouement." One must, when examining Poe's reviews of novels written by ladies, keep in mind that Poe was the Southern gentleman. His reviews of ladies' novels are always kinder than those of men's. In fact, in this same review, he says "we are heartily ashamed of finding fault with such trifles, and should certainly not have done so had there been a possibility of finding fault with something of more consequence." (p. 100.)

The Irish Dragoon (Graham's Magazine, March, 1842) that a novel, in order to have literary merit, must be appreciated by cultivated, sophisticated tastes: Popularity, says Poe, is frequently indicative of a "book's demerit inasmuch as it shows a 'stooping to conquer.'" Popularity indicates that the author has been guided by that which the unlettered, ignorant masses are appreciative of. Poe indicates that there are instances of a book's being at once popular and unfathomable, in part, by the masses. That which to the masses remains an enigma may be of great pleasure to intellect and genius.[34]

Again, in his review of Marryat's Joseph Rushbrook, Poe expresses the opinion that a book which addresses itself to the popular tastes can have no pretention to legitimate art. Marryat, says Poe,

> has always been a very popular writer in the most rigorous sense of the word. His books are essentially "mediocre." His ideas are the common property of the mob, and have been their common property time out of mind. We look throughout his writings in vain for the slightest indication of originality; for the faintest incentive to thought. His plots, his language, his opinions, are neither adapted nor intended for scrutiny. We must be contented with them as sentiments, rather than as ideas, and properly to estimate them, even in this view, we must bring ourselves into a sort of identification with the mass.[35]

Henry Cockton's Stanley Thorn, reviewed in the January, 1842 issue of Graham's Magazine, is a novel which Poe

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[34] Works, XI, pp. 86-87.

[35] Works, X, pp. 197-198.

says depends for its effect upon the "practical joke." He states that novels of this variety "are not letters," and are no more "'literature'" that "cat-gut is music." To men with animalistic spirits, says Poe,

> whatever may be their mental ability, such works are always acceptable. To the uneducated, to those who have read little, to the obtuse in intellect (and these three classes constitute the mass) these books are not only acceptable, but are the only ones which can be called so. . .with these classes of people "Stanley Thorn" is a favorite.[36]

From the above comments it is obvious that Poe felt popular success to be of no importance insofar as art is concerned. If a novel were, in Poe's estimation, to be a critical success it would have to address itself to an audience appreciative of sophisticated literary skills.

Originality

In his critical reviews of novels Poe expresses a fondness for inventiveness and a loathing for imitation. In his review of Judge Beverly Tucker's George Balcombe (Messenger, January, 1837) Poe says that Tucker has displayed that "rarest of all qualities in American novelists, and that certainly most indispensable, invention."[37] Reviewing William Gillmore Simms' The Damsel of Darien (Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, November, 1839) Poe finds its gravest sin to be "the sin of imitation--the entire

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[36] Works, XI, p. 11.

[37] Works, IX, p. 247.

absence of originality."[38] By "imitation" Poe intends the practice of many nineteenth century authors of patterning their fictions on proven models (see Chapter I, p. 19.)

In the May, 1835 issue of the Messenger Poe reviewed a novel entitled I Promessi Sposi, or The Betrothed Lovers, translated from the Italian of Alessandro Manzoni by G. W. Featherstonhaugh. Poe finds fault with this work because the author, who "is obviously familiar with English literature," has taken too many hints from Sir Walter Scott. Poe sees Scott's influence in Manzoni's relying upon "the records and traditions of time gone by."[39]

In his review of Frederick Marryat's Joseph Rushbrook (Graham's Magazine, September, 1841), Poe accuses the author of flagrant plagarism of two characters from Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist: Fagin the Jew and Nancy. Marryat, says Poe, realizing the success with which Dickens' characters were met, merely wrought feeble imitations, in his Furness and Nancy, in order to capitalize on the popularity assured by Dickens.[40]

Speaking of G. P. R. James, author of Lives of The Cardinal de Richelieu, Count Oxenstiern, Count Olivarez, and Cardinal Mazarin (reviewed in the October, 1836, Messenger), Poe says, "His sentiments are found to be pure--his morals

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[38] Works, X, p. 53.

[39] Works, VIII, pp. 15-16.

[40] Works, X, p. 200.

unquestionable, and pointedly shown forth--his language indisputable correct," and his historical information is highly accurate. But this does not make him a novelist worthy of high praise. For,

> Similar attainments are possessed by many thousands of well-educated men of all countries, who look upon their knowledge with no more than ordinary complacency . . .Something more than we have mentioned is necessary to place our author upon a level with the best of the English novelists--for here his admirers would desire us to place him. . .To genius of any kind, it seems to us, that he has little pretension. In the solemn tranquility of his pages we seldom stumble across a novel emotion and if any matter of deep interest arises in the path, we are pretty sure to find it an interest appertaining to some historical fact equally vivid or more so in the original chronicles.[41]

What then is the "genius," the talent for "invention," the "originality" of which Poe is wont to speak? In his review of George Balcombe, Poe allows that no one can be truly original, for to be so "would, necessarily, be untrue, in some measure, to nature."[42] But originality can be achieved, says Poe in his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, through the "novel combinations" of familiar ideas. In such an approach to literature the reader experiences "calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to" him before.[43] Poe

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[41] Works, IX, p. 169. [42] Works, IX, p. 261.

[43] Works, XI, p. 105. This review first appeared in Graham's Magazine, May, 1842. This idea is reminiscent of Horace who said in The Art of Poetry: "the ideal of poetic skill is to mould familiar material with such skill that anyone might hope to achieve the same feat." (Walter Jackson Bates, ed., Criticism: The Major Texts [New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1952], p. 55.)

sees originality of character as being possible in two ways:

> either when presenting qualities known in real life, but never before depicted. (a combination nearly impossible) or when presenting qualities (moral, or physical, or both) which although unknown, or even known to be hypothetical, are so skilfully adapted to the circumstances which surround them, that our sense of fitness is not offended, and we find ourselves seeking a reason why these things might not have been, which we are still satisfied are not.[44]

Style

In his review of William Bird's The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow (Messenger, December, 1835) Poe defines "style" as "the prevailing tone and manner which gives character and individuality to the book." Although this is a rather ambiguous definition, Poe offers an additional comment concerning Bird's style which gives one to understand that keeping one's subject constantly focused and in control is, to Poe, a primary constituent of style:

> In the style properly so called. . .we cannot bring ourselves to think that Dr. Bird has been. . .fortunate. His subject appears always ready to fly away from him. He dallies with it continually--hovers incessantly round it, and about it--and not until driven to exertion by the necessity of bringing his volume to a close, does he finally grasp it with any appearance of energy or good will. The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow [my italics] is composed with great inequality of manner-at times forcibly and manly--at times sinking into the merest childishness and imbecility.[45]

In other reviews Poe discusses a number of particular stylistic devices for which he voices either complete

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[44] Works, IX, pp. 261-262.

[45] Works, VIII, p. 72.

disapproval or marked reservation. As noted earlier in this chapter, Poe indicates a strong dislike for allegory, labelling it, in his review of Bulwer's Night and Morning, "an abomination--a remnant of antique barbarism--appealing only to our faculites of comparison, without even a remote interest for our reason, or for our fancy."[46] Though less severe in his condemnation of allegory, Poe holds fast, in his review of Baron de la Motte Fouque's Undine (Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, September, 1839), to his position that an undercurrent of suggestiveness is undesirable in a work of fiction:

> We have no hesitation in saying that. . .this portion which conveys an undercurrent of meaning--does not afford the fairest field to the romanticist--does not appertain to the higher regions of ideality. Although, in this case, the plan is essentially distinct from allegory, yet it has too close an affinity to that most indefensible species of writing--a species whose gross demerits we cannot now pause to examine.[47]

Metaphor is a device which Poe approves of when handled properly. In his review of Night and Morning Poe says, "Metaphor, its softened image, has indisputable force when sparingly and skilfully employed."[48] However, Poe objects to the use of metaphor when the comparison is a ludicrous one. In his review of Norman Leslie Poe offers two passages in which metaphor is improperly employed:

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[46] Works, X, p. 130.

[47] Works, X, p. 37.

[48] Works, X, p. 130.

> "It was the first unfolding," says she, in a letter towards the denouement of the story, "of that character which neither he nor I knew belonged to my nature. It was the first uncoiling of the basilisk [a North American lizard] within me," (good heavens, a snake in a ladie's stomach!).

Again, when the heroine is saved in the nick of time from being trampled to death by horses, the author of Norman Leslie has her being narrowly saved "'from the very jaws of death. . .'" Poe reminds us that she is, more properly, being saved "from the very hoofs of horses."[49]

Other niaiseries of style to which Poe objects are the use of "little French sentences, without a shadow of excuse for their employment," and the indiscriminate employment of personification.[50]

Decorum

Interestingly enough, Poe, the master of the Macarbre, the author of Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, was very much concerned with questions of decorum in incident and language. He was revulsed by the detailing of horrible incidents, and he felt the grotesque to be a proper concern

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[49] Works, VIII, pp. 53-54.

[50] Works, X, pp. 129-130. Poe is not wholly against the use of foreign languages, he is only against their being used for mere embellishment. His particular objection in this review (Night and Morning) is to the sudden switch, for emphasis, from English to French when the entire conversation has taken place in France, between two Frenchmen, and, obviously, all along in the French tongue. This is a valid objection and not unlike an objection to twentieth-century movie-makers who persist in hindering the cause of verisimilitude by having French characters, in France, speaking English with a French accent.

only when it pertained directly and incontrovertibly to the denouement of the story.[51] In his review of William Gilmore Simms' The Partisan Poe reports that,

> Instances of bad taste--villainously bad taste--occur frequently in the book. Of these the most reprehensible are to be found in a love for the mere physique of the horrible which has obtained for some Parisian novelists the title of the "French convulsives." At page 97, vol. ii, we are entertained with the minutest details of a murder committed by a maniac, Frampton, on the person of Sergeant Hastings. The mad man suffocates the soldier by thrusting his head in the mud of the [illegible]--and the perils of the sufferer, the views of the sufferer, are dwelt upon by Mr. Simms with that species of delight with which we have seen many a ragged urchin spit a cockchafer upon a needle.[52]

In another instance (his review of Fenimore Cooper's Wyandotte, or The Hutted Knoll) Poe objects to the "painful impression" received by the reader upon the slaying of three characters: "Their deaths affect us as revolting and supererogatory; since the purposes of the story are not thereby furthered in any regard."[53] And, in his review of Simms' The Damsel of Darien, Poe accuses Simms of

> a grossness of thought and expression which indicates anything but refinement of mind. . .by grossness of

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[51] Poe's concern for the wanton depiction of the horrible is not unlike a similar concern voiced by Horace in his Art of Poetry:

> "You must not show on the stage itself the kind of thing that should have taken place behind the scenes . . .For example, Medea should not butcher her children in plain view of the audience, nor the wicked Atreus cook human flesh in public. . .Whatever you try to show me in this way simply leaves me unbelieving and disgusted." (Bates, Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 54.)

[52] Works, VIII, p. 157.

[53] Works, XI, p. 210. Reviewed in Graham's Magazine, November, 1843.

> expression we do not mean indelicacy, but the expression of images which repel and disgust. At page 59 vol. I., for example, the novelist dwells too unequivocally upon the horrid barbarities inflicted upon the Indians by Jorge Garabito.[54]

Poe indicates a strong disapproval of what he would consider vulgarities of language as well. In his review of Simms' The Partisan Poe says:

> The rude and unqualified oaths with which he seasons his language deserve to be seriously reprehended. There is positively neither wit nor humour in any oath of any kind--but the oaths of Porgy are abominable.
>
> The "oaths" to which Poe alludes is the frequent utterance, by the character Porgy, of "damn."[55]

Time and Place

Poe does not limit the action of a novel to "a single revolution of the sun" as Aristotle observed was the proper duration for the action of a tragedy. He, rather, views the novel, as Aristotle viewed epic poetry,[56] as having no limits of time. Poe does, however object to broad movement of the action if this movement is not essential to the plot. In his review of Dickens' Barnaby Rudge Poe objects to the action being moved up five years for what he finds to be an unsatisfactory reason:

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[54] Works, X, pp. 53-54.

[55] Works, VIII, pp. 151-152.

[56] Bates, Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 22.

> It [the five year interval] is not to bestow upon the lovers a more decorous maturity of age--for this is the only possible idea which suggests itself--Edgar Chester is already eight-and-twenty, and Emma Haredale could, in America at least, be upon the list of old maids. No--there is no such reason; nor does there appear to be any one more plausible than that, as it is now the year of our Lord 1775, an advance of five years will bring the dramatis personae up to a very remarkable period, affording an admirable opportunity for their display--the period, in short, of the "No Popery" riots.[57]

It is also in his review of Barnaby Rudge that Poe makes his sole allusion to the unity of place. Because the subject occurs nowhere else in his criticism, the concern for unity of place can scarcely be considered a major element of Poe's theory. Yet he does indicate that the unity of place can be effectively employed in the novel:

> The effect of the present narrative might have been materially increased by confining the action within the limits of London. The "Notre Dame" of Hugo affords a fine example of the force which can be gained by concentration, or unity of place.[58]

Truth in Fiction

Poe's statements concerning the presence of truth in fiction are to be found in his reviews of historical novels, a type which experienced wide popularity during the nineteenth century (see Chapter I, p. 19.) His position on the extent to which fiction can convey truths is much like that of Sir Philip Sidney who, in his An Apology for Poetry

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[57] Works, XI, p. 54.

[58] Works, XI, p. 59.

states that the poet "excelleth History. . ."[59] In his review of Bulwer's Rienzi, The Last of the Tribunes (Messenger, February, 1836) Poe says that Bulwer's original design was to write a purely historical work, there being no satisfactory history "of the life or times of that most remarkable man in the hands of the people." Poe expresses the opinion, however, that Bulwer's work far surpasses a pure history by combining fact with fiction:

> He has adhered with scrupulous fidelity to all the main events in the public life of his hero; and by means of the relief afforded through his personages of pure romance which form the filling in of the picture, he has been enabled more fully to develop the private character of the noble Roman.[60]

Continuing his discussion of Bulwer's blending of historical truths with fiction, Poe says that Rienzi "is History. We hesitate not to say that it is history in its--in its only true, proper, and philosophical garb." That is, history has been made more vital, more striking, by the author's perception and imagination. For, says Poe, "we shall often discover in Fiction the essential spirit and vitality of Historic Truth--while Truth itself, in many a dull and lumbering Archive, shall be found guilty of all the inefficiency of Fiction."[61]

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[59] Bates, Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 91.

[60] Works, VIII, p. 224.

[61] Works, VIII, p. 227. Although Poe renders a similar verdict on the combining of truth with fiction in several reviews, a contradiction can be found in his review of William Gilmore Simms' The Partisan: "The interweaving of

In his review of Mrs. Child's Philothea: A Romance, Poe professes his belief that historical truths are important only inasmuch as they relate "passions the sternest of our nature, and common to all characters and time." For this reason he feels that Philothea fails as a novel. The plot of Philothea Poe regards "as the mere vehicle for bringing forth the antique 'manners, costumes, modes of thought, and habits,' which we have just mentioned as at variance with a popular interest today." Because Philothea depicts merely the "appropriateness in manners, costume, habits, and modes of thought" of "the distantly antique," says Poe, it can be of little value to us.[62]

It is obviously Poe's contention that fiction and truth complement one another. His statements imply that the only truths for which one can have any real concern are philosophical truths "common to all characters and time, "and that fiction relates those truths in their "true, proper, and philosophical garb." (see p. 68)

Verisimilitude

It has been noted in a discussion of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's influence on Poe (see Chapter I, p. 35) that

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fact with fiction is at all times hazardous, and presupposses on the part of the general reader that degree of intimate acquaintance with fact which should never be presupposed." (Works, VIII, p. 146.)

[62] Works, IX, pp. 153-154. Philothea: A Romance was reviewed in the May, 1836 Messenger.

Poe saw the promotion of verisimilitude as being essential to the writing of both poetry and fiction. He discusses verisimilitude at length in several of his novel-reviews. A new Harper and Brothers edition of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe[63] occasioned this discussion of verisimilitude in the January, 1836 Messenger:

> Not one person in ten. . .has, during the perusal of Robinson Crusoe [my italics] , the most remote conception that any particle of genius, or even of common talent, has been employed in its creation! Men do not look upon it in the light of a literary performance. Defoe has none of their thoughts--Robinson all. The powers which have wrought the wonder have been thrown into obscurity by the very stupendousness of the wonder they have wrought! We read, and become perfect abstractions in the intensity of our interest--we close the book, and are quite satisfied that we could have written as well ourselves? All this is effected by the potent magic of verisimilitude. Indeed the author of Crusoe must have possessed, above all other faculties, what has been termed the faculty of identification--that dominion exercised by volition over imagination which enables the mind to lose its own, in a ficticious, individuality.[64]

Again writing of verisimilitude--this time in a review of Lambert Wilmer's The Confessions of Emilia Harrington--Poe says that a deep interest is always excited,

> be the subject matter what it may. . . [in a] work in which the author utterly loses sight of himself in his theme, and, for the time, identifies his own thoughts and feelings with the thoughts and feelings of ficticious existences. Than the power of accomplishing this perfect identification, there is no surer mark of genius. It is the spell of Defoe, it is the wand of Boccaccio.[65]

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[63] Robinson Crusoe was first published in 1711. This was a pirated edition made possible by the absence of an International Copyright Law.

[64] Works, VIII, p. 170. [65] Works, VIII, pp. 234-235.

Poe's belief that the author should lose his identity in the thoughts and characters of his fiction is among the firmest of his literary convictions. In his review of William Bird's Sheppard Lee (Messenger, September, 1836) Poe says that verisimilitude can be achieved by,

> avoiding. . .directness of expression. . .thus leaving much to the reader's imagination; in writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth, yet astonished at the. . .wonders he relates, and for which. . .he neither claims nor anticipates credence in minuteness of detail. . .in short, by making use of the infinity of the arts. . .and by leaving the result a wonder not to be accounted for.

In this way, says Poe, the author is free of having to explain the incredible, and can direct his energies towards giving the bizarre "the character and luminousness of truth" through which "some of the most vivid creations of human intellect" are made possible.[66]

Character[67]

Of characters, Poe only demands that they be consistent in their actions and life-like. Poe notes the inconsistency in a character, Hyland, in his review of William Gilmore Simms' The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow:

> The hero Hyland, with whom we were much interested in the beginning of the book, proves inconsistent with himself in the end; and although to be inconsistent with one's self, is not always to be false to Nature--still in the present instance, Hyland Gilbert in prison, and in difficulty, and Herman Hunter, in the

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[66] Works, IX, pp. 138-139.

[67] A discussion of Poe's concept of originality in character can be found in an earlier section of this chapter.

> opening of the novel, possess none of the same traits, and are not, in point of fact, identical.[68]

Again discussing consistency of character, Poe, in his review of Miss Sedgwick's The Linwoods; or, "Sixty Years Since in America, demands that characters not be imbued with virtues or talents inconsistent with real-life. Poe charges that Miss Sedgwick is at fault when she allows mere schoolboys such rhetoric as, "'no more of my contempt for the Yankees, Hal, an' thou lovest me,' replied Jasper; 'you remember Aesop's advice to Croesus, at the Persian Court?'" Poe offers another passage from The Linwoods at the end of which he interjects his indomitable wit:

> "Now out on you, you lazy, slavish, loons, 'cried Rose, 'cannot you see these men are raised up, to fight for freedom, for more than themselves? If the chain is broken at one end, the links will fall apart sooner or later. When you see the sun on the mountain top, you may be sure it will shine into the deepest valleys before long." Who would suppose this graceful eloquence, and these impressive images to proceed from the mouth of a negro-woman?[69]

In his review of William Gilmore Simms' The Partisans Poe rebells against the practice of having a group of stock characters whose outward appearances are to be substituted for the skilful drawing of their motives and personalities:

> Goggle is another miserable addition to the list of those anomalies so swarming in fiction, who are represented as having vicious principles, for no other reason than because they have ugly faces.[70]

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[68] Works, VIII, p. 71. The character Hyland Gilbert seeks the convenience of the pseudonym Herman Hunter early in Simms' work.

[69] Works, VIII, p. 99.

[70] Works, VIII, p. 150.

And in his review of Edward Lytton Bulwer's Zanoni Poe makes known his disapproval of characters who, rather than being drawn with real-life in mind, are made mere representations of vices and virtues. Bulwer's characters, says Poe

> have no originality. . .There is not, in his numerous novels, a single personage whom we can look back on as a real individual. Falstaff and Nicol Jarvie are so life-like that it seems as if we had drunk canary with the one, at the Boar's Head, and "had a crack" with the other, on the causeway of Glascow. Bulwer's characters have none of this personal identity--they are only embodiments of certain passions or peculiarities. His actors are like the knights of Spenser, mere walking horses for particular vices or virtues. . .[71]

Plot

Reviewing Edward Lytton Bulwer's Night and Morning, Poe found occasion to define plot as "that in which no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole." And he described it as "a building so dependently constructed, that to change the position of a single brick is to overthrow the entire fabric."[72] Mephistopheles in England, or the Confessions of a Prime Minister (anonymous), a work which Poe praised in every other respect, was ultimately condemned because the structure of the book has an "utter want of keeping".[73]

In his review of Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge, Poe charges that Dickens' not having a pre-conceived plot in

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[71]Works, XI, p. 121. [72]Works, X, pp. 116-117.

[73]Works, VIII, pp. 42-43. Reviewed in the September, 1835, Messenger.

mind has resulted in numerous inconsistencies in the construction of the story:

> The opening speeches of old Chester are by far too truly gentlemanly for his subsequent character. The wife of Varden. . .is too wholesale a shrew to be converted into the quiet wife--the original design was to punish her.[74]

And in his review of James French's Elkswatawa; or The Prophet of the West (Messenger, August, 1836) Poe maintains that the author's not having a definite plot in mind has resulted in his skipping from scene to scene, regressing in time, much to the consternation of the reader. That is, the narration accounts for the sequence of events in one locale, and then, switching the locale, regresses in time to bring up the action in this new locale. "This adjustment of the date," says Poe, "is so frequently repeated that Mr. French's readers are kept in a constant state of chronological hornpipe."[75]

Poe also finds fault with the too complex or "overstrained" plot. In his review of Edward Lytton Bulwer's Night and Morning, Poe indicates that the plot which is so perfected that the most insignificant characters are shown to inextricably relate to the whole can do grave damage to the promotion of verisimilitude.[76] In his review of Professor Ingraham's Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf, Poe

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[74] Works, XI, pp. 54-55.

[75] Works, IX, p. 124.

[76] Works, X, pp. 124-125.

demonstrates this over-complexity of plot. He says that Professor Ingraham is "too minutely" concerned with detail--so much that verisimilitude is lost:

> Of mere outlines there are none. Not a dog yelps, unsung. Not a shovel-footed negro waddles across the stage, whether to any obstensible purpose or not, without eliciting from the author a nos plaudite, with an extended explanation of the character of his personal appearance--of his length, depth, and breadth,--and more particularly, of the length, depth, and breadth of his shirt-collar, shoe-buckles and hatband.[77]

In his review of Night and Morning Poe says that "the interest of plot" refers "to cultivated thought in the reader," and is by "no means a popular interest." Even for the discerning reader "it is a pleasure which may be purchased too dearly." Poe sees the complex plot, with its "continual and vexatious shifting of scene, with a view to bringing up events to the time being," as being essentially a dramatic tool:

> By the frequent "bringing up" of his events the dramatist strove to supply, as well as he could, the want of the combining, arranging, and especially of the commenting power, now in the possession of the narrative author. . .the drama of colloquy, vivacious and breathing of life, is well adapted to narration, the drama of action and passion will always prove, when employed beyond due limits, a source of embarrassment to the narrator, and it can afford him nothing which he does not already possess in full force.

In this same review Poe says that if an artist persists in constructing long works "he must content himself, perforce, with a more simply and more rigidly narrative form."[78] One of the grievous faults Poe finds with Frederick Marryat's

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[77] Works, IX, p. 114. [78] Works, X, pp. 120-123.

Joseph Rushbrook is that Marryat never pauses, in the midst of his story to comment:

> Comment, in the author's own person, upon what is transacting, is left entirely out of the question. There is thus none of that binding power perceptible, which often gives a species of unity (the unity of the writer's individual thought) to the most random narrations. . .The commenting force can never be safely disregarded. It is far better to have a dearth of incident, with skilful observation upon it, than the utmost variety of event without. . .The successful novelist must, . . .be careful to bring into view his private interest, sympathy, and opinion in regard to his own creations.[79]

It can be seen that Poe believes that plot must be skilfully employed, if it is to be employed at all. However it is apparent that he considers the longer forms of fiction essentially ill-suited for the unity that can be derived from plot. His comments on the matter imply that he prefers--in long works of fiction--the narrative form of the novel. It is, in fact, the narrative form which Poe employs in his own novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.

Here then is a set of criteria, culled from the maze of Poe's critical reviews and essays, evincing, for Poe, a theory of the novel. In order to investigate the consistency of Poe's theory in practice it will be necessary to subject his own attempt at the novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, to the scrutiny of his critical precepts. The subjection of Poe's attempt at the novel to his theory of the novel shall be the substance of Chapter III.

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[79] Works, X, pp. 201-202.

CHAPTER III

THE NARRATIVE OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM: POE'S THEORY OF THE NOVEL IN PRACTICE

This chapter will concern itself chiefly with the application of the critical precepts contained within Poe's theory of the novel to his own attempt at the novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. The object of this chapter will be to determine whether or not Poe's theory remains consistent in practice. However, before this application is made some preliminary matters will be discussed: the distinction drawn by Poe between the novel of plot and the "narrative form" of the novel; the possible reasons for Poe's writing a novel--a form for which he professed such a low regard; and some sources for The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.

Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman's A Handbook to Literature cites two types of narration:

> Simple narrative, which is content to recite an event or events and is largely chronological in its arrangement of details. . .; and narrative with plot,. . . often arranged according to a preconceived artistic principle determined by the nature of the Plot and the type of story intended. . .[1]

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[1] William Flint Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1936), p. 300.

It is the former species of the narrative of which Poe speaks when he says, in his review of Night and Morning, that long words are better suited to "a more simply and more rigidly narrative form" than to the unity derived from plot.[2] Poe's "narrative form" is much the same as what E. M. Forster deems the "story": "It is a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence--dinner coming after breakfast, Tuesday after Monday, decay after death, and so on."[3] The primary difference between story and plot, according to Forster, is this: "'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot." The plot is overshadowed by a "sense of causality." Forster says, in addition, that memory and intelligence are essential to plot,

> for unless we remember we cannot understand. If by the time the queen dies we have forgotten the existence of the king we shall never make out what killed her.[4]

In The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym memory and intelligence

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[2]Edgar Allan Poe, The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. by James A. Harrison, X, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1902), pp. 120-123. Due to the unavailability of an intact complete works of Poe in the Margie Helm Library, two sets of the complete works will be referred to in this chapter. The James A. Harrison edition will hereafter be referred to as Harrison, Works. Following the first, full footnote, the Nathan Haskell Dole edition will be referred to as Dole, Works.

[3]E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1927), p. 27.

[4]Ibid., pp. 86-88.

are, for the most part, of no importance. "Why" is of less interest than "what happens next?"

One wonders, in light of his multitudinous statements regarding the unsatisfactory nature of the novel, what prompted Poe to create The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym? Perhaps a partial answer lies in the "Introductory Note" to the novel. In this statement, the narrator, Arthur Gordon Pym, explains that upon his return to the United States from an extraordinary voyage to the South Seas a number of gentlemen of Richmond, Virginia, including Edgar Allan Poe, persuaded him to offer an account of his adventures to the public. Poe, attests Pym, arrived at the scheme of publishing two installments of his narrative in the Southern Literary Messenger. Furthermore, Pym indicates that it was Poe's idea to cloak the narrative in the garb of fiction and to make the public believe the narrative to be wholly a figment of his imagination. However, says Pym, the narrative was so well received by the public,

> I thence concluded that the facts of my narrative would prove of such a nature as to carry with them sufficient evidence of their own authenticity, and that I had consequently little to fear on the score of popular incredulity.[5]

Arthur Gordon Pym is, of course, the name assigned by Poe,

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[5] Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, in The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. by Nathan Haskell Dole, V (New York: The Chesterfield Society, 1908), pp. 7-9. The two installments appeared in the January and February, 1837, Messenger.

the author, to his narrator. Poe would have early serialized The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym in view of his feelings concerning the impossibility of unity of effect in long works and his statement (in his review of Night and Morning) that if a novel is to be appreciated at all it is to be appreciated in terms of its component parts.[6] That is, Poe preferred the episodic novel. However, realizing the popular reception given his two installments of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Poe decided to attempt a longer work.

Despite the fact that Poe believed an artist should not be dictated to by popular tastes, there exists additional information indicating that Poe may have had popularity very much in mind when he set about writing The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. This additional information, reports Alexander Cowie, is a letter to Poe from Harper and Brothers:

> "Readers in this country have a decided and strong preference for works (especially fiction) in which a single and connected story occupies the whole volume, or number of volumes, as the case may be. . ." Perhaps these words, written to Poe in 1836. . .were mainly responsible for Poe's turning his attention to the composition of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket. . .[7] Two installments of the story were

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[6]Harrison, Works, X, p. 122.

[7]Walter E. Benzanson, in his article "The Troubled Sleep of Arthur Gordon Pym," indicates that Poe's full original title, not reprinted in modern editions, was THE NARRATIVE OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM OF NANTUCKET: COMPRISING THE DETAILS OF A MUTINY AND ATROCIOUS BUTCHERY ON BOARD THE AMERICAN BRIG GRAMPUS, ON HER WAY TO THE SOUTH SEAS, IN THE MONTH OF JUNE, 1827. WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE RECAPTURE OF THE VESSEL BY THE SURVIVERS; THEIR SHIPWRECK AND SUBSEQUENT HORRISLE SUFFERINGS FROM FAMINE; THEIR DELIVERANCE BY

published. . .in 1837, and Harper bought the book in 1838. Poe was now a "novelist."[8]

Several studies indicate probable sources for The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. Patrick Quinn suggests that Poe's book bears a strong resemblance to a French work, published in 1723, entitled Relation d'un voyage du pole anartique par le centre du Mondo.[9] D. M. McKeithan

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MEANS OF THE BRITISH SCHOONER JANE GUY; THE BRIEF CRUISE OF THIS LATTER VESSEL IN THE ANTARCTIC OCEAN; HER CAPTURE, AND THE MASSACRE OF HER CREW AMONG A GROUP OF ISLANDS IN THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PARALLEL OF SOUTHERN LATITUDE; TOGETHER WITH THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES STILL FARTHER SOUTH TO WHICH THAT DISTRESSING CALAMITY GAVE RISE. (Essays in Literary History, ed. by Rudolf Kirk and C. F. Main [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1960] , pp. 149-150.)

[8]Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York: American Book Company, 1948), p. 300. There seems to be some disagreement as to whether or not Poe actually was a novelist. L. Moffit Cecil, in "The Two Narratives of Arthur Gordon Pym," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol. V (Spring, 1963), pp. 232-233, contends that The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym was not intended as a complete work, but was rather two stories. He says, also, that most scholars are wrong to maintain that Poe set out to write a novel. Whatever were Poe's original intentions, he did write a novel. E. M. Forster, in his Aspects of the Novel (p. 6), defines the novel as "Any ficticious prose work over 50,000 words." And, Edward Wagenknecht, in his Cavalcade of the American Novel (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1952), p. 30, indicates that The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is a novel of "the age of Cooper and Simms." Richard Chase, in The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 12-13, makes a distinction between the "romance" and the "novel." The novel, says Chase, "renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail." It portrays people in real-life and concentrates more on character than on action or plot. The romance Chase describes as concerning itself less with reality and prefering action to plot. Chase says, in addition, that "the romance will veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms." The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym has elements of both the romance and the novel. At any rate, the distinction is slight and not drawn by Poe.

[9]Patrick Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957),p. 32.

says that one source which Poe surely used was Archibald Duncan's The Mariner's Chronicle (1806). The Mariner's Chronicle is a work containing "scores of accounts of shipwrecks from every conceivable cause and of the most unbelievable sufferings of the survivors." Although McKeithan indicates that determining precisely how extensively Poe borrowed from The Mariner's Chronicle is made difficult by Poe's consistent combining of incidents from widely separated parts of the work, he does offer passages from The Mariner's Chronicle which are practically duplicated in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.[10] McKeithan finds The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym divided into two well-defined sections: the first relates the story of the shipwreck, the mutiny, and the suffering and subsequent rescue of the survivors; the second relates Pym's adventures in the South Seas. It is the first section which borrows extensively from The Mariner's Chronicle. The second section relies heavily on Benjamin Morrell's A Narrative of Four Voyages, To the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Indian and Anartic Ocean (1832). McKeithan's findings indicate that, as in the case of The Mariner's Chronicle, lengthy passages in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym correspond to passages in Morrel's work. For instance, says McKeithan, Pym's long digression on the

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[10]D. M. McKeithan, "Two Sources of Poe's 'Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,'" University of Texas Studies in English, XIII (1933), pp. 116-117.

value of the Galopago turtle to mariners so closely resembles a similar account in Morrell's work that there can be little doubt as to Poe's source.[11]

J. O. Bailey adds to the list of source materials for The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym a novel, published in 1820, by Captain Adam Seaborn entitled Symzonia. In his novel Seaborn gives the "hollow-earth" theory of John Cleves Symmes "a utopistic development." The strange animal found drifting at sea near the Jane Guy, the canoe adorned with mysterious carvings, and Pym's disappearing into the strange, white mist all have parallels in Symzonia.[12]

Keith Huntress believes that Poe drew much of the action in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym from R. Thomas' Remarkable Events and Remarkable Shipwrecks (1836). Huntress reports that Thomas' book was published just a year before the first installments of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and that Poe, as editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, might well have received a copy for review. Huntress finds a number of passages in Poe's work which correspond, with only minor changes in spellings

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[11] Ibid., pp. 126-135.

[12] J. O. Bailey, "Sources for Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, 'Hans Pfall,' and Other Pieces," PMLA, vol. 57 (1942), pp. 513-517. Bailey explains that Symmes' "Hollow-earth" theory maintained that the earth is composed of five hollow, concentric spheres with habitable living space between each. Furthermore, Symmes believed the poles to be open, allowing the oceans and the sea-creatures passage through mid-earth from pole to pole.

and punctuation, to Remarkable Events and Remarkable Shipwrecks.[13]

Poe's friend J. N. Reynolds headed an expedition to the South Seas in 1836. Robert Rhea contends that Poe capitalized on the popular attention drawn to Reynolds' expedition and that he borrowed freely from an address made by Reynolds late in 1836 and published shortly thereafter. Rhea offers passages from The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym which closely parallel certain passages in Reynolds' An Address on the Subject of a Surveying Exploring Expedition to the Pacific Ocean and South Seas. The passages, for the most part, constitute a history of exploration in search of a southern continent, beginning with Captain Cook in 1772 and proceeding through similar British and Russian expeditions. Poe, reports Rhea, "carried over from Reynolds' Address some seven hundred words out of a total of some fifteen hundred in the original."[14]

All of the studies cited, concerning sources for The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, demonstrate, by offering lengthy passages, that Poe did not merely depend upon the various sources indicated for factual material, but

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[13]Keith Huntress, "Another Source for Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," American Literature, vol. 16 (March, 1944), pp. 19-25.

[14]Robert Lee Rhea, "Some Observations on Poe's Origins," University of Texas Studies in English, X (July 8, 1930), pp. 135-143.

that he borrowed, verbatim, many hundreds of lines. The nature of this study does not permit the display of these instances of "borrowing." But, in light of Poe's concern for originality and loathing for imitation, these borrowed passages represent an interesting contradiction between theory and practice.

Synopsis of the Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym

In order that some coherence may be given to subsequent statements regarding Poe's theory of the novel, relative to its application in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, and because it is Poe's practice to offer a plot summary in his critical reviews, a synopsis of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym will be given here. The source for this synopsis is The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, contained within Volume V of the Nathan Haskell Dole edition of Poe's works (pp. 7-271).

The initial episode in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym bears little relation to the major part of the narration. Its function is to introduce two of the principle characters: Pym, and his friend Augustus Barnard. Pym explains in this episode that he and Augustus Barnard are two schoolboys of Nantucket. One night, at a party given by Augustus' father, a captain of a whaling vessel, Pym and Augustus get quite intoxicated. In his inebriated condition Pym elects to spend the night at the Barnard's. Shortly after retiring, Augustus awakes and suggests that he and Pym go for a sail aboard Pym's sloop, the Ariel.

Pym takes up Augustus' suggestion and the two of them venture out into the cold Atlantic with Augustus at the tiller. No sooner does the fury of an off-shore gale drive them far out to sea than Augustus passes out, dead-drunk, leaving Pym, who doesn't know how to manage his own craft, virtually helpless. In the midst of their difficulties, an inbound whaler rams the tiny Ariel, dashing the youths into the sea. Pym is knocked unconscious by the passing whaler, never even retrieved by its crew. The whaler arrives in Nantucket early in the morning, and the adventurers arrive at Augustus' home in time for breakfast, with no one's knowing of their harrowing experience the night before.

In the next episode of his narrative, Pym desires to go to sea aboard Captain Barnard's whaler, the Grampus. Pym's parents will not allow this to happen, so Augustus, who is to accompany his father on a whaling expedition to the South Seas, contrives a plan to stow Pym in the hold of the Grampus. Augustus provides a large box, in the Grampus' hold, amply fitted with all the conveniences Pym could want. This being done, Pym is smuggled aboard ship and the Grampus sets sail. The plan was to keep Pym secreted in the hold until the Grampus was sufficient distance from Nantucket to prohibit turning back. The plans go awry, however, and Pym is entombed in the hold for ten days. During his period of entombment Pym suffers from the closeness of the hold and a lack of water. When his

suffering reaches frenzy, a wild beast leaps at Pym's breast, causing him to faint. Upon recovering, Pym discovers the beast to be his faithful dog, Tiger (it is later disclosed that Augustus, as an afterthought, smuggled Tiger aboard to keep Pym company).

The plans have gone awry because a number of the crew mutinied. This mutinous band slaughter a part of the faithful crew and set the remainder (including Augustus' father) adrift in a lifeboat. The mutineers then divide into two factions: one desiring a life of piracy upon the seas, the other favoring an adventure cruise to the South Sea Islands. A member of the latter faction, Dirk Peters, befriends Augustus, and thus his life is spared. The two factions become hostile towards each other, and Dirk Peters enlists the aid of Augustus in the event of a clash between the forces. Augustus seizes this opportunity to inform Peters of Pym's presence in the hold. Peters is pleased by the news, for it means another member for his side, and thus Pym is rescued.

The inevitable clash between the factioned mutineers comes, at the same time as a horrendous storm at sea. At the end of the fracas, Pym, Augustus, Peters, and Parker, a mutineer from the opposing side, are the sole survivors aboard the crippled and half sunken Grampus. The four float for days on the derelict without food or drink. Parker at last suggests that one of them will have to be sacrificed for the remaining three. Pym alone is repulsed

by the thought of cannibalism, but at length, realizing that no other course is open to them, he consents and lots are drawn. Ironically, Parker, who suggested the sacrifice, is the victim of the draw. Parker's death is quickly brought about, and his flesh and blood maintain the survivors for several more days. They are once more at the point of death when they capture a sea-turtle which provides sustenance for a few more days. Augustus finally dies as a result of exposure and wounds received during the fight with the opposing faction of mutineers. This leaves only Pym and Peters aboard the floating hulk. They manage to exist for a time by eating barnacles scraped from the bottom of the ship, but at length they prepare themselves for death. On the twenty-eighth day of their dereliction, Pym and Peters sight a sail. They are saved by the crew of the schooner Jane Guy, outfitted for an exploring cruise to the southern latitudes.

The third and final episode of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym concerns the adventures encountered by Pym and Peters as they travel southward with the crew of the Jane Guy. On board the schooner, Pym and Peters are treated kindly by her master, Captain Guy. As the ship sails south Pym and Peters slowly recuperate from their weeks of suffering. During the passage into the waters south of the Cape of Good Hope, Pym, in a lengthy digression, gives an account of the history of navigation and exploration in the area, as well as a discussion of the animal

species inhabiting the many islands in these waters. Captain Guy discloses to Pym his intention of exploring the southernmost latitudes, all the way to the pole. This disclosure being made, Pym delivers another lengthy dissertation, this time concerning the history of exploration in Antarctic waters--beginning with Captain Cook and continuing through various British and Russian expeditions. Weeks pass by as the Jane Guy proceeds into the lower latitudes. Icebergs and occasional fields of ice are sighted. As the weeks become months the Jane Guy continues her course, encountering snow squalls, larger fields of ice, and a polar bear. On an island located below the eightieth parallel the crew of the Jane Guy uncover the remains of a primitive canoe. As the ship draws nearer the polar regions the current becomes noticably stronger, proceeding toward the pole at one mile an hour and causing considerable alarm among the crew. Five months after having retrieved Pym and Peters from the sea, the Jane Guy comes upon an island inhabited by a black race of people. The natives have the appearance of being friendly so Pym, Peters, Captain Guy, and several crew members go ashore. Pym describes the physical features of the island, which are, indeed, quite unique. The water of the island is particularly strange. Pym describes it as being made up of several colored veins rather than a whole mass of liquid. The natives proving hospitable, the Jane Guy remains at the island a month trading among the natives.

The crew grows incautious because of the friendly overtures of the natives and, consequently, are surprised in an ambush planned by the natives. Only Pym and Peters escape death.

The pair of adventurers are forced to remain in hiding for several weeks until they can find opportunity for escape. This opportunity presents itself when they chance upon several canoes along the beach. Pym and Peters overpower the native guards, taking one of them along, and flee the island by canoe. They float with the current southward and notice that the water temperature is becoming increasingly warmer. After several days, they enter a region where ashy white material floats down from the sky. Their native captive becomes terrified as they proceed farther south, and the ocean becomes rougher. At last their canoe is rushed into an enormous chasm in which stands a gigantic, shrouded figure.

Here the story ends. Poe explains that Mr. Pym has disappeared since giving the publisher the last few chapters and expresses the hope that the remainder of his narrative will one day be found and published.

Application of the Theory

Poe's reviews of novels display a rigid set of critical precepts to which novels coming under his scrutiny must conform. These precepts have been examined in Chapter II of this study. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym will

now be subjected to the rigors of these critical principles.

To Whom the Novel Should Be Addressed

It has been shown in Chapter II of this study that Poe felt that any novel aspiring artistic merit must address itself to an audience possessing sophisticated literary tastes.[15] In his review of Harry Lorrequer's Charles O'Malley, The Irish Dragoon, Poe says that mere popularity is not sufficient, for popularity indicates that the author has been guided by the tastes of the unsophisticated masses.[16] Yet recent scholarship has shown that Poe, in all probability, ignored his critical prejudices relative to the novel as a form of literary art and attempted to pen a work which would meet the requirements of popular tastes. It was shortly after a letter from his publisher indicated the popular preference for books of novel length that the first installments of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym appeared.[17]

Originality

In Chapter II of this study it has been indicated that originality and invention are two qualities Poe believed to be most essential, yet sadly deficient, in the novel.[18]

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[15]See Chapter II, pp. 57-59.

[16]Harrison, Works, pp. 86-87.

[17]Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York: American Book Company, 1948), p. 300.

[18]See Chapter II, pp. 59-62.

In his review of The Damsel of Darien, Poe indicates that its author (William Gilmore Simms) is guilty of a grievous sin, "the sin of imitation. . ."[19] In his review of Judge Beverly Tucker's George Balcombe, Poe says that pure originality is not possible, for it would be untrue to nature.[20] In another review Poe defines originality as being "novel combinations" of familiar ideas.[21] It can be seen, then, that to Poe, "the sin of imitation" is a matter of degree. One must necessarily imitate, believes Poe, but this imitation must be wrought through the "novel combinations" of familiar ideas. To what extent, then, does Poe imitate? Several scholarly sources previously referred to in this study have indicated that Poe relied heavily on existing journals concerning disasters at sea and expeditions into the lower latitudes.[22] This, in itself, would not condemn Poe for a lack of originality, for he combines a wide range of source materials into a new entity. However, these same studies indicate that

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[19]Harrison, Works, X, p. 53.

[20]Harrison, Works, IX, p. 261.

[21]Review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, Harrison, Works, XI, p. 105.

[22]Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 32. McKeithan, "Two Sources of Poe's 'Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,'" pp. 116-117. Bailey, "Sources for Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, 'Hans Pfall,' and Other Pieces," pp. 513-517. Huntress, "Another Source for Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," pp. 19-25. Rhea, "Some Observations on Poe's Origins," pp. 135-143.

Poe freely borrowed entire passages from his sources. This oversteps the limits of imitation set forth by Poe who, in his review of Joseph Rushbrook, accuses the author, Frederick Marryat, of plagiarizing two characters from Oliver Twist in order to capitalize on Dickens' success.[23]

Style

It has been noted in Chapter II of this study that Poe's critical reviews of novels evince a number of considerations concerning the propriety of style and some specific stylistic devices (see pp. 62-64.) Among these considerations is the keeping of one's subject constantly in focus and control. Poe accuses William Bird (in his review of Bird's novel The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow) of continually hovering around and about his subject.[24] Poe can be found guilty of this same hovering quality. Though the subject of his narrative is the adventures and suffering of Pym and company during their voyage to the South Seas, Poe indulges himself in frequent and lengthy digressions which have little or no immediate relevance to the subject of the book. Among these digressions are: a seven page account of the history of exploration in the antartic

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[23] Harrison, Works, X, p. 200.

[24] Harrison, Works, VIII, p. 72.

regions;[25] a discussion of the value of the Galapago turtle to mariners;[26] and an account of the islands and animal life in the area immediately south of the Cape of Good Hope.[27]

Decorum

In Chapter II, pp. 64-65, of this study it is reported that Poe justifies the depiction of the macabre only when this depiction pertains incontrovertibly to the denouement of the story. It would seem that the mere recording of Augustus' death, and the comment that his death was ghastly, would have served the narration as well as Poe's revolting description of the scene:

> It [Augustus' corpse] was then loathsome beyond expression, and so far decayed that, as Peters attempted to lift it, an entire leg came off in his grasp. As the mass of putrefication slipped over the vessel's side into the water, the glare of phosphoric light with which it was surrounded plainly discovered to us seven or eight large sharks, the clashing of whose horrible teeth, as their prey was torn to pieces among them, might have been heard at the distance of a mile.[28]

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[25]Dole, Works, V, pp. 185-192.

[26]Dole, Works, V, pp. 149-152.

[27]Dole, Works, V, pp. 170-178. Among the specific stylistic devices for which Poe expresses a dislike is Allegory (see Chapter II, p. 63). Patrick Quinn, in his article "Poe's Imaginary Voyage," Hudson Review, IV (February, 1955), p. 573, says that Pym's narrative has a double-level of meaning: one on the plane of reality, and one on the plane of dreams. While it is true that Pym's narrative at times seems to enter the world of dreams, it is not a subliminal plane of meaning, as in allegory, but a different level of perception.

[28]Dole, Works, V, pp. 158-159.

Poe also strongly objects to vulgarities of language, utterly condemning oaths such as "damn." (See Chapter II, p. 66.) Yet in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Poe has a Captain Brook (master of the vessel which rammed the Ariel) uttering the same oath.[29]

Character

In a discussion of Poe's concern for characterization, it was revealed that Poe demands only that characters be consistent and life-like (see Chapter II, pp. 71-73). In the drawing of characters in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym Poe disobeys, in several instances, his own rules. Reviewing The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow, Poe says that the author (William Gilmore Simms) has erred in drawing a character, Hyland, who, by the book's end, proves inconsistent with himself.[30] The same might well be said of one of Poe's characters, Dirk Peters. Early in the narrative Peters is a member of the bloodthirsty cook's faction of the mutineers (it is the cook who slaughters most of the loyal crew members,)[31] but, by the time Pym and Peters are rescued by the Jane Guy, Peters has proved so indispensable to Pym's safety that the mutiny is never

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[29]Dole, Works, V, p. 19.

[30]Harrison, Works, VIII, p. 71.

[31]Dole, Works, V, p. 62.

mentioned and Peters is treated, aboard the Jane Guy, with all the courtesy due an unfortunate gentleman plucked from the sea.[32]

In his review of The Linwoods, Poe charges that two of Miss Sedgwick's characters, both schoolboys, are inconsistent with real-life because they speak with the eloquence of classical scholars.[33] While none of Poe's characters demonstrate this particular inconsistency, two of them do behave in a manner inconsistent with real-life. Pym and Augustus are described, at one point, as "schoolboys."[34] It seems improbable that two New England schoolboys would be allowed to become intoxicated at a party of one of their fathers. Yet Pym narrates, in the episode concerning the Ariel, that "one night there was a party at Mr. Barnard's, and both Augustus and myself were not a little intoxicated toward the close of it."[35] In this same episode another inconsistency in character is revealed: Pym owns the sloop Ariel, yet, "knew little about the

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[32]Dole, Works, V, p. 169.

[33]Harrison, Works, VIII, p. 99.

[34]Dole, Works, V, p. 24.

[35]Dole, Works, V, p. 12.

management of a boat, and was now depending entirely upon the nautical skill of. . . [his] friend."[36]

Time and Place

It has been previously stated in this study that Poe does not object to chronological and spatial movement as long as this movement can be found to be essential to the whole of the story (see Chapter II, pp. 66-67). On this count Poe's practice is consistent with his theory. The narrative, after all, concerns itself with an adventurous voyage to uncharted regions, and a period of prolonged suffering at sea. Without the broad movement through time and place The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym would be stripped of its substance.

Truth in Fiction

Poe, in his review of Bulwer's Rienzi, The Last of the Tribunes, says that fiction frequently enhances "Historic Truth," giving it "spirit and vitality," at the same time that "Truth itself, in many a dull and lumbering Archive, shall be found guilty of all the inefficiency of Fiction."[37] Poe applies this principle in The Narrative

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[36]Dole, Works, V, p. 14. In passing, it may be said that Poe lacks a thorough acquaintance with sailboats, which manifests itself in improbability: the Ariel's mast is carried away, leaving her "under the jib only." (p. 17) A sloop has but a single mast; thus, if it were carried away the jib would go as well.

[37]Harrison, Works, VIII, p. 227.

of Arthur Gordon Pym. It has been indicated in an earlier section of this chapter (see p. 92) that Poe relied heavily on available publications concerning exploration, navigation, and disasters at sea. These works, then, constitute the "Truths" of Poe's book. Poe's powers of imagination have selected and combined elements from these documents, and added to them the fictional account of Pym's adventures, arriving at a new and vital work of art based upon historical facts.

Verisimilitude

In his review of Robinson Crusoe, Poe says that Defoe achieves verisimilitude by utilizing "the faculty of identification--that dominion exercised by volition over imagination which enables the mind to lose its own, in a ficticious individuality."[38] In another review (Lambert Wilmer's The Confessions of Emilia Harrington), Poe says that the author achieves verisimilitude by losing "sight of himself in his theme, and,. . . [identifying] his own thoughts and feelings with the thoughts and feelings of ficticious existences."[39] It can be seen that Poe has attempted to achieve verisimilitude in the manner suggested in his critical reviews. He has cloaked the entire fiction in the guise of a supposed factual account given

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[38]Harrison, Works, VIII, p. 170.

[39]Harrison, Works, VIII, pp. 234-235.

by one Arthur Gordon Pym.[40] By so doing, Poe has divorced himself completely from the work, and the pseudo-author, Arthur Gordon Pym, is able to identify, with all veraciousness, with the thoughts and emotions of the ficticious characters.

Plot

Although Poe's comments concerning the proper handling of plot are many (see Chapter II, pp. 73-76), he has been shown to prefer, in long works of fiction, a more strictly narrative form. In his review of Bulwer's Night and Morning, Poe says that if an artist persists in writing long works "he must content himself, perforce, with a more simply and more rigidly narrative form."[41] And, in his review of Marryat's Joseph Rushbrook, Poe says that "comment, in the author's own person," is a useful tool to the novelist. "It is far better to have a dearth of incident, with skilful observation upon it, that the utmost variety of event without. . ."[42] In this principle, more than any other, Poe is consistent in practice. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is, throughout, the tale of a single, omnicient narrator. And, disguised as Arthur

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[40] Dole, Works, V, pp. 7-9.

[41] Harrison, Works, X, pp. 120-123.

[42] Harrison, Works, X, pp. 201-202.

Gordon Pym, Poe is able to make frequent observations upon the various incidents.

Several of the critical precepts set forth by Poe in his critical reviews of novels suffer from disregard in his own attempt at the novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym --in particular, those dealing with the proper audience for the novel, the importance of originality, style, decorum, and characterization. These inconsistencies are in themselves interesting, but they by no means lessen the importance of his critical theory. Poe, after all, wrote forty-three critical reviews of novels, and only one novel. Had Poe written a number of novels displaying the same inconsistencies between theory and practice, one might begin to suspect his theory of tenuousness. But Poe's one novel, inconsistent with his theory, can only fortify the knowledge that Poe held the novel in low esteem.

CONCLUSION

While Edgar Allan Poe's literary criticism has been widely examined relative to poetry and the short story, his criticism of the novel has been largely neglected. This investigation has necessarily taken a broad approach in tracing the development of Poe's critical position regarding the novel. This broad approach has disclosed some interesting insights.

Poe, through the entire range of his literary endeavors, has shown himself to be a curious blend of Neoclassicist and Romantic. His penchant for rule making, as evinced by the body of critical material written during his career as a journalist, would seem to make Poe the inheritor of a literary tradition which, in recent years, has come to be known as Neoclassicism. In his "Philosophy of Composition," for example, Poe instructs that the proper method for constructing a poem is to first determine the appropriate length (one-hundred lines), secondly to consider the desired effect, thirdly to decide upon the tone, and so on.[1] For Poe there is no "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." There is, instead, a rigid, controlled method. Poe's critical reviews of novels, too, display a

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[1]Harrison, Works, XIV, p. 197.

set of rules for the construction of a long piece. Yet, in the midst of these rules, there is the rebellious spirit of the Romantic, expressing a loathing for imitation, and demanding originality in all works. Furthermore, Poe's subject matter exhibits the daring of the Romantic: the death of a beautiful woman, premature burial, madness.

This study has revealed that, despite the fact that he wrote a number of critical reviews on the subject, and attempted the form himself, Poe considered the novel to be an inferior form of art. As a poet and a tale writer Poe was concerned with the unity derived from effect, and was convinced that this, the most important aspect of poetry and fiction, was possible only in short works. Thus, when Poe finds a novel worthy of merit it is on the basis of its component parts rather than as a unified whole. In addition, Poe finds the simple, narrative form of the novel preferable to the novel of plot. Plot, believes Poe, when forced to thread a course through the many incidents and characters in a novel can only become overcomplex and overstrained. Interestingly enough, his own attempt at the novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, consists of three major episodes and is a simple narrative.

The justification for Poe's criticism of the novel being neglected is slight: Poe's prejudices against works of novel length are well known, and the novels he reviewed are, today, all but unknown. Yet Poe's criticism of the novel, found in his critical reviews, constitutes a

remarkable body of material: The reviews themselves demonstrate Poe's exceptional wit and shrewd, analytical approach; and, while Poe expressed no theory of the novel *per se*, a theory can be inferred from the critical statements contained within his reviews. This theory defines the province of the novel (the novel should be a picture of real life) and demands that the novel address itself to readers of sophisticated tastes; it expresses an abhorrance for allegory and requires originality in theme and characterization, while condemning the needless depiction of the grotesque and vulgar. The theory also requires that characters be consistent and life-like, decries the wanton neglect of the unities of time and place, and expresses the belief that the combination of fact with fiction produces the most vital truths. In addition, the theory suggests that verisimilitude is best achieved by the author's identifying himself with his fictionalized existences and suggests that the narrative novel is preferable to the novel of plot.

Poe's theory of the novel does not manifest itself wholly consistent in practice. *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* disobeys many of his critical precepts. However, Poe's reputation is that of a critic, not a novelist. As such, his criticism of the novel presents an interesting area for research.

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