

A STRUCLTURALIST READING OF SELECT WORKS BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

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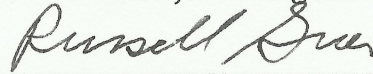
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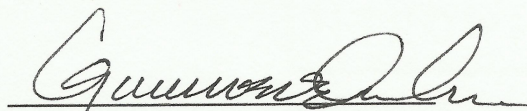
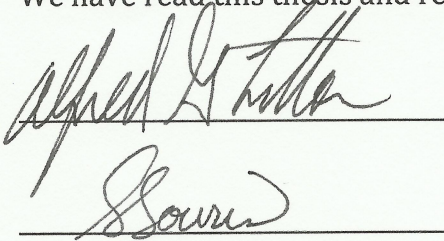
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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sara Taboada entitled
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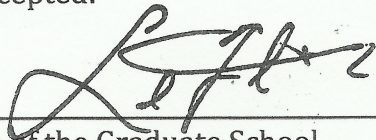
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We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:



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Accepted:



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ABSTRACT

SARA TABOADA

A STRUCTURALIST READING OF SELECTED WORKS BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

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I hypothesize that the methodical arrangement, which epistrophe and refrain adhere to throughout "The Raven," is important for a thorough understanding of the poem because it reinforces the narrator's growing state of insanity and ultimate loss of self. These figures of speech reflect the narrator's unstable state of mind, a state that inevitably leads to a collapse of the self. This instability is reflected in other Poe narrators. Through a review of the changing perception of the insane individual along with the growing social fear of premature burial in 19th Century America I will analyze a selection of Poe's short stories: "Berenice," "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," "The Mask of the Red Death," "The Premature Burial," and "The Tell-Tale Heart." The mental collapse that the narrators of these tales go through will then be compared to the narrator of "The Raven." Through this comparison recurrent themes will be highlighted. These themes include monomania (a form of insanity), the fear of premature burial, repression, the importance of midnight, and the return of both the deceased and he repressed.

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CHAPTER I

A STRUCTURALIST READING OF SELECT WORKS BY E.A. POE

In “The Poetic Principle” Edgar Allan Poe defines “The Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*,” (Poe and Thompson 78) and discusses how all poetic form is mathematical and how symmetry equals true beauty. This relationship between poetics and mathematics can be seen in “The Raven” through the use of refrain and epistrophe, both tropes under the umbrella of repetition. Figures of repetition create a “rhythmical pattern” that “[carries] the reader along the text, even as [they] establish a connection between words” (Wheeler). That refrain occurs in line six and epistrophe in lines four and five of every stanza is *very* formulaic. I hypothesize that the methodical arrangement, which epistrophe and refrain adhere to throughout “The Raven,” is important for a thorough understanding of the poem, because it reinforces the narrator’s growing state of insanity and ultimate loss of self. According to Jin Lei, the narrator’s fall into self-annihilation is a recurrent theme of Poe’s works; each narrator is “suspended in a despairing state of watching [his] mind breaking down and waiting for the moment of final destruction and annihilation” (47). Using the figure of epistrophe, in particular, the narrator repeats words, or, in some instances, entire phrases; the repetition of “Lenore,” especially, signals the narrator’s monomania, “a very popular

psychiatric diagnosis” in the 19th Century, of an exaggerated or obsessive preoccupation with one thing, in this case the memory of Lenore (Noll 278).

The narrator’s monomania reflects the importance psychiatry, as a science, was gaining in the 19th Century, and the role of this particular diagnosis. Therefore, to understand this poem, or any poem, from a structuralist perspective, according to Terry Eagleton, means to grasp “its language as being ‘oriented’ towards the reader from a certain range of positions,” which consists of the following questions: “what kind of effect this language is trying to achieve...what sorts of rhetoric it contains appropriate to its use, what assumptions govern the kinds of poetic tactics it employs, [and] what attitudes towards reality these imply”(Eagleton 120). Of particular interest to this analysis are the questions of rhetoric and implied reality. In this way, through structuralist theory, the figures of speech *inside* the poem will be connected to the cultural phenomenon of monomania occurring *outside* the poem, expressed in “The Raven” with the usage of rhetorical devices of repetition.

The patterned presentation of these figures of repetition highlights the contrast between ordinary speech and poetic discourse. Poetic discourse, as Terry Eagleton defines, is not just words strung together “for the sake of the thoughts they convey,” but instead, words meticulously ordered “with an eye to the patterns of similarity, opposition, [and] parallelism...created by their sound, meaning, rhythm, and connotations” (99). This interest in the language of the text stems from structuralism’s attempt to apply “the methods and insights of...structural

linguistics,” founded by Ferdinand de Saussure, to literature (Eagleton 96). In this way, the focus of structuralism, as Lois Tyson points out in *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, is not “what a text means” but *how* “a text means what it means” (220). To answer the question of “how a text means what it means,” structuralism seeks “to isolate certain ‘deep’ structures within...which are not apparent on the surface” (Eagleton 96). The figures of repetition Poe employs in “The Raven” are devices that are not “apparent” on the surface of the poem. However, once these figures are identified and analyzed they reveal much about how the poem achieves its effect.

Poe is a sophisticated writer, and as such, readers of his works need to be especially mindful to search beneath the surface; “if something looks simple, look again” (Amper 48). An example of the consequences of not searching beneath the surface is modern readers thinking the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is simply mad. Though this assumption is plausible, it is not wise for readers to jump to that conclusion when so many other avenues of speculation exist. Very much a story of its day, “The Tell-Tale Heart” must be examined, as should any Poe work, in the context of the time it was written. And, “At the time [The Tell-Tale Heart] was written, the situation of a murderer whose sanity is open to question played directly to one of the decades hottest controversies:” the insanity defense (Amper 166). As such, in Poe’s time “readers would have approached the tale and its narrator more skeptically...than [readers] do today” (Amper 166).

The same lack of investigation is often applied to “The Raven.” It is one thing to acknowledge that Poe uses alliteration and repetition in “The Raven”, it is quite another thing to look closely at what words are being repeated and the “role” they play in the context of the poem. Therefore, the first step is identifying what words are being repeated. Discovering why they are repeated is the second step. Only then, after this discovery, can a work be better understood.¹ Though Poe has made “key words” easy to identify, it is up to the reader to discover their purpose or function. What do the key words reveal? How do they enhance understanding? What might the author be trying to reveal through these key words? According to Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, “Only those words that [the author] uses in a special way are important for him” and for the readers (101). The sequential order in which epistrophe is presented in “The Raven” fits the criteria of special use.

While the repetition “of a single word over and over is awkward and boring” this is not the case with mathematical writing (Adler & Doner 110). Instead of “substituting different words having the same or similar meanings for important words” Poe chooses to repeat important words for definition (110). In “The Raven” words are not merely repeated for lack of a better word but key words are repeated sequentially, to emphasize their importance and lead the reader to discover the author’s hidden intent. This is the message or meaning the author has imbedded within the text, which can be unearthed through close inspection of the context surrounding the key words. Through these words Poe communicates the narrator’s

emotional and mental state, and the poem's effect is compounded. Rather than avoid monotony Poe makes it the tone of the entire poem. Since this is Poe's intended effect, he accomplishes the clarity of mathematical writing. Words repeated through epistrophe are arguably the most important, in regards to this analysis; all other words are important in relation to those key words.

In regards to mental state, monomania, as mentioned previously, is a recurrent theme in Poe's works. Egaeus, the narrator of "Berenice," diagnoses the disease that he suffers from as "monomaniac" in character (Poe 142). This self-diagnosis is correct, for monomania, as defined by Jean-Etienne Esquirol, an influential figure in the development of psychiatry, is an obsessive fixation on a single object, and Egaeus is obsessed with Berenice's teeth. Egaeus further confirms Esquirol's definition of monomania as "a disorder in which the patient would be driven to acts against his conscience" (Byrum) by removing Berenice's teeth while he is under one of his frequent spells of inverted reality, wherein he has no control over any of his faculties, mental or physical.

Along with the narrator's obsession is his isolation, another recurrent theme in Poe's works, both of poetry and prose. Most, if not all, of Poe's characters are isolated from society. Not only are they isolated from the world, but also, they are further enclosed by an existence centered solely within the confines of their own mind. In regards to Poe's tales of terror, Jacob Rama states, the "self becomes other and the tranquility of the domestic sphere is shattered by this alterity—be it

madness, disease, or decadence" (139). This "alterity," or otherness, can be seen as the narrators'—in some cases murderers'—attempt to defend their sanity but achieves the opposite and proves their *insanity*.

In regards to madness, the insanity-defense, as previously mentioned, was a controversial topic in the 19th Century. Poe's "familiarity with the scientific and medical accounts of insanity of his day has been well established, and his awareness of the issues of the insanity-defense controversy can be linked to two specific cases in which the defense was employed," that of James Wood and Singleton Mercer (Cleman 626). The Mercer case in particular was an influential part of public life in Philadelphia between 1843 and 1845, making it hard to imagine Poe was not aware or influenced by this trial (Cleman 627). Through his various editorial jobs, Poe was required to stay up-to-date on periodical writing (Bondeson 208), of which common topics included, not only court cases but cases, some fictitious others factual, of premature burial; and so, we are presented with another recurrent theme of Poe's writing. A structuralist reading of Poe's works must therefore begin with stepping back from entrenched perceptions and exploring the social context in which he was writing.

Through the lens of the insanity-defense controversy of the 19th Century, and the public fear of premature burial, Poe's narrator's unstable state of mind will be analyzed by comparing "The Raven" to select tales of terror and other of Poe's poems. The roles of the different figures of repetition in the narrator's final

destruction will be highlighted, as previously underrepresented tools in both tracking and proving the narrator's final and complete loss of sanity. With the various revisions and modifications Poe made, these figures not only remained but their efficacy was enhanced. The enhancement in the revision process attests to the importance of the placement of these figures within the poem and their role in communicating a thorough understanding of its content. A work cannot truly be understood without looking at all of its component parts.

In fact, in *The Anatomy of Poetry*, Marjorie Boulton points out the importance between the elements and the whole: "When we have separated the various things that go to make a poem what it is, we shall find that one thing is missing, part of the beauty of a poem, part of its form, is the way in which all the component parts are appropriate to each other and fit together" (6). It is therefore important when analyzing these figures of speech, not only to connect them to each other but also to tie them into the other literary elements used in the poem, while discussing them individually. In this way the content, the figures, and the context will be used to focus on how Poe's narrator is overwhelmed by monomania and driven to self-annihilation, the inescapable termination with which every tale ends.

CHAPTER II

19TH CENTURY DILEMMAS: INSANITY, BURIAL, AND POE OH MY!

The Birth of Monomania

Monomania, as a recurrent theme in Poe's works, is essential to understanding the narrators of both his poetry and prose. As such, readers of Poe must first familiarize themselves with the changing medical and social perspective of the insane individual during the 19th Century. While "The Seventeenth-century mind [had been] divided between belief in the supernatural and confidence in the newly burgeoning scientific method" (Karp 9), by the end of the 18th Century, Samuel Tuke and Philippe Pinel, both instrumental in the development of a more humane approach to the care of psychiatric patients, stressed an increase in "urbanization and industrial revolution [as] responsible for insanity because they separated man from nature" (Karp 13)

While Pinel was a key contributor to the change in diagnosis and treatment of mentally ill patients, his disciple, Jean-Etienne Esquirol, was equally, if not more, influential. Whereas Pinel "opened up a career in psychiatry" which "provided the first instance where insanity had been depicted as having an external appearance" (Davey), it was Esquirol who "In order to differentiate and clarify the many forms of mental illness, developed new terms" (Karp, 16) including the term monomania.

Although Esquirol coined the term, it was *his student*, Etienne-Jean Georget, who “first suggested that monomania could be used as a defense in the courtroom” (Davey). Georget, as opposed to Pinel, Esquirol, and other psychiatrists (then known as alienists because they dealt with people alienated from society) believed that “monomania could not be seen by the everyday-eye” and therefore, required a professionally trained eye to diagnose a patient” (Davey). In order to train specialists to make a diagnosis, Georget’s good friend, and influential French painter, Jean-Louis André Théodore Géricault, painted a series of portraits of subjects exhibiting different afflictions of the insane (Davey).

The aim of these portraits was to portray dominant facial factors of monomania, through emphasizing the eye and mouth (Davey). By depicting Georget’s patients with no backdrop behind them the patients are isolated from society, from the known, and places them in the unknown solitude of their mental state, where the only thing they are aware of is the object of their fixation; their gaze locked straight ahead, “searching for or focusing on the object of their fixation,” their unawareness of being observed, heightening their detachment (Davey).

The Many Faces of Poe: Gorgeous or Grotesque?

This emphasis on the face is reflected in Poe’s works by his own emphasis on facial features. In “Ligeia” (1838), the narrator devotes far more time to describing the title character’s face than he does in describing the rest of her body, which is

given two sentences, compared to the bulk of an entire paragraph, of which several sentences are devoted to describing her mouth:

I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly—the magnificent turn of the short upper lip --the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under --the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke --the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and **placid**, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. (Poe 161)

Following this in-depth description of her face, the narrator dedicates the next paragraph entirely to Ligeia's eyes. The focus on the eyes and mouth mirrors that of Géricault's portraits, where light emphasizes these particular facial features.

In "Berenice" the narrator, again, dedicates an entire paragraph to describing Berenice's face in great detail:

The forehead was high, and very pale, and singularly placid; and the once jetty hair fell partially over it, and overshadowed the hollow temples with innumerable ringlets now of a vivid yellow, and jarring discordantly, in their fantastic character, with the reigning melancholy of the countenance. The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupil-less, and I shrank involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. (Poe 145)

From the very pale and placid forehead to the hollow temples and lifeless, lusterless eyes to the thin and shrunken lips, this description is better fitting of a corpse than a living human being. This less than lively description of the female character reoccurs in “The Premature Burial,” where the lips of the “deceased” are described as having “the usual marble pallor,” and the eyes “lusterless. There was no warmth” (Poe 357).

A similarly morbid description is given to Ligeia, when on her death bed the narrator describes how “the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death” (Poe 171). Madeline Roderick is also described in a ghastly manner. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” both Madeline and Roderick are described as more dead than alive, sharing a remarkably similar appearance: A cadaverous complexion comprised of “lips somewhat thin and very pallid” (Poe 202) and “hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity” that “floated rather than fell about the face” the pallor of which was now “ghastly” (203).

Death: A Temporary Farewell

In life, Poe’s characters are described more corpselike than living and conversely in death they come to life. The contrast in facial features between the “living” and the “corpse” connects Poe’s fascination with the head and face to another of his fascinations, and not only a recurrent theme in his works but a grave fear of his time: premature burial. “To be buried while alive,” Poe writes, in “The

Premature Burial,” “is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality” (357). Whereas Tuke and Pinel stress urbanization and industrialization as the cause of insanity, Agutter et al. stress industrialization, and its role in the increase of mortality rates within the crowded new towns and cities as a key contributor to premature burial (134).

Burial as soon as possible after death became a necessity, and the short passage of time between death and burial lead to cases of premature burial in the 18th and 19th century (Agutter et al . 134). In the absence of bodily decomposition, due to the need for hasty burial, doctors could not tell the difference between the living and the dead (Bondeson 137). A longer passage of time in earlier centuries, “typically seven days,” served to prevent premature burial in most cases (Agutter et al. 133-134). However, change in social circumstances (industrialization) caused man’s primal fear of premature burial to reach a fever pitch in the 18th and 19th Century (133-134). “Its alleged association with epilepsy and catalepsy (which at the time were not clearly distinguished) made several appearances in 19th century romantic and realist literature in the English-speaking world” including works of Poe (133).

Given that “medical tests, fail to establish any material distinction between the state of the sufferer [of epilepsy] and what we conceive of absolute death” (Poe 362), it is no wonder that epilepsy, and catalepsy, were the maladies that consigned the women of Poe’s tales to live interment. The difficulty in distinguishing between

these conditions and that of death, each sharing so many similarities, lead to a heightened fear of live burial; Poe's statement in the above quote is no farce, "some of the leading European medical authorities on the subject were of the opinion that live burials were common" (Bondeson 208); in fact, "In the 1830s and 1840s, it was neither uncommon nor abnormal to be concerned about the risk of being buried alive" (208).

Transferring this topic of public fear to Poe's tales, his readers read in horror as Berenice becomes no more, "seized with epilepsy in the early morning, and now, at the closing in of the night, the grave was ready for its tenant, and all the preparations for the burial were completed" (Poe 146). Her epileptic condition "so closely resembled death as to deceive every one who saw her" (358), her ailment foreshadowing the fate that awaits, not only her but, Poe's other female leads; the fate that ends by awakening in a horror worse than death. Berenice returns from the tomb with a "shrill and piercing shriek" that brings Egaeus out of his own state of stupor after unknowingly removing her teeth (147).

Another of Poe's female leads, the Lady Madeline Usher, suffers from catalepsy, a condition closely related to epilepsy. In the case of either condition, "the sufferer falls into a deep, narcotic sleep, has no response to external stimuli, shows no sign of breathing, and is stiff and rigid to the touch" (Poe 205). Only as a corpse does "a faint blush" (211) appear on the Lady Madeline's face, which in life had been pallid and more closely resembled that of a cadaver. Such is the case of the victim in

"The Sleeper," the very title of which implies a body that is resting, not one that is dead, and yet the poem describes a corpse. The nameless narrator prays that the lady sleep "Forever with unopened eye" (43) in "Some sepulcher, remote, alone" (57). Far from ending peacefully, the poem concludes with the supposedly dead body groaning from within the grave.

According to Poe, "the well-known occurrence of such cases of suspended animation must naturally give rise, now and then, to premature interments" (357), and so, the narrator watches in awe and terror as Ligeia returns from the unknown illness that (temporarily) claimed her life by taking possession of Rowena's life, her beloved husband's second wife. As the corpse stirred "The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance" and "she who had been dead...[arose] from a desolation more appalling in its utter hopelessness than any" (172).

Appalling indeed is the horror that sweeps over Prince Prospero's guests in "The Mask of the Red Death," where death, masquerading as the living is described as itself: "His vesture was dabbled in *blood* — and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror" (Poe 303). Just as the many victims of premature burial in Poe's other works are described as dead or resembling death while they are still living, and alive when they are corpses in the grave, so too, here, the Red Death, the very incarnation of death, described as death, is believed to be alive, believed to be another guest, alive but dressed up from head to toe in clothing of the grave. Just as Poe's victims of premature burial are

described as “dead” or resembling death when they are living, and alive when they are “corpses,” death is equally misunderstood.

It is precisely this misunderstanding that consigns Prince Prospero and his guests to die at the hand of the pestilence they try so hard to avoid by isolating themselves in one of the prince’s many abbeys. This misunderstanding blurs the lines between life and death, as shown by the tendency to confuse temporary conditions of stillness with the eternal rest of death. The suspended animation to which so many of Poe’s female characters are prone is reflected in the ailment that each narrator suffers from as well, additionally blurring the boundaries of reality and fantasy. The frequency with which premature burial occurred is enough to terrify both victim and witness.

All the while the female character is going through the horror of an illness confused with death, leading to premature burial, the narrator is going through his own descent into a hellish madness of lost identity and control, concluding with the complete collapse of the self. The journeys that Poe’s narrators embark on “are life-and-mind-threatening journeys into the underworld, the dark or shadow side of self, in search of self-knowledge and wisdom” (Freedman , “The Porous Sanctuary” 31); knowledge and wisdom that are not attained.

Poe ‘s conclusion to “The Premature Burial” resonates the thoughts and actions of every narrator that comes before it, of every tale that precedes it: “they must sleep, or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber, or we will

perish" (Poe 367). "The terrors that must sleep lest they devour us, that must slumber lest we perish," according to Freedman, "are the terrors of the mind" ("The Porous Sanctuary" 22).

Decline into Madness

Through each narrator's fixation on his beloved, or the secondary character, not as a person, but as a physical object, and his isolation from society, as well as the inversion of reality and fantasy, the narrator is overcome by monomania and self-destructs. Jenny Webb points out that in seeking to achieve their desire, the narrators risk losing their identity (212), an identity that from the beginning of the tale is fading into oblivion. Whereas Egaeus has a first name, unlike most Poe narrators, who are completely nameless, the lack of a family name, which he does not divulge, takes away from the reader's knowledge of him and his knowledge and understanding of himself.

The absence of a last name takes away from an identity that the narrator spends the rest of the story losing, both a sense of and control over. In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator does not give his own name or the name of the old man. In fact, the narrator deliberately withholds the name of the old man by simply stating that he "called him by name" (Poe 318) instead of stating the old man's name. Nameless, both narrator and old man are condemned from the tale's commencement to oblivion. Even in "The Fall of the House of Usher" where readers know the characters' full names, Roderick and Madeline Usher, their isolation from society

takes away from their identity. More to the point, even here, where the protagonists are named fully, the narrator is not, remaining like so many others, nameless (Poe 141).

Shakespeare asks, “What’s in a name?” and ...centuries later Poe answers the question quoted worldwide: everything! And so Poe’s nameless narrators begin with an incomplete identity and lose control over what little sense of self they have to begin with to the point of complete oblivion. Even a name, a full name, cannot save the narrator or other characters from self-annihilation. For example, although Roderick and Madeline Usher’s first and last names are revealed, being the last of their family line foreshadows the fate from which their name cannot save them: oblivion.

Taking oblivion one step further Freedman proposes that “answering ‘Nevermore’ to the entreaty ‘Tell me what thy lordly name is’ means offering not only an answer that is a refusal to answer but a ‘name’ that, rejecting the demand for a name, insists on the condition of namelessness” (“Poe’s ‘Raven’” 25). Even Lenore, who like the Usher twins is given a name, is but a pawn in Poe’s evocative game of naming and namelessness. In stanza 2, where the narrator recounts his ineffective efforts to find comfort exists what would appear to be an internal contradiction (Freedman, “Poe’s ‘Raven’” 25):

Eagerly I wished the morrow,—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow from the lost Lenore—
From the rare and radiant maiden who the angels named Lenore
Nameless *here* for evermore. (9-12)

Even as he names her the narrator declares Lenore nameless. As so many before him, this Poe narrator tries in vain to repress but is unable to escape. According to J. Gerald Kennedy, that which will be “Nameless *here* for evermore” will be repeated. Lenore, therefore, denotes the absence that affects the narrator to the point that he “perversely and self-punishingly cannot resist naming” (Freedman, “Poe’s ‘Raven’” 25). Lenore, like Berenice, Ligeia, Rowena and so many others, is woman as truth sought. She is not a desired individual but desired knowledge. And truth, like Lenore’s name, that is nameless for evermore, is sought after in its absence and, as in all of Poe’s works, denied.

Like Lenore who is only described in reference to the angels naming her and her namelessness, Ligeia, too, despite the name by which she is referred, is nameless. The lack of any last name in conjunction with the narrator’s reference to her as “the image of her who is no more” (Poe 159) places Ligeia, like Lenore, in the realm of that which is sought but never attained and in whose absence waits oblivion. Absent and adored, Lenore, like Ligeia and other females of Poe’s works, becomes, “like truth or beauty, not only the unattainable but the unnamably unknown” (Freedman,

"Poe's 'Raven'" 26). That she is named yet simultaneously declared nameless is no contradiction. The poem identifies, insistently, perhaps defiantly, as do Poe's other works, "that which is most eagerly sought and ostensibly identifiable as that which, even when named, remains nameless," and in its namelessness remains unattainable (26). Blasing's proposal that Lenore may not be the name of the narrator's beloved, but instead a "'generic name for...the male speaker's anima-muse'" (26) is reinforced in stanza 5 where the echo whispers the *word* "Lenore" (28), not the *name* Lenore. In the absence of a name and an answer to the narrator's inquiry there is only darkness. She is nameless and absent, and the void each woman leaves cannot be filled. In its wake the narrator persists in vain but only destruction and oblivion await.

"Woman truth" as Freedman states "will not be discovered or pinned down" ("Poe's 'Raven'" 31). In either poem or tale of terror the truth will not reveal itself or cannot be discovered. Hard as he tries Egaeus cannot open the box, within which reside Berenice's teeth. Only when the box escapes his grasp and falls upon the floor does it burst open and reveal its contents. Once revealed, it is known that the answer sought is a terror that should have been kept locked up.

The truth, that which the Poe narrator seeks, is more than he can fathom, more in fact, than any mere mortal would dare to dream. Resolute in his endeavor the narrator regards no warning. Even the narrator of "The Premature Burial" who forewarns, "There are certain themes of which the interest is all-absorbing, but

which are too entirely horrible for the purpose of fiction," (Poe 356) does not heed his own advice.

Although each narrator professes to seek knowledge the real pursuit is to subdue. The resulting failure of the pursuit to which they are all subject is self-destruction. This very fate is reached in "Berenice," at the pinnacle of Egaeus' monomania, when he unknowingly removes Berenice's teeth, believing that in possessing them, in attaining the object of his desire and the cause of his monomania, he will be cured of his disease: "I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason" (Poe 146). However, the complete opposite is achieved. In attaining the object of his desire, the cause of his monomania, far from accomplishing peace, Egaeus, instead, suffers a total collapse of identity, a complete self-destruction. The narrators do not seek the return of their beloved, they seek the return of their reason, their ultimate desire is knowledge, knowledge they are never able to grasp.

The narrator's obsession with Berenice's teeth takes precedence over any other object, becoming his sole reality: "They—they alone [the teeth] were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life" (Poe 145). Although the narrator believes that possessing her teeth, the object of his obsession, will save him from his monomania and unstable state of mind, by restoring him to reason, it has the opposite effect. Not only does he not regain his reason he is thrown even deeper into self-destruction.

The attainment of the narrator's desire is destruction; "the drive towards revelation [therefore] collides with the fear of seeing and being seen" (Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 10). Possessing Berenice's teeth is not about possessing the object, i.e. the teeth, but about what they represent to the narrator: knowledge and understanding. In the faltering stability of Egaeus's state of mind he desires her teeth, believing, "que tous ses dents etaient des idées [that all her teeth were ideas]" (Poe 146) and that, in possessing them he will attain the knowledge he seeks to understand. However, once his desire is fulfilled, and he possesses her teeth, and all the knowledge of their ideas, he falls victim to self-destruction. Truth revealed turns out to be more terrifying than the greatest horror the imagination could contrive.

Proof of the narrator's declining mental state and loss of control abounds, all foreshadowing the end from which the narrator cannot escape. In the search for what they seek Poe's narrators fail across the board. As the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher" states, he should fail "in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which [Roderick] involved [him]" (Poe 205). Time and again Poe narrators fail in attaining what they seek.

In "Ligeia" the narrator struggles in vain to fathom the mysterious meaning of his beloved's eyes; spending long hours pondering the "expression of the eyes of Ligeia...possessed with a passion to discover" (Poe 162). Asking, without any hope of an answer, "who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor?" (Poe 162-163) and ultimately, "admits he lacks power to portray it," just as the narrator of "The Fall

of the House of Usher", who, "eager to rationalize and understand, comprehends almost nothing" (Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 25). In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the murderous narrator claims that it is "impossible to say how first the idea [of killing the old man] entered [his] brain," but once there "it haunted [him] day and night" (Poe 317; Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 26).

The narrator later claims that he "thinks" it was the old man's eye followed by, "yes, it was this" as if the idea has just come to him, making it seem as though the decision to kill the old man came to him very gradually (Amper 161). Claiming at first that he had no motive at all and a moment later stating emphatically that his motive was to destroy the old man's eye the narrator clouds his actions in contradictions. Unable to discern whether these contradictions are evidence of the narrator's mental confusion or of his deception the narrator defies the reader to understanding his muddled motives. Likewise, in "Berenice," as Freedman points out, the narrator bids defiance to either analysis or explanation of the disease that befalls him ("The Porous Sanctuary" 26).

Egeus is not alone in his defiance, every narrator struggles with his reason. In "Ligeia" the narrator felt "that [his] vision grew dim, [and his] reason wandered" (Poe 171) as control splits from his grasp. In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator desires to destroy the old man's eye and once that is achieved, though he gloats over his success for a bit, he ultimately falls victim to his own demise, at the very moment when he would be triumphant, the moment he thinks himself triumphant is the very

moment that the narrator loses: his identity, his self. In Poe "The truth that is identified...with a menacing or revolting evil, ugliness, corruption, horror, pestilence, or darkness becomes a truth of self" (Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 10).

By focusing elsewhere the narrator tries to avoid evaluating the self. His fixation with external objects, therefore, is a mechanism for repressing internal fears. In an attempt to create distance from the alter ego, monomania is a temporary escape from the subconscious, which inevitably, and ironically, leads to permanent mental entombment. Accordingly, each tale presents an obsession that merely delays the narrator's unavoidable termination. In "Berenice" and "Ligeia" the focus is on the mouth and eyes, respectively, whereas the point of fixation in "The Black Cat" (1845) is not a particular facial feature, but rather a particular animal.

The black cat, which the narrator names Pluto, functions as both the object of obsession and the cause of the narrator's detachment from society and self-isolation. While the narrators of "Berenice" and "Ligeia" are separated from society by location, either a library in the first or an abbey in the latter, the narrator of "The Black Cat" is isolated from society by his fondness of animals. This fondness for animals, which the narrator describes as his "principle source of pleasure," becomes the object of obsession. This narrator, in line with other Poe narrators, defends his obsession, in this case, with the explanation that animals are more reliable than mere men (Poe 349).

The story begins, as does the "Tell-Tale Heart," with the narrator proclaiming "Yet, mad am I not." This mirrors the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" asking "How, then, am I mad?" Similarities between these two tales of terror, in particular, abound for they were both published in 1843, "The Tell-Tale Heart" in January and "The Black Cat" in August (Baym 702, n1, 705, n1). The most disturbing similarity is that of the single eye. In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator obsesses over the old man's "vulture-eye," singular. Similarly, Pluto, the black cat, is left with a single eye after the narrator "deliberately [cuts] one eye from the socket" (Poe 350). Afterwards, "came, as if to [his] final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS" (350). Just as in "Berenice," where the narrator does not fully succumb to his disease and self-destruct until after he extracts her teeth, so, too, here, it is after bodily mutilation, after the loss of self-control, that the narrator proceeds to lose his former identity and is taken over by his "other," by the "perverseness" of the alter ego.

This, also, occurs in "The Tell-Tale Heart" where, not until after the narrator dismembers the corpse of the old man, by cutting off the head, arms, and legs, in that order, does he perish under his own derision. In both "The Tell-Tale Heart" as in "The Black Cat" the moment of total collapse takes place at the very moment the narrators believe to be a triumph. As the narrator talks with the police, in the very place where the body is concealed, in the old man's room or in the cellar, as is the

case of “The Black Cat,” at the very moment that the officers show satisfaction with the narrator’s tale, the very moment of triumph, the narrator’s downfall transpires.

Though the narrator “talked more quickly—more vehemently...arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations...paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides...foamed...raved...[and] swore!” (Poe 320) swinging the chair on which he had sat upon the boards that conceal the old man’s body, the ease with which the officers continued to chatter gives the impression that, contrary to the narrator’s claims, this is an internal battle, brought on by the sound of the beating heart.

Preceding this internal battle, the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” admits he has a disease at the beginning of the tale, and claims that this disease has made his sense of hearing more acute. Acute sense is also the “disease” that Roderick Usher suffers from in “The Fall of the House of Usher.” It is this very acuteness of hearing that enables the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” to hear the beating heart so clearly. But in his state of madness he does not recognize it as his own and believes it to be the sound of the pounding of the old man’s dead heart. Because of his supposed madness, the very madness he denies being subject to at the tale’s commencement, he believes that the officers are “making a mockery of [his] horror!” (705). He believes they, too, can hear the pounding heart, and therefore suspect, yet, as the narrator himself, pretend nothing is out of the ordinary.

The same fate awaits the narrator of "The Black Cat." At the very moment in which the police are "thoroughly satisfied and prepare to depart," the narrator in the glee from his own triumph places his hand upon the very spot behind which the body of his wife is concealed. Just as in "The Tell-Tale Heart" where the narrator sits upon the very spot that he buried the old man's remains. In this way, both narrators are revealing the place of concealment and by extension confessing to their crime. While in "The Tell-Tale Heart" the silence is broken by the sound of the beating heart, which drives the narrator to confess his misdeeds, in "The Black Cat" it is the sound of a cry "coming from within the tomb!" growing louder and louder, just as the beating heart, that reveals the narrator's wrong doing, and acts as confession.

Like the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart," as much as the narrator of "The Black Cat" seeks to avoid exposure and punishment, another part of him actively invites it. Both narrators reveal the place of concealment, inevitably ensuring their downfall. Though the narrator of "The Black Cat" claims that he raps on the wall that hides his wife's body "in order to ensure the police of his innocence... the effect is to bring his downfall" (Amper 151).

Like opium in "Ligeia," alcoholism in "The Black Cat" seems to be an attempt for the narrator to evade responsibility for his actions (Amper 154). Both opium and alcoholism give the narrator of their respective tales the scapegoat of an imagined "other." Such fantastic things occur that only could transpire in an altered or imagined reality. Through monomania, consumption, or intoxication fantasy

becomes the narrator's reality. This separation from reality is a means of escape and repression that inevitably leads to the narrator's self-destruction. In trying to evade, the narrators invite; when the murderous narrators try to assure the police of their virtue, they instead ensure the discovery of their vices.

In sitting above or placing their hand upon the place of interment the narrators are revisiting the place of burial. It is the very refusal or neglect to speak, directly, "of the corpse beneath the floor that" according to Freedman "compels its exposure" ("The Porous Sanctuary" 75). In burying the "other" the narrator tries to avoid his own interment. However, upon returning to the grave the narrator provokes the rising of the dead. But in Poe's world there is no empty grave and the narrator is forced to take the place of his alter ego. Yet, worse than the physical entombment of the "other" is the mental entombment of the narrator, from which there is NO escape.

For, contrary to the poem with which "Berenice" begins, "Dicebant mihi sodales, si sepulchrum amicae visitarem, curas meas aliquantulum forelevatas, [My companions told me I might find some little alleviation of my misery, in visiting the grave of my beloved]" no alleviation is realized (Poe 140). Visiting the grave of his beloved only deepens and makes more horrible the narrator's misery. As is the case with most of Poe's narrators, the moment of final realization, the moment when it is known that the dead is not dead, they proceed to final self-destruction. However, paradoxically, this very moment of realization depends upon visiting the grave.

While in “The Cask of Amontillado” the narrator knowingly, and viciously, begins to wall up his inebriated “friend” (Poe 420), in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” as in “The Black Cat,” the narrator misinterprets the source of the sound that condemns him. Believing the sound to be that of his wife, the narrator is shocked to find, upon the head of his wife’s corpse, the black cat, whom he unknowingly walled up within the confines of the tomb. The cat, or as the narrator refers to him, the “hideous beast whose craft had seduced [him] into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned [him] to the hangman” (Poe 355), like Berenice in the tale by the same name and Madeline Usher in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” has been buried prematurely. The return of the dead is the catalyst to the narrator’s collapse. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” Roderick, Madeline’s twin brother, is terrified when she returns from the family vault after being buried alive.

Fear of Return of the Dead

More profound than the fear of death itself is the fear of being buried alive. “To be taken into the darkness when life is extinct is a dreadful enough prospect, but for the Grim Reaper to come calling before the appointed hour is to condemn the yet-living to a seeming eternity of suffocative horror” (Wilkins 15). Yet, more terrifying even than premature burial is the *thought* of premature burial, under the control of the imagination that can take that terror to new and more horrific heights. Or, as Freedman states, “It is the imagination of man that may not be explored with

impunity, the imagination whose terrors must be suffered" to slumber, "at peril to our own sanity or survival" ("The Porous Sanctuary" 45).

Long before Berenice returns from the tomb, she holds control over Egaeus, whose sanity and survival are in peril. Her mere presence elicits a paralytic response: "An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me; a consuming curiosity pervaded my soul; and sinking back upon the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, with my eyes riveted upon her person." (Poe 145). Egaeus is as motionless in Berenice's presence as the narrator of "The Raven" is trapped in the bird's ever-present gaze. Likewise, in "The Black Cat" the narrator is irrationally and instantly possessed by "the fury of a demon" when upon returning home one evening he "fancies" that the cat is avoiding him and seizes the animal, who in fright at the narrator's actions bites him. One slight wound upon the hand and the demonic fury, which it incites, leads the narrator to know himself no longer (Poe 350).

Curiosity, or fancy, consumes him, and Berenice, like the cat, is the seed from which it stems; a seed of forbidden knowledge that consumes to the point of destruction. The narrator of "Berenice" like the narrator of "The Black Cat" or the narrator of "The Raven" is trapped motionless and speechless in the presence of the object of obsession, trapped under the gaze of that which the narrator has spent countless hours observing. This is an example of the potency of reflection in Poe's works. That which is looked at looks back.

The hidden goal of these Poe narrators is self-knowledge; their end, therefore, is the same as the object they observe because what they see, in effect, are themselves. Contrary to what these narrators purport, they do not seek to unravel the mystery of the object of obsession but rather the mystery of the self, reflected through the gaze of their obsession. But the narrator does not know it to be his reflection because he does not know himself. Wrapped in the confines of imagination the narrator is unable to distinguish fact from fantasy. Egaeus, describes how “The realities of the world affected [him] as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn, not the material of [his] every-day existence, but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself” (Poe, “Berenice” 141). Egaeus’ character is further reflected in the narrators of Poe’s other tales of terror. In mirroring Egaeus, all other narrators, then, show signs of monomania.

In a reality that is not real anything can happen and the supernatural reigns. The “other” takes over overwhelming the self, corpses return from the dead, and the self destroys itself. Reality is replaced by fantasy and fantasy, the fantastic, is terrifying: Chaos and indecision reign. “Was it my own excited imagination” asks Egaeus, “or the misty influence of the atmosphere—or the uncertain twilight of the chamber—or the gray draperies which fell upon her figure—that caused in it so vacillating and indistinct an outline?” (Poe 145), concluding that “[he] could not

tell,” an answer that is not an answer but a response as vague as the raven’s “Nevermore.”

To this deceptive illusion of sought knowledge Freedman adds, “Poe’s narrators, Egaeus among them, typically proclaim themselves relentless seekers of the truth, but the impulse they betray is less for discovery than exclusion” (“The Porous Sanctuary” 62). In the contrast between seeking knowledge and perpetual misunderstanding the alter ego always wins and the narrator is always kept in the dark, victim of an imagination that far from repressed is unleashed.² Freedman further proclaims, “what is repressed” or buried, much like the live corpse, “insidiously rises, often to destroy” (“The Porous Sanctuary” 34). In “The Raven” the narrator is, on the one hand, trying to forget the memory of Lenore, yet contradicts this by asking the raven questions pertaining to the very subject he proclaims to wish to forget. As such, it seems “There is virtually no way...to express absence that will not assert its presence” (Freedman, “Poe’s ‘Raven’” 27).

The narrator’s desire to repress is reinforced by his repetitive insistence that the raven “Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!” (83). In “The Raven” nepenthe, a drug that stimulates a sense of oblivion is what the narrator summons as a means to forget Lenore, even as he continues to inquire about her. This perpetual battle between repression and resurfacing in “The Sleeper” is evidenced by the narrator’s reference to both Rosemary, the herb of remembrance, and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Hades (Poe 49). In “The Black

Cat” the narrator tries to repress by avoiding the creature that he “gradually—very gradually...came to look upon with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence” (Poe 352). Try as he might he cannot be rid of or escape the cat, who even before he is prematurely buried, reappears and will not disappear.

The notion of repression and resurfacing mirrors the death scene of the Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremain, whose battle with the Shadow (death) results “time after time, until near the period of the gray dawn” in a hideous drama of repeated revivification (Poe 172). Death wages a mighty battle with her in its grip but the corpse, as the repressed memory, resurfaces, rising in both instances to the narrator’s astonishment, disbelief, and above all utter and absolute terror. In fact, premature burial and memory repression are one, for “The rise of the...corpse in Poe’s fiction is the rise of the repressed through the decorated lid of its idealization” (Freedman, *The Porous Sanctuary* 61).

If the corpse, like the memory, will not be suffered to slumber, then the narrators must perish, and perish they do. The horrifying possession of Rowena’s frame by Ligeia “is but the climatic revelation of the power that reduces her husband to a benighted child. Here is the power to erase another’s identity and replace it with her own” (Freedman, “*The Porous Sanctuary*” 83). Ligeia taking control of Rowena and her husband is mirrored in “*The Raven*” and “*The Black Cat*” by the beast each narrator fears, be it bird or cat, taking control.

In “The Mask of the Red Death” the very thing that Prince Prospero and his guests are avoiding, the red death, appears in the abbey, the precise place they have sought refuge and think themselves capable of escaping death. Rumor of the new presence, “having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise — then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust” (Poe 302-303). All Poe tales end in “terror, horror, and disgust.” In *Berenice*, the narrator is terrified, horrified, and disgusted by the bloody teeth that fall out of the box in his bedchamber. Egaeus comes face to face with his mental demons at the end of the tale, just as Prince Prospero and his guests come face to face with the masked figure of death that, along with darkness and decay, “held illimitable dominion over all” (304).

Darkness and decay, of the mind and self, are the fate that Roderick Usher meets in his terror at the sight of Madeline’s return from the family vault. “The very effort to exclude, ” be it Lenore, Ligeia, the black cat, the old man’s vulture-eye, or the Red Death, “from consciousness occasions their intrusive entry” (Freedman, *The Porous Sanctuary* 75). Poe’s tales and poems reinforce again and again that “thoughts...driven underground ...suffer the most hideous revival” (50). In “The Raven” the narrator tries to repress his memory of Lenore and in doing so the memory is revived, taking the form of the raven. In so doing, by suffering or compelling such thoughts to slumber, is, in effect, to subject them “to premature

interment” and therefore, “to invite the horror of an awakening within, a stifled arousal far more terrible than a conscious awakening ‘above ground’” (50).

Where there is awakening, there must first be sleep. And, in tales of premature burial and catalepsy, sleep bears special significance because both are representative of a deadened state of consciousness that identifies the sufferer of catalepsy as susceptible to premature burial (Freedman, “The Porous Sanctuary” 49). Not only are the women of Poe’s tales typically cataleptic but so, too, in many cases, are their narrators. In seeking escape the narrators desire a state of lethargy that mimics premature interment of the consciousness. A parallel exists between thought and possession, between the narrator’s preoccupation with annihilation and the thought that obsesses him to the point of annihilation, wherein, what is buried, like the still living corpse, awakens to darkness, in the catacombs of the tomb or the conscious (49).

This parallel is the very thing that the narrator of “The Premature Burial” professes at the tale’s end when he states that perhaps his “[charnel] apprehensions...had been less the consequence than the cause” of his cataleptic disorder (Poe 367). “The fear of death, in other words,” explains Freedman, “is the likely cause of cataleptic flight into the painless state of voided thoughtlessness” (“The Porous Sanctuary” 47). However, here, as in other tales, the narrator’s supposed explanation is nothing more than mere speculation. That “perhaps” his apprehensions on the subject of death had been the cause and not the consequence

of the disorder reinforces the narrator's desire for erasure instead of answers. Like so many of his predecessors, this narrator believes, foolhardily, that through isolation and repression he can escape the terrors of his mind.

Claiming he is cured of his disorder, just as Poe's murderous narrators claim they are innocent, neither is free from the horror they neglect or deny. The very *proof* the narrator in "The Premature Burial" provides as antidote to his ailment is, paradoxically, proof of his continued concealment. Instead of obsessing over death the narrator "thought upon other subjects than Death...read no 'Night Thoughts'—no fustian about churchyards—no bugaboo tales," in effect, does everything in his limited power to repress thoughts of death and the terrifying threat they present.

Unfortunately, as Freedman points out, "the mere presence of a repressed threat is sufficient cause for erasure" not however of the repressed but of the self ("The Porous Sanctuary" 73). And, indeed, the very thing the narrator professes at the tale's end to have ceased obsessing over is the very topic the tale is built upon. As such, the entire story belies the narrator's claim of thinking of other subjects than death and becoming a new man (Poe 367). In other words, exclusion "is a form of summons or invitation," where what is summoned is always far worse than what is repressed (Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 75) for mortal terrors listen to no reason (Poe 364).

When reason is gone, madness, brought on by fear, takes over. Madness such as is seen in Roderick, who “sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out as if in the effort he were giving up his soul” (Poe 215); fearing only one thing more than Madeline’s return from the grave: that she will take him there. In his manic state he asks, “Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart?” concluding himself a “Madman!” (215).

Terrified that Madeline will take him to the grave from which she came he waits in fear for her (or death’s) slow descent; she is his alter ego, his opposite in every way. Their illnesses are opposite, their gender is opposite, and if Roderick fears death Madeline becomes the corporeal form of that fear. Prince Prospero and his guests cannot escape the Red Death in their self-sought seclusion and neither can Roderick escape Madeline’s retribution. She is death come to claim him. Like Madeline and the Red death the raven is the embodiment of darkness.

In Lenore’s absence there is darkness “and nothing more” (24), or so the narrator would prefer there to be, in his efforts to forget. However, the darkness of stanza 4 becomes an echo that whispers Lenore “and nothing more” (30) in the following stanza. Then, in stanza 6 the eerie echo becomes the slightly more substantial wind that transforms, in stanza 7, into the form of the raven (Freedman, “Poe’s ‘Raven’” 26) who, “Perched upon a bust of Pallas” (41), represents not only darkness, repression and oblivion, but wisdom.

The raven is an external manifestation of internal personal destruction brought on by repression. When fear is buried, such as Roderick does when he buries Madeline prematurely, it inescapably resurfaces. In their thirst for “intellect” Poe’s narrators strive for the appearance of rationality but as the narrative progresses their mental state becomes increasingly unsteady (Lei 44). As they lose a firm grasp on reality the fantasy of the imagination takes control. Consistently, or inevitably, Poe’s tales and poems draw the reader, as they do the narrator, into the abyss of the unconscious, where the loss of the beloved is merged with the loss of the self, and the live burial of the beloved woman in the grave is mirrored by the burial of the vexatious male in the unconscious (Kennedy 541). In isolation Poe’s narrators bury themselves prematurely as a means of escape but inevitably collapse inside the very grave they have dug. Although the narrator spends his time in isolation endeavoring to repress, fear and terror can only be held at bay for so long before they come hurling to the surface, and when they do time is up!

Time

In “The Premature Burial” the narrator recounts an instance of live burial where, at midnight [Julien Bossuet] unearths the coffin, opens it, and is in the act of detaching the hair, when he is arrested by the unclosing of the beloved eyes” (Poe 358). In this one tale within a tale travesty is averted and the reunited lovers flee to America together. Berenice is not so fortunate; her shrieks do not deter Egaeus from

detaching all her teeth. In fact, time and time again in Poe's tales of terror the narrator's collapse occurs following the strike of midnight.

Upon waking from his latest state of stupor, or as he calls it "confused and excited dream," Egaeus recounts that "[he] knew that it was midnight, and...was well aware that since the setting of the sun Berenice had been interred," (Poe 146-147). The significance of this particular awakening is what follows. Having left his fantasy dreamland, Egaeus' return to reality is met with unimaginable terror: the unearthing of his involvement in the mutilation of the still living corpse of his beloved Berenice. Likewise, In "Ligeia," "At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning [her husband], peremptorily, to her side, she bade [he] repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before" (Poe 165). When the husband-narrator finishes reading "The Conqueror Worm" Ligeia "half shrieked...leaping to her feet" then, "as if exhausted with emotion...she died" (166).

Later in the story midnight strikes again, this time upon the Lady Rowena. At this point in the tale the narrator's uncertainty has mounted and he vaguely informs that "It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for [he] had taken no note of time...when the hideous drama of [revivification] commenced," concluding with the return, not of Rowena but, of the Lady Ligeia (172), whose return destroys not only Rowena but the narrator as well.

In "The Cask of Amontillado" it is midnight when "there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in" (Poe 420) for the completion of Fortunato's premature interment. In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator enters the old man's room "every night just at midnight" for eight long nights (Poe 317) and looks in on the old man while he slept. For the first seven nights the narrator finds the old man's eye closed and so is unable to do the deed. Only on the eighth night when the old man wakes and opens the evil eye is the narrator able to kill him. Sleep is safety; every night that the old man remained asleep is a night he remained alive. However, once the old man wakes and the evil eye opens the murderous narrator commits his misdeed, killing and cutting the old man in three "at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence" (Poe 319-320). At length, even in "The Mask of the Red Death," there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock...[and] before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure" (Poe 302).

In Poe's tales of terror, as shown by the examples above, the time of madness reaches its height, its end, at midnight, the very time at which several of Poe's poems begin. Whereas in his tales of terror the woman is alive at the beginning and upon her death we see the narrator collapse, many of Poe's poems begin at the very moment that marks the descent into oblivion. In "The Mask of the Red Death" death appears at midnight and takes "dominion over all."

"The City In the Sea" begins at this very point of take over, where "death has reared himself a throne" (1). In "The Sleeper" death, like the pestilence in "The Mask of the Red Death," takes dominion, beginning, as is the case with "The City In the Sea," where the tales of terror end. The poem begins "At midnight in the month of June" (1) the very hour in which Berenice, Ligeia, and Rowena are all claimed by death. The poem proceeds to describe a body buried alive, where sleep has once more been confused for death, the fate to which all three women, in the aforementioned tales, are subject. Likewise, "The Raven" begins like "'The Sleeper," "Once upon a midnight dreary."

Pondering over "quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore" the narrator of "The Raven" resembles Egaeus, in "Berenice," who spends his time in the library pouring over books, falling in and out of a cataleptic dream state of fantasies. In "The Raven," "the blurring of the distinction between interior and exterior, imagination and fact, begins with the 'nearly napping' of line 3 that introduces the pervasive possibility of the experience as a dream" (Freedman, "Poe's 'Raven'" 29). The student-narrator, therefore, nodding "nearly napping" is equivalent to Egaeus slipping in and out of lethargy, confusing fact with fantasy until they become, not only inverted but also indistinguishable.

This is not the only commonality the poem shares with Poe's tales of terror. In "The Raven," as in his tales of terror or other works, Poe touches on "the relationship between self and other; imagination and world; and the limits of human understanding" (Freedman, "Poe's 'Raven'" 27). As such, all of Poe's tales, whether prose or poem, deal with similar subject matter, the loss or absence of a woman, by illness and or premature burial, and the narrator's decline into madness that, aided by the mirroring of self and other and the inversion of reality and fantasy, leads to self-destruction, showing Poe's works follow a format (a Poe-pattern).

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EPISTROPHE

The notion of a pattern is seen in the meter of the “The Raven,” which Poe discusses in “The Philosophy of Composition.” Each line corresponds to a particular meter, and this sequence is repeated in every stanza: the first line consists of eight feet, the second of seven and a half, the third of eight, the fourth and fifth of seven and a half, and the sixth of three and a half feet (“Philosophy of Composition” 730). Although this format is followed throughout most of the poem there are a few stanzas that deviate. Refer to Appendix C for clarification. George Kelly points out, in “Poe’s Theory of Beauty,” that “*the root of all beauty*” is a “merely mathematical recognition of *equality*” (535). The beauty of “The Raven” therefore can be credited to its mathematic qualities, achieved through its meter and the use of different devices of repetition, particularly refrain and epistrophe that combined form the outline of the poem.

Comprised of one hundred and eight lines “The Raven,” as Shelley Costa Bloomfield points out in *The Everything Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*, tramples on Poe’s own belief “that a good poem should not exceed an arbitrary one hundred lines” (187). The poem is further divided into 18 stanzas, each divided into six lines, which are additionally divided between “octameter,” “heptameter,” and “tetrameter”

("Philosophy of Composition" 729). In this respect the poem can be seen as an equation wherein the numbers vary. Like the numbers in a math equation, the words used in Poe's work all play an important role. Each word is carefully selected to reach the end goal of Poe's poetry or prose work: creating an effect. The form of "The Raven" is *very* mathematical. This form relates to Poe's theory of beauty being based on an aesthetic principle that "consistency is merely perfect symmetry" (Kelly 536).

Perfect symmetry is exactly what Poe has achieved in the stanza-form of "The Raven." However, it is important to note that the methodical precision to which the poem adheres is not all encompassing until revisions are taken into account. Corresponding to the meter used in verses four and five of each stanza is the use of epistrophe, a figure of speech under the umbrella of repetition, wherein there is "repetition of a closing word or words at the end of several successive clauses, sentences, or verses" (Lanham 190). To this George Kelly adds that, "Verse originates in the human enjoyment of equality, [and] fitness. To this enjoyment also, all the modes of verse—rhythm, meter, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the refrain, and other analogous effects—are to be referred" (535).

The use of the figure of speech epistrophe in conjunction with the seven and a half-length meter (or heptameter) repeated throughout the poem, in the fourth and fifth verses of every stanza is *very* formulaic. However, as previously mentioned, to achieve consistency in the meter and rhyme of the poem revisions were

necessary. Before “adjure” was changed to “burden bore” stanza 11 did not follow as closely to the rhyme pattern to which the rest of the poem conforms. Only once this revision to stanza 11 is made and “adjure” changed to “burden bore” does the rhyme scheme of this stanza fully match the rest of the poem (ABCBBB). Prior to this modification, stanza 11 is the only stanza where epistrophe appears without the use of a word that ends in “-or”, present in every other occurrence of this figure of speech.³

Taking into consideration the changes made to the poem is important to a thorough understanding of “The Raven.” Unlike practical writing, creative writing strives to emphasize, or even over-emphasize, the opaqueness and ambiguity of language; poetry in particular endeavors to capitalize on the multiple meanings associated with any *one* given word. As Adler and Doner point out, “imaginative writing [such as poetry] relies as much upon what is implied as upon what is said” (206). Therefore, the revisions Poe made in his copy of *The Raven and Other Poems* (See Appendix B) are paramount in revealing Poe’s intentions and, additionally, the significance of rhetorical figures, such as epistrophe, in achieving the desired effect.

Whereas Poe made many grammatical changes to “The Raven,” there are only a few changes in wording. The few word changes that were made, however, are profound to the poems desired effect, considering the connection between words, meter, rhyme, and repetition. Before the narrator became startled in stanza 11 he is “wondering,” still very much in his mind. In view of the narrator’s reactive change of

expression and spirit in the stanzas that follow startled is more fitting. Startled, as Jorie Graham points out, “is born from a suddenness, causes recoil, reactive changes of expression, which the more internalized ‘wonder,’ whose attributes include an observing scrutiny, a slow seepage of change over the spirit,” does not (237).

The suddenness of startled highlights the change the rest of the poem takes. No longer is the narrator physically inactive, sulking, mourning, or pensive, but quite the contrary, very *reactive*. To fully appreciate the magnitude of this seemingly subtle change the poem must be evaluated in its entirety, from eerie start to chilling ending. Only then is it revealed that the stillness broken is both sound and more importantly the narrator’s previous stillness and state of inactivity.⁴ Once broken he no longer marvels at the bird but instead wheels “a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust, and door” (68).

Careful analysis of “The Raven,” or any poem, is additionally necessary as a result of language being a complex and relatively opaque medium of communication (Adler & Doner 166). In this respect, of particular importance to “The Raven,” are both changes and recurrences in vocabulary. Unanalyzed, “words, sentences, and paragraphs are opaque” and remain barriers rather than mediums of communication (Adler & Doner 120). While repetition emphasizes words, the sequential presentation of epistrophe in “The Raven” further emphasizes the words being repeated and distinguishes them as key words. However, to merely stop at that is to stop short. If the key words being repeated are not further analyzed their

role in the text cannot fully be understood; left simply as “repetition” a barrier still exists and what these words communicate is not discovered.

Without further analysis “The Raven” remains known for its ominous refrain “Nevermore” and the other figures of speech are ignored forevermore. Therefore, of particular interest to this investigation, in addition to refrain is epistrophe. These figures, in conjunction with meter and rhyme form a template that the poem obeys. The symmetry of the figures and meter give the poem stillness as the rhyme simultaneously gives it movement and momentum. In the section that follows the role of epistrophe, and the key words it highlights will be broken down stanza-by-stanza to get a closer look at how each use of epistrophe affects the poem, as well as, how and, more importantly, what they bring to the poem and reveal about the narrator.

The first stanza introduces a narrator who is attempting to reassure himself, repressing any fear that the rapping at his chamber door might have excited, and indeed does excite, with the dismissive statement “‘Tis some visitor,’ I muttered, ‘Tapping at my chamber door’ (5). Door is not merely the first epistrophe in the poem but the most emphasized key word reappearing in five other stanzas. As such, this particular key word represents 1/3 of the words that Poe highlights through epistrophe. Important to the analysis of epistrophe are the events that take place in the lines in which they appear. The narrator’s muttering, therefore, should not be overlooked. To mutter is to speak indistinctly in low tones, very close to murmuring.

Muttering lacks conviction and so the narrator speaks with uncertainty to assure himself, yet is unable to.

Further assurance through repression follows in the second stanza where the narrator describes Lenore as “rare and radiant” revealing that it is the angels who have named her Lenore; this admission adds to the notion that the name of the maiden he mourns remains unknown and therefore nameless; like the narrator and the bird whose supposed “name” is both answer and denial to answer. Without this line, “For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore” (11) there would be no description of Lenore. However, the inclusion of this description presents Lenore as both someone the narrator wishes to forget and, through the repetition of her name, as the narrator’s means of self-torture. Even as the narrator introduces her as someone whom he wants to repress, by introducing her in the first place he refutes the very repression he claims to seek. The continual repetition of “Lenore” is not only narrator’s means of self-torture but the second most repeated word via epistrophe.

As in the first stanza, the third stanza finds the narrator reassuring himself that there is merely a visitor “Some late visitor entreating entrance at [his] chamber door” (17). Not only is the narrator attempting to reassure himself, but also more importantly he is repeating “door.” The correlation between the narrator reassuring himself and repeating “door” suggests that what awaits on the other side of the door is not in fact a visitor but the narrator’s repressed fear. Like Madeline Usher who

escapes the vault and returns to claim Roderick's life, the repressed fear is once again escaping its confinement to seek vengeance upon its repressor. Adding to the narrator's growing apprehension of the return of his repressed fear is the rustling of the purple curtains. Francis F. Burch points out that the introduction of the "silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain" (13) is disturbing (81), suggesting "Since there is no possible cause for the movement of the curtains at this point, the image should be relocated after the opening of the window in stanza seven" (81).

However, Poe has placed the rustling curtains exactly where he wants. The image is meant to be disturbing, the atmosphere supernatural. There is nothing unusual about curtains rustling when there is an open window, but if curtains rustle where there is no source for this movement there is definitely cause for alarm and unease. Equally awe-inspiring is the raven hair in "Ligiea" streaming in specially designated indoor wind. In the tale, as in the poem, the image is thrilling and meant to draw the reader and the narrator ever further into the unknown (Amper 68). After all, the rustling is a cue to the switch from reality to fantasy. And fantasy as seen again and again in Poe's tales of terror is destructive. If the narrator is seeing curtains rustling where there is no open window to provide a breeze it is safe to assume his subconscious has taken control.

Reinforcing the notion of altered reality is the "faintly" of stanza four that denotes barely perceptible sound and movement, faint sound and movement as if not there at all, as if imagined. The "That I scarcely was sure I heard you" (23)

further enforces the narrator's uncertainty as to whether what he heard, or thinks he has heard, is real or not. Complimenting this supposition of an imagined visitor is the narrator seeing "Darkness there, and nothing more" (24) when he peers outside the door. Contrary to his statement in stanza three that it is merely a visitor entreating entrance, in seeing nothing, the narrator reinforces that what is actually knocking at his chamber door is his own repressed fear. Alternately, Freedman suggests, "In seeing darkness beyond his door, the student in effect has seen Lenore, that which must remain perpetually absent" (Freedman, "Poe's 'Raven'" 26); and, that which must remain perpetually absent is knowledge, answers, and understanding. However, as both the narrator's desire and fear Lenore does not remain absent returning again and again in the epistrophe of other stanzas, as well as the manifestation of the raven. The moment when the narrator seems to attain his desire is in fact when he is destroyed: the moment when the murderous narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" believe they have deceived the police and triumphed is actually the moment they are condemned.⁵

In fact, the echo that answers the narrator back in stanza five is to become or take the form of the raven two stanzas later. In line 28 Lenore is followed by a question mark signaling the narrator's continued uncertainty. However, in line 29 Lenore is followed by an exclamation. The narrator whispers the question "Lenore?" as he peers into the darkness looking, searching for her and finding nothing but darkness, emptiness, and oblivion. Following the question "Lenore?" there comes

from the darkness an echo in response, mimicking the narrator but with affirmation. The darkness of the previous stanza becomes an echo of “Lenore” that becomes wind and then...raven.

Without epistrophe there would be no echo, which reveals so much about the narrator’s faltering sanity. The whispered Lenore in stanza five builds suspense and heightens fear. The narrator standing still in silent darkness, unmoving, and unspeaking hears only a whisper that like the rustling curtains has no possible source but his mind (Burch 81).

In reaction to the whispered response “Lenore!” the narrator reveals the escalation of his state of excited terror in stanza six. The beating heart he has been trying to still since stanza three has not ceased beating chaotically, because he is still trying to slow it down: “Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore— / Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore” (33, 34). Through this epistrophe the narrator tries to present himself, like other Poe narrators, as a relentless seeker of the truth; yet, like other Poe narrators, he betrays this pretense by reducing any and all possible causes to merely the wind and nothing more, trying as always to rationalize the irrational and to appease his excited state of growing terror.

However, his self-assurances are in vain because far from nothing or merely the wind upon flinging the shutters open for confirmation, in stanza seven, in flutters a raven. Immediately upon entering, the bird "...with mien of lord or lady perched above my chamber door—/Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door" (40-41). Installing himself above the door the raven, already an omen of death, symbolizes the return of the repressed from confinement to condemn its repressor. As always, what is avoided cannot be escaped. "Perched like truth or wisdom on the bust of Pallas," Freedman claims "it is that which blindly and mercilessly resists the ambition of the pleading will, insisting on what is and what must always be" ("Poe's 'Raven'" 29). The bird, perched on the bust of Pallas, represents, like Ligeia and Berenice, wisdom, truth, and knowledge sought.

Seeking truth, wisdom and knowledge, stanza eight presents the first of the narrator's many inquiries to which the bird replies "Nevermore." "Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!" (47) is not a question that the raven responds to but a demand. Without this line there is nothing yet to prompt the bird's reply of "Nevermore." As Poe states in "The Philosophy of Composition," by employing the word as answer to the lamenting narrator's queries it could be used continually for various applications (165). The stanzas that follow demonstrate a variety of applications through different inquiries. Highlighting "shore," in "Nightly shore" and "Plutonian shore" could imply a precipice, not merely the edge of the ocean but also the edge of reason and rationality. "Nightly shore" implies the edge of

darkness, possibly of life and death, which “Plutonian shore” in directly referencing the realm of the underworld in Roman mythology where the dead dwell reinforces, adding to the ever-growing connection between the raven and death.

Stanza nine further reinforces the connection between bird and death made in stanzas seven and eight by emphasizing through epistrophe that the bird is “above the chamber door—/...upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door” (52-53). As in previous stanzas where “door” is repeated, here, too, uncertainty is also present. From being perceived as a blessing in line 52 the bird turns into a possible beast in the next line. The narrator cannot decide whether it is merely a bird or perhaps a beast. The uncertainty of “bird or beast” goes against the earlier pronouncement that “...we cannot help agreeing that no living human being/ Ever yet was blessed with seeing...” (52-53) bird with such name as Nevermore. The bird or beast, however, is yet another uncertainty in a fast growing list.

This sudden alteration is not new to the Poe world; the instantaneous switch from awe to violent hatred occurs throughout his works. In “The Black Cat” upon the narrator’s return home late one night he is instantly possessed with the fury of a demon and cuts the cat’s eye out of its socket (Poe 350). So fast and sudden the change is almost imperceptible the narrator changes and becomes other, unrecognizable to the self. From the narrator’s love towards the first cat to his hate of the second, the shift from delight to disgust is seen again in the narrator’s love for Ligeia and hate for Rowena. So, too, is this seen in “The Raven” when the bird

transforms from marvel to menace and the narrator's curious delight towards the bird or beast turns to frustration and discontent.

Following his latest state of uncertainty, stanza ten finds the narrator muttering once more, not of visitors but friends and hopes gone: "Other friends have flown before—/ on the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown before" (58-59). Friends and hopes are used synonymously here to represent things absent in the narrator's solitary confinement. Removed from society there are no friends and removed from Lenore there is no hope. Alone and hopeless the narrator mourns the absence of his beloved with only his books to console him and create an escape from harsh reality, which he wishes to abandon just as Egaeus seeks in his library. The repetition of "before" directs the reader to the past, which stands in direct contrast to the narrator's claim in stanza two of wanting to forget; "before" like the repetition of "explore" in stanza six, tries to distract from the narrator's wish of repression. Without repression there cannot be return and without return the narrator is unable to inflict harm upon his soul.

Startled out of his reverie by the raven's reply, the narrator redirects his dead hopes upon the raven, concluding that the bird came to its current state of nevermore by mimicking a former unhappy master, "Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore" (65). As a funeral song, dirge implies that the bird's hope, like the narrator's, has died. That the death of the bird's hope is reflected in the death of the narrator's hopes creates a connection between bird and narrator; a

connection replicated in the “burden bore” epistrophe. That the raven “bore” this melancholy burden “Of Never-nevermore” on the surface implies simply that the melancholy has made him weary, but looking beneath the surface “bore” could imply that the melancholy burden was thrust upon him, which the bird then pushes on the narrator, just as Madeline Usher bore Roderick to the floor a corpse. In the final stanza the raven has borne the narrator to the floor a victim of the shadowed projection of his subconscious fears.

Before the modifications to this stanza, the epistrophe originally ended in “adjure.” Adjure, which means to urge or request someone to do something, is quite different than “bore” which means to pierce, perforate, or to force one’s way, and to weary by being dull, uninteresting, or monotonous. The latter, “bore,” definitely fits the continual repetition of Nevermore, an unvarying single tone, much better.

Another modification to this stanza is Poe changing “Wondering” to “Startled” (See Appendix B). Taking into consideration this modification Poe states in “The Philosophy of Composition” that the narrator is “startled from his original *melancholy* by the melancholy character of the [“Nevermore”]—by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that utters it—“ (165).

The “Followed fast and followed faster” in conjunction with the “Startled” that the stanza begins with signal a drastic change in the narrator’s docile behavior and pace of the poem. From muttering to whispering to marveling, and back to muttering the stillness, and silence, are indeed broken “by reply so aptly spoken” (61). Stanza eleven is important because it signals a drastic change in the narrator who is no longer ponderous but reactive and violent. This change is only drastic, however, once Poe modifies “Wondering” to “Startled” and “adjure” to “bore.”

In unity with the fast pace turn the poem takes in stanza eleven and the narrator’s reactive stance after being startled into action stanza twelve demonstrates the narrator’s growing disdain towards the bird that has gone from beast in stanza nine to “grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore” (71). This description of the raven indicates the narrator is long past the point of marveling astonishingly at the bird. No longer does “ghastly grim” suffice to describe the narrator’s feeling towards the bird; therefore, more synonyms are added to stress the narrator’s growing frustration. Leading up to his spate of superlatives the narrator “wheeled a cushion seat in front of bird, and bust, and door” (68). In the midst of the narrator’s growing frustration he reverts once again to the past.

The repetition of “yore,” like the repetition of “before” indicates the narrator’s reminiscing instead of repressing. Yore refers to former times and is used in nostalgic, or mocking-nostalgic, recollection. Referring to the raven as a “bird of yore” places the bird in the past connecting it with that which the narrator wishes to forget. As the manifestation of the narrator’s subconscious fears it is fitting that the narrator would continue trying to repress his fears, even or especially as they escape from his mental confines and control.

In stanza thirteen, the epistrophe created by lines 76 and 77, “the lamp-light gloated o’er,” is very important. As Freedman states, “the gloating lamplight evokes the poetic imagination that seeks to illuminate the darkened world of the raven, looking for relevance and meaning in the speech that, devoid of limiting context, contains none” (“Poe’s ‘Raven’” 29). Attempting to regain his composure and his reason the narrator tries to divine what the raven means in “croaking ‘Nevermore’” (72).

“This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining/
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o’er,/But whose
velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o’er,/ She shall press,
ah, nevermore!” (75-78)

The repetition of “lamp-light gloating o’er” created by epistrophe evokes an illumination that by the poem’s conclusion will be turned off and covered in darkness. The lamplight that reflects light o’er the seat the narrator sits on while “engaged in guessing” (73) streams light o’er the raven in the final stanza creating the shadow from which the narrator’s soul “Shall be lifted nevermore!” (108).

Although light is symbolic of reason its use in conjunction with the repetition “o’er” suggest the end of reason. After all, the word actually being highlighted in this stanza through epistrophe is “o’er,” a word that separate from lamplight means end. Therefore, in conjunction with “o’er” contrary to what it implies, instead of illuminating the lamplight obliterates. Instead of informing it hides, remaining shrouded in darkness, forever out of the narrator’s reach. Like the lantern pointed at the old man’s eye in “The Tell-Tale Heart” far from returning the narrator to reason it is the catalyst to murder. Rather than enlightenment or clarification the lantern, like the lamplight, bring focus to the very things the narrators attempt to repress: the old man’s evil eye, in the case of “The Tell-Tale Heart” and Lenore’s absence in “The Raven,” through illuminating the cushion upon which she shall never sit again. Drawing attention to the very thing the narrator is so desperately trying to forget leads him to redouble his efforts of repression.

From the failed attempt at reclaiming understanding, stanza fourteen shows the narrator’s renewed efforts to repress. First comes the calm “Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore” (82) followed by the demanding “Quaff,

oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!" (83). The "*She*" that the narrator refuses to name at the end of stanza thirteen is not only named but repeatedly named in stanza fourteen. While the first line asks for a short pause from the memories of Lenore, the latter demands outright for absolute repression in "forget." As in stanza five where the narrator's whispered "Lenore?" is followed by the echo "Lenore!," here also a subtle inquiry is followed by a demand. In this case, though the first part does not end in a question mark it is markedly subtler than the exclamation that follows. More than just attention grabbing, the repetition of respite marks the narrator's final query. Following "Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe" are nothing but demands.⁶

Heightening the narrator's growing unease, the entire fifteenth stanza leads up to the exclamation "Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead—tell me—tell me, I implore!" (89). Contrary to the narrator asking the raven to forget Lenore in the previous stanza now the narrator proceeds to "implore," desperately beg, for information regarding Lenore. "Having learned the univocal vocabulary of his interlocutor, [in stanza eleven with the revelation that 'what it utters is its only stock and store' (62)] the student in 'The Raven' is free to create reality through the questions that are the manifestations of fears" (Freedman, "The Porous Sanctuary" 22). By "Asking the 'right' questions, [the narrator] uses the power of words to turn to fact the world of unending loneliness he dreads" (22).

The questions the student-narrator asks of the raven, therefore, are products of his own tortured imagination, as is his continual repetition of Lenore. As such, Freedman suggests, "The raven...is such a self-reference, one that heightens an already encouraged sense that ultimately the discourse between the student and the raven is an internal dialogue, that the clearly autobiographical student is joined by the covertly self-referring raven in a dialogue of the single soul" (Poe's 'Raven'" 27).

Reinforcing the narrator's self-torturous repetition of Lenore, the object that he wishes to repress but is unable to due to his incessant internal dialogue of inquiry, stanza sixteen presents the following epistrophe: "Tell this soul with sorrow laden if within the distant Aidenn,/It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—/Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore" (93-95). This second description of Lenore is not only repetition within the stanza but also repetition of the description given in the second stanza. Lines 93 and 94, therefore, reinforce the impression that Lenore is not the name of the narrator's beloved, restating four times that the angels have named the rare and radiant maiden Lenore. Absent of a name she is nameless.

It is possible that the narrator forgoes her real name as a means of further repressing her memory, even as he instigates its resurgence through these repetitions. Like stanza two and stanza fourteen where the narrator repeats "Lenore" even as he claims to want to forget her or asks the raven to forget her, repeating "Lenore" in stanza sixteen under the pretense of inquiry reveals the

narrator's repeated means of self-torture.⁷ As in stanza fifteen the narrator continues in stanza sixteen to desperately implore, only now instead of begging for the raven to forget "Lenore" the narrator, inquiring about her, is begging for the raven to remember "Lenore."

The narrator's outburst in stanzas fifteen and sixteen culminate in stanza seventeen with the narrator shrieking to the raven: "Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!/ Take thy beak from out my heart and take thy form from off my door!" 100-101). Restating the bird's location this epistrophe, like the ones before it that repeat "door," highlights the connection between bird and door and by extension self-destruction or interment.

Also of importance in stanza seventeen is the word "form" in the demand "take thy form from off my door!" (101), which implies a figure or projection of an image that is not real, just as "the lofty and enshrouded figure of the Lady Madeline" stood in the doorway (Poe 216). As with the Lady Madeline, or the Lady Ligeia, it is a figure described. The raven is but a form that cannot have its beak in the narrator's heart and its form above the door, unless both are emblematic. Freedman argues that "much of the poem's setting and descriptive imagery, from its beginning, is translatable as reified spirit ("Poe's 'Raven'" 29). Exemplifying the connection between narrator and setting, pervasive throughout all of Poe's works, is stanza six:

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
‘Tis the wind and nothing more!” (31-36)

This stanza, Freedman claims, strongly suggests, “the tapping at the chamber door...is the excited beating of the student’s heart” (“Poe’s ‘Raven’” 29). Further resulting from this reading, the chamber is the soul and the bust of Pallas the mind (29). “The raven that begins as the voice of the other, the irrevocable truth of reality or fact, becomes but an expression of the haunted projective imagination” (29-30).

Stanza seventeen, therefore, is, in effect, a continuation of what begins in stanza six. The demand “Take thy beak from out my heart” corroborates the idea that the raven, in flying in through the chamber window, has flown directly into the narrator’s soul. If eyes are the windows to the soul then here Poe reverses using a physical window to represent eyes. The chamber window is seen then, as the windows of the House of Usher are described, as an eye.

Similarly, “The opening description [in “The Fall of the House of Usher”] of the ‘sickening’ decay of the external setting symbolically figures the hero’s physical and mental condition” (Stein 110). So, too, in “The Raven” setting and narrator are intertwined. Whereas Roderick’s outraged conscious “swallows up all conscious

authority,” symbolized in the setting of the tale by “the disappearance of the house and its occupants”(Stein 111), in “The Raven” the revolt of the narrator’s repressed feelings is symbolized by the narrator’s entrapment in the raven’s shadow upon the “floor.”

Before succumbing to his subconscious, however, the narrator of “The Raven” shrieks his final futile demands that create the final repetition of “door.” These final shrieked demands reverberate throughout Poe’s work, as a sound that resonates finality. In “The Tell-Tale Heart” the old man gives a final shriek before dying; one shriek upon realizing that death is eminent and inescapable. “Once—only once” does the old man shriek, and “In an instant [the narrator] dragged him to the floor” (Poe 319). The same floor upon which the old man dies is the floor under which he is buried, making the floor his tomb.

In “Berenice” the last sound Egaeus makes is also a shriek (Poe 147). Egaeus shrieks and bounds to the box, reminiscent of Pandora’s, in the similarity of their content: terror. In “Ligeia” the narrator also “shrieked aloud” when the figure opens the eyes and reveals them to be the black and wild eyes of the Lady Ligeia. Likewise, Roderick Usher’s final dialogue is a shriek: “Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door” (Poe 215).

Following the shrieked demands of stanza seventeen the narrator ceases demanding anything in stanza eighteen and resolves himself to his inevitable and inescapable fate. From the poem’s beginning the narrator has been attempting to

repress his fears. Long before the raven manifests the narrator tries to calm his heart and bury his terrors. Yet, the bird, like the subconscious, cannot be separated from the self. And likewise, both can and only will stay in the recesses of the mind for so long before they surface and take control. And so, in the final stanza the narrator has come, at long last, to terms with the fact that the bird will not, now or ever, depart: "And the Raven never flitting still is siting, *still* is sitting" (103). This loss of control over the "other" in "The Raven" is reminiscent to that of the narrator in "Legia" where the Lady Legia herself takes the place of not just Rowena but the narrator as well.⁸

And so, in the concluding stanza of "The Raven,"

"the closing image [of] the bird assumes the opening identity of the student: while the latter, who may have dreamed the entire sequence, was first discovered 'nearly napping' (3), now it is the raven whose 'eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming' (105). And in the final line, the student, whose identity has just been usurped by the raven, in turn internalizes the usurper; it is he [the student] who utters the fateful and terminal 'nevermore.'" (Freedman, "Poe's 'Raven'" 30)

Trapped in the raven's shadow upon the floor is equivalent to being buried alive, "equivalent" because Poe's narrators are never subject to physical interment. As in "The Fall of the House of Usher" where Roderick and Madeline are literally buried under the debris of their crumbled family home, the narrator of that tale, like the narrator of "The Raven," is instead plagued by his experience and trapped forever in a mental hell.

The fate of the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is the fate of all Poe narrators; he can either be buried alive under the fallen structure or mentally by the terrors that plague his mind. Essentially, the narrator of "The Fall of the House of Usher," escapes one fate only to be subjected to one far more terrifying. Like Wilkins' states, and Poe's narrators exemplify, the fear of premature burial is greater even than the fear of death (15). In an attempt to thwart their fear Poe's narrators condemn themselves to "a seeming eternity of suffocative horror" (Wilkins 15) by inflicting harm upon their own soul.

Final Deductions

Although repetition is indeed reinforcement, in "The Raven" epistrophe functions as double reinforcement emphasizing key words, those repeated most: "door" and "Lenore." Considering doors in other Poe tales leads to the proposition that doors refer to the lid of a coffin and floor, repeated in the final stanza, to burial in the ground that becomes grave. When the narrator opens the chamber door and looks into the darkness, as if looking into the grave, he invites in his terrors, his

“charnel apprehensions,” as the narrator of “the Premature Burial” calls them (Poe 367). Throughout the poem “door” is repeated in stanza 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 17 ending with the epistrophe of floor in the final stanza; giving the appearance that the narrator continually opens the lid of his grave before finally collapsing within his own tomb.

In “The Tell-Tale Heart” the floorboards are the doors to the old man’s impromptu grave. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” the doorway to the narrator’s room is like the open lid of a coffin revealing the figure of the previously interred Lady Madeline who falls through the threshold “heavily inward upon the person of her brother...and bore him to the floor a corpse, and victim to the terrors he had anticipated” (Poe 216). Falling upon the floor a corpse, the floor is Roderick’s burial ground, his impromptu grave. Buried in his home, once the house collapses Roderick is trapped under the rubble like the narrator of “The Raven” is trapped in the raven’s shadow floating on the floor.

Like Roderick and so many others, the narrator of “The Raven,” in essence, anticipates or invites his terrors from the moment he manifests a visitor seeking entrance to his chamber, the subconscious seeking entrance and domain over the mind, such as the Red Death appearing in the hall among the guests who seek so desperately in their isolation to avoid and repress it; to thwart it. However, Poe’s tales and poems are circular and despite their efforts the narrators are the ones thwarted. What is repressed continues to resurface or what is absent reappears in a

similar but slightly different form. J. Gerard Kennedy reinforces this when quoting Silverman, "What has been buried in the past or hidden within the self must return" (538).

Freedman suggests that peering into the darkness the narrator searches for the absent Lenore, who will be present "Nevermore" ("Poe's 'Raven'" 26). If opening the chamber door is equivalent to lifting the lid of a coffin then the student narrator who does not, or cannot, see Lenore, like Egaeus who does not see Berenice is still alive when he visits her grave...has lost control of the self through a loss of faculty and sensory functions, by means of a fear that refuses to be repressed by means of the narrator's own insistence on its resurgence.

In "The Raven" the narrator's insistent repetition of Lenore, one of the most repeated words in the poem, is a direct sabotage of his desire to forget her. Identified as sabotage, this action is then discovered to be the means by which the narrator of "The Raven" inflicts harm on his own nature. The culmination of the narrator's failed attempts at repression manifest as the appearance of the raven, the punishing conscience that refuses to be forgotten or ignored. Each double, essentially, allows the narrator to "watch" as Lie claims, "suspended in a despairing state" as his minds breaks down and wait for the moment of final destruction and annihilation" (47).

Even draped in ambiguity Poe leaves clues to be found for the reader who ventures to look beneath the surface. As deep as you might venture to explore, the one thing “you can be sure of with Poe is that you cannot be sure” (Amper 48) because with Poe nothing is ever as it appears. Fact and fancy shroud everything in uncertainty, blurring the lines between the two until they cannot be distinguished. Pushing the ambiguity of language to obscurity Poe’s narrators are vague, doubtful, and contradictory. The only thing that a reader can be certain of in regards to Poe’s works is that at every turn he will be uncertain. Reality, especially, is constantly brought under question. The raven after all is not the only character manifested by the conscience of a Poe narrator.

Described in reference to “the wife of my bossom,” a shadow, “the radiance of an opium dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision” (Poe 160), Ligeia, too, is described as an abstract, apart from reality. Presented in such a metaphorical way makes it difficult to see Ligeia “as a flesh and blood person” (Amper 71). Symbolizing unattainable knowledge, to possess her is to possess the answers held by a figure that resides “either above or apart from the earth” (Poe 161).

Just as these odd and unrealistic descriptions of Ligeia give rise to questions of her reality, the passage where the second cat first appears suggests, when read closely, that the cat could be imagined. When the narrator touches the cat he describes what it looks like rather than what it feels like to the touch:

I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast. Upon my touching him he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. (Poe 352)

The lack or absence of descriptions that indicate how the cat feels to the touch places him, like Ligeia, in the abstract realm of imagined reality. Enhancing the potential that the cat is not real is the marvelous way in which it appears. As Amper points out “How can a man look steadily at something for minutes and then suddenly see a cat there?” (149). It is possible that the cat, like Ligeia and the raven, is a figment of the narrator’s imagination, especially since the narrator claims to have been searching for such a cat and then one appears to his eyes where nothing had been before (149). The fact that the narrator encounters the second cat while at a bar “half stupefied” adds to the possibility that the figure is a hallucination. Having killed the first cat while intoxicated it is possible that the narrator imagines a second cat while once again under the influence of alcohol.

In line with this proposition that the cat is an imagined figure, it follows that when the narrator states that the cat appeared delighted he is describing his own feelings, rather than those of the cat. Especially considering his declaration after finding the cat that “This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search” (Poe 352). Projecting his own feelings onto the cat, his “other,” is what the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” does when he claims: “I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart” (Poe 318).

How can the narrator know how the old man felt unless they are one and the same? In claiming to know the old man’s feelings the narrator connects two halves of a collapsing whole. The narrator also knew that the slight groan the old man made was the groan of mortal terror because “Many a night...it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me” (Poe 318). The terror that distracts the narrator is the vulture-eye that made his blood run cold every time it fell upon him, “for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye⁹” (Poe 317). As the source of the narrator’s fear, once the old man is dead and his eye no longer present to cause trouble the narrator asks, “what had I *now* to fear?” (Poe 320).

Additionally, “the close conjunction of the old man’s ‘eye’ with the pronoun ‘I,’ referring to the narrator” further infers a correlation between the two characters (Amper 165): “I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and rid myself of the eye forever” (Poe 317). In taking the life of the old man the narrator indeed rids

himself of the “I” forever. The correlation between the pronouns is not the only link that binds the narrator to his “other.” While the eye is what prompts the murder it is the sound of the beating heart that condemns both the old man to murder and the narrator of his crime.

Before the old man is killed the narrator describes the sound that came to his ears as, “a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton” claiming, “I knew *that* sound well...it was the beating of the old man’s heart” (Poe 319). After the old man has been murdered and the body concealed the narrator fancies a ringing in his ears that is found not to be in his ears at all but instead “*a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*” (Poe 320). In his final shriek the narrator professes, “it is the beating of his hideous heart,” (Poe 321) implying that both instances are the beating of the old man’s heart. However, the heartbeats correspond to the narrator’s terror; as he grows more nervous the beating grows louder.

Though the narrator patiently waits to murder the old man, the fear of a neighbor hearing the sound of the old man’s beating heart, which grows louder and louder, prompts the narrator to leap into the room and do the deed. The same beating heart that prompts the narrator to commit murder prompts him to confess his crime, when in the presence of the police the beating heart once again grew louder and louder.

Since the old man, like the cat, will prove to be the instrument of discovery and punishment, Amper asks whether “the man’s wish for a new cat suggests that a part of him seeks the punishment that the cat will bring about?” (149). In punishing the first cat the narrator punishes himself claiming that it is the “unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong’s sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I have inflicted upon the unoffending brute” (Poe 350). The psychological dimension, of cat as “other,” invites readers to think of the cat as embodying the narrator’s own conscience” (Amper 156).

Killing the first cat and walling up the second cat demonstrate the narrator’s attempts to escape from the cat, which correspondingly, are attempts to escape from his conscience. Likewise, the old man’s eye, when seen as something always looking at the narrator could be indicative of the narrator’s conscience. In such a case the murder of the old man might be viewed as an attempt to escape from an overactive and punishing conscience (Amper 160). By harming the old man the narrator is harming himself. Seen as an overactive and punishing conscience the old man doubles as another version of the narrator, an older version of the narrator¹⁰. Seen as doubles or doppelgangers the nature of the fear or loathing that the old man’s eye inspires in the narrator is transference of the narrator’s self-loathing and wish to do harm to his own nature.

The notion of the old man as another version of the narrator mirrors Roderick and Madeline Usher, who, as twins, are in fact, doubles of one another. Madeline 's illness, like the old man's old age, is a constant reminder of mortality. Madeline, in fact, is so close to death she is described as corpse-like; and, as her twin, Roderick is equally as close to death. Trying to prolong his life Roderick condemns Madeline to the grave in his stead. Like Roderick, the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is also abnormally fearful of death. Examples of the narrator's obsession with time and subsequent fear of death abound; indeed, Amper points out that references to death in "The Tell-Tale Heart" are recurrently linked to references of time and clocks (164).

The narrator's description of the beating heart in terms of the sound a watch makes when enveloped in cotton exemplifies the watch-death imagery. Likewise, the steady and stealthy way the narrator opens the door to the old man's room is described as slower than the minute hand of a watch (Poe 318). Even the narrator's nightly intrusion into the old man's chamber is compared to "Hearkening to the death watches in the wall" (318); an appropriate comparison considering that the narrator is conducting "his own kind of death watch" every night upon the old man (318, n5).

The narrator's nightly intrusions upon the old man are attempts to destroy the evil eye. Although the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" tries to victimize himself by blaming the old man's evil eye for his murderous actions, in the end, he, like all of

Poe's narrators, is only a victim of his own self-destructive actions. The narrator of "The Raven" drives himself to destruction by fabricating dialogue between himself and the raven. The narrator of "The Black Cat" destroys himself by a sequence of self-punishing events: Killing the first cat is one form of self-punishment; manifesting a replacement cat is another; and rapping on the cellar wall is yet another. The last "ultimately brings [the narrator's] own punishment" (Amper 152) by leading to his condemnation and simultaneously to the completion of his self-destruction.

As a response to the narrator's action of tapping on the wall the cat is brought back. Just as the narrator brings back the first cat through the manifestation of the second, he brings back the second cat by tapping on the brick wall and instigating the echoing answer from within. Up until that point the cat has remained silent all those many days. However, as a response to the narrator's tapping on the wall the cat is brought back, yet again, this time divulging in the process the corpse of the narrator's dead wife and by so doing condemning the narrator.

Likewise, the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" ensures the old man's return by revealing the place where the body is concealed; and in "return" the narrator ensures his destruction. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," Roderick, too, ensures Madeline's return, and his own destruction, by burying her alive. All attempts to condemn the "other," an endeavor every narrator undertakes, end in personal destruction. The narrator's behavior towards the "other" may therefore, be viewed

as representing their feelings towards a punishing conscience (Amper 153), a conscience that forces the narrator's repressed fears to escape from their mental manacles.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

As a sophisticated and complicated writer Poe cannot and should not be condensed, nor should “The Raven” be reduced simply to repetition and alliteration. Though Poe has made “key words” easy to identify, it is up to the reader to discover their purpose or function. The stanza-by-stanza analysis of “The Raven” is an attempt to answer the questions: what do the “key words” reveal and how do they enhance understanding?

After examining the methodical arrangement that the figure of epistrophe adheres to throughout “The Raven” it was found that, as hypothesized, the key words epistrophe highlights do enforce the narrator’s growing state of instability and ultimate loss of self, which add important insight to understanding the poem fully. The various revisions and modifications Poe made, especially in stanza eleven, enhance the efficacy of epistrophe and in so doing attest to the importance of the placement of this figure within the poem and its role in communicating a thorough understanding of its content. Certainly, given the role of this figure of repetition in the narrator’s self-destruction epistrophe can be recognized as a previously underrepresented tool in both tracking and proving the narrator’s final and complete loss of self.

Having separated “the various things that go to make a poem what it is,” in this case each stanza and each figure of epistrophe, it is found “that one thing is missing, part of the beauty of a poem, part of its form, is the way in which all the component parts are appropriate to each other and fit together” (Boulton 6). Therefore, even as each occurrence of epistrophe was analyzed individually it was important to connect them to each other. Furthermore, although this analysis compares “The Raven” to only a selection of Poe’s other works, to understand any one of his works it is pertinent to examine multiple works and, equally imperative, to examine them in the cultural context of Poe’s time.

Therefore, through the lens of the insanity-defense controversy of the 19th Century, monomania, and the public fear of premature burial, the unstable state of mind of the narrator of “The Raven” was analyzed in comparison to narrators of select tales of terror and other of Poe’s poems. In the process of investigating these works it was discovered that Poe’s tales not only leave the narrator suspended but also the reader who is left “unable to choose between opposing interpretations” of the tale’s ending (Amper 67).

To read Poe, therefore, is to enter a realm of uncertainty where little can be confidently decided, “including—even on the most basic level—what his work is all about. In fact, there is likely no other author of Poe’s prominence about whom so little consensus exists” (Amper 47). And indeed critics cannot seem to agree on either Poe’s works or Poe’s person. Yet, even as critics disagree—some hailing Poe

as a genius and others denouncing him as salacious—none can deny the “tremendous influence he has had upon generations of acclaimed writers, artists, composers and filmmakers” among which are included “Charles Baudelaire, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, Franz Kafka, Ray Bradbury, Gustave Doré, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alfred Hitchcock” (Price).

In the midst of ambiguity surrounding Poe and his works one thing is undeniable, to the world of literature Poe “contributed a body of work that has shocked, thrilled, delighted, and perplexed readers by the millions, influenced generations of writers—and in immeasurable degrees changed the art of writing” (Amper 49).

To truly appreciate Poe’s work, or any work of art, be it novel, nonfiction, or poem you cannot read it passively; you must read it passionately (Adler & Doner 214). Reading a work passionately the reader discerns the role the various characters and elements play. Complimenting Tysons’ supposition that the focus is not “what a text means” but *how* “a text means what it means” (220) John Moncure Daniel, editor of the Richmond *Examiner*, writes in September 1849,

The worth of 'The Raven' is not in any 'Moral,' nor is its charm in the construction of its story. Its great and wonderful merit consists in the strange, beautiful and fantastic imagery in which the simple subject is clothed...added to these is a versification indescribably sweet and wonderfully difficult...[concluding] 'The Raven' is a gem of art.

(Bloomfield 188)

Adding to Daniel's sentiment, Alder and Doner state that the beauty, or worth, of a work of art, "is related to the pleasure it gives us when we know it well" (213).

Therefore, to merely "know" "The Raven" is to mock its brilliance. To know it well is to truly appreciate it.

ENDNOTES

¹ By focusing on refrain, as many scholars have, full understanding of the poem may not be achieved. The importance given to refrain over the multitude of other tropes found throughout Poe's "The Raven" is exemplified by the articles of George Nordstedt's "Prototype of 'The Raven'," Robert Forsythe's "Poe's Nevermore: A Note," Joseph Jones' "'The Raven,' and 'The Raven': Another Source of Poe's Poem," George Kelly's "Poe's Theory of Beauty," and Anthony Caputi's "The Refrain in Poe's Poetry." All of these articles discuss the use of refrain in Poe's "The Raven" in comparison to other potential influential poems that might, according to Nordstedt, Forsythe, Jones, Kelly and Caputi, be the prototype to Poe's Raven. Other scholars, such as Francis F. Burch, William Freedman, Dana Gioia, and Jorie Graham, have concentrated on the structure and symbolism, as well as contradictions, musicality, and atmosphere of the poem in their articles, "Clement Mansfield Ingleby on Poe's 'The Raven': An Unpublished Criticism," "Poe's 'Raven': The Word That is an Answer 'Nevermore'," "An Overview of 'The Raven'," and "Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven'," respectively. Benjamin Hrushovski in "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry: An Interaction Theory" and Lynette McGrath in "Structural and Poetic Theory: Intention, Meaning and Privilege" both discuss sound patterning in poetry.

Hrushovsk, however, gives specific examples from “The Raven” of sound contributing to meaning.

² Although the concept of repression is “one of the most important tropes in the Freudian interpretation of literature” and therefore could have easily led this discussion in that direction psychoanalytic interpretation is excluded. The focus of this analysis was to interpret Poe’s works through contemporary influences of *his* time. This analysis looks introspectively (through the lens of Poe’s time) not retrospectively (through the lens of modern psychoanalysis). For anyone interested in a psychoanalytic interpretation, Marie Bonaparte’s *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation* and Shirley F. Staton’s *Literary Theories in Praxis* are valuable sources to begin with.

³ It is important to note, however, that even when revising Poe maintains the established meter. Before revisions lines four and five of stanza 11 have the same syllable count as after revisions, 15 syllables.

⁴ The narrator’s initial inactivity or stillness is indicative of the corpse like appearance attributed to other Poe characters during life. Outside the tomb the narrator resembles a cadaver in his stillness. Only in the moments leading to his interment does he become lively, too late, however, to escape his inevitable fate.

⁵ The narrator of “Ligiea” desires her knowledge and when she “returns” he faces his demons. Likewise, when the narrator of “Berenice” is finally in possession of her

teeth he comes undone. Getting what they claim they want is only a means of self-destruction.

⁶ In fact, until stanza fourteen the narrator is relatively quiet, almost silent, muttering, whispering, “engaged in guessing...no syllable expressing” (73). The muttering of stanza one that turns to whispering and murmuring in stanza five, “This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word ‘Lenore’” (29) culminates with the narrator crying out for the raven to forget Lenore. This outburst is followed with successive stanzas of demands, terminating with the narrator’s shriek in stanza seventeen, before collapsing, trapped in the raven’s shadow floating on the floor in the final stanza.

⁷ Through his inquiry, the narrator of “The Raven” like other Poe narrator’s wishes for the return of the repressed, of the buried. In “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat” this is the moment where the narrators’ reveal the place of concealment and resurrect the corpse to bring about their own destruction.

⁸ At the end of “Ligeia” it is the corpse that advances and the narrator who, “trembled not—[and] stirred not.” While the demeanor of the figure rushed hurriedly through the narrator’s *brain*, “With the manner of one bewildered in a dream” (Poe 172). This description of the figure more accurately represents the narrator. Reflecting his feeling onto the “other” is not unique to this work but recurrent throughout Poe’s tales; a theme further discussed in the conclusion of the

analysis under the section titled “Finale deductions.” As in “The Raven” it seems that here too, narrator and “other” swap places.

⁹ Traditionally, an individual possessing an Evil Eye was believed to have the power to inflict pain or injury on those at whom the fixed stare of the eye was directed (Amper 167; Poe 317, n3).

¹⁰ If the evil eye represents the narrator’s conscious and the old man is his double, then, the narrator could direct the evil eye at himself and inflict injury upon himself and appease the unfathomable longing of the soul to offer violence to its own nature.

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Appendix A

First Published Version of “The Raven”

“THE RAVEN”

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door —
Only this, and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; — vainly I had tried to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore —
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore —
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me — filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
“’Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door —
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door; —
This it is, and nothing more.”

[page 144:]¹

¹ “The Raven” was first printed on pages 143-145 of the *American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* on February 1, 1845. The page numeration indicates the page of the journal the content of the poem that follows it appeared on.

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you” — here I opened wide the door; —
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!"
This *I* whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"
Merely this, and nothing more.

Then into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon I heard again a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore —
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind, and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not an instant stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door —
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door —
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore —
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no sublunary being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door —
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered — not a feather then he fluttered —
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends have flown before —
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown before."

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

Wondering at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster — so, when Hope he would adjure,
Stern Despair returned, instead of the sweet Hope he dared adjure —
That sad answer, "Nevermore!"

[page 145:]

But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust, and door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore —
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight [[lamp-light]] gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight [[lamp-light]] gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by angels whose faint foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee — by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite — respite and Nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Let me quaff this kind Nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil! —
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted —
On this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore —
Is there — *is* there balm in Gilead? — tell me — tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us — by that God we both adore —

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore —
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting —
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! — quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore!

Appendix B
Poe's Revisions to "The Raven" as Marked in His Copy of *The Raven and Other Poems*

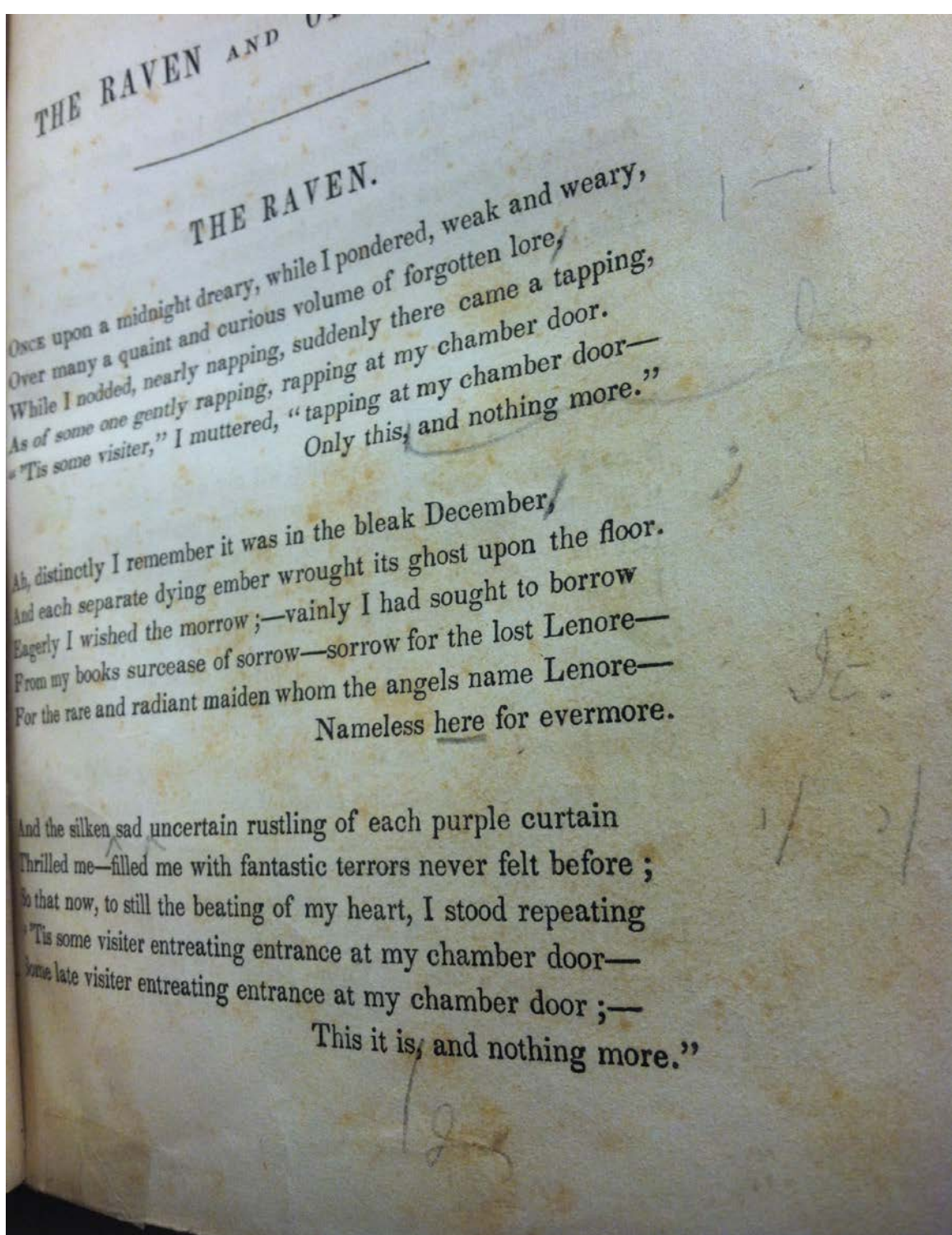


Figure 1. Poe's Revisions to "The Raven." *The Raven and Other Poems*

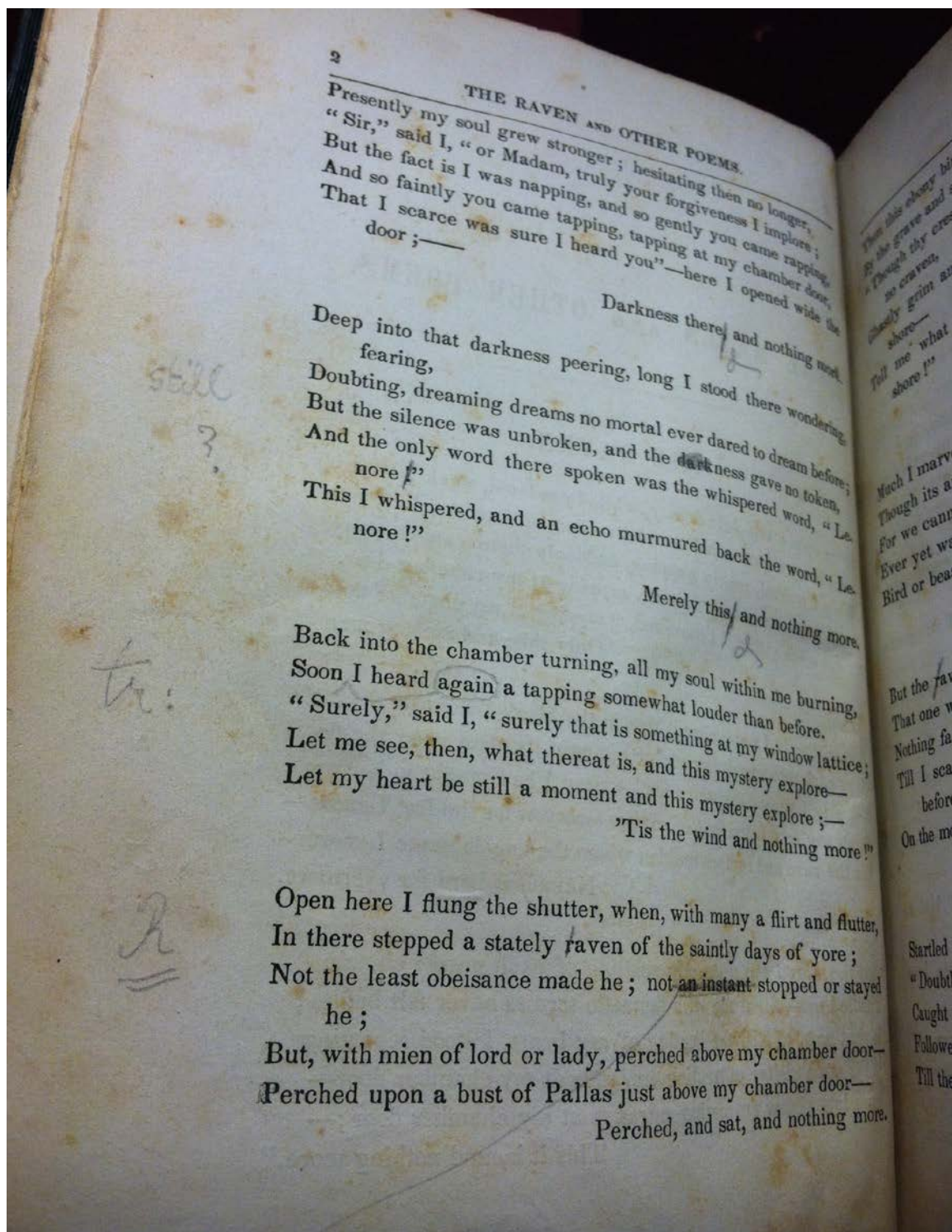


Figure 2. Poe's Revisions to "The Raven." *The Raven and Other Poems*.

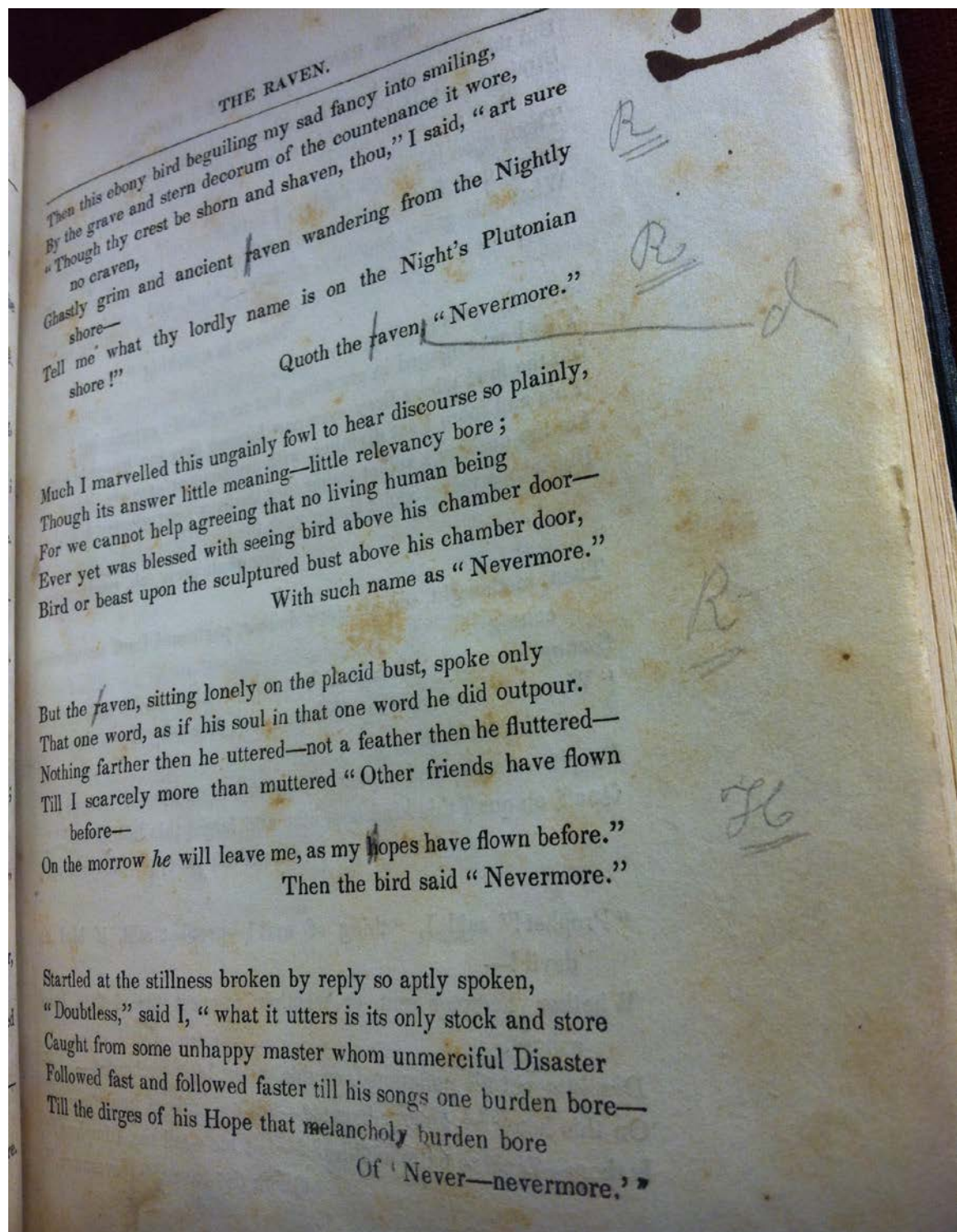


Figure 3. Poe's Revisions to "The Raven." *The Raven and Other Poems*.

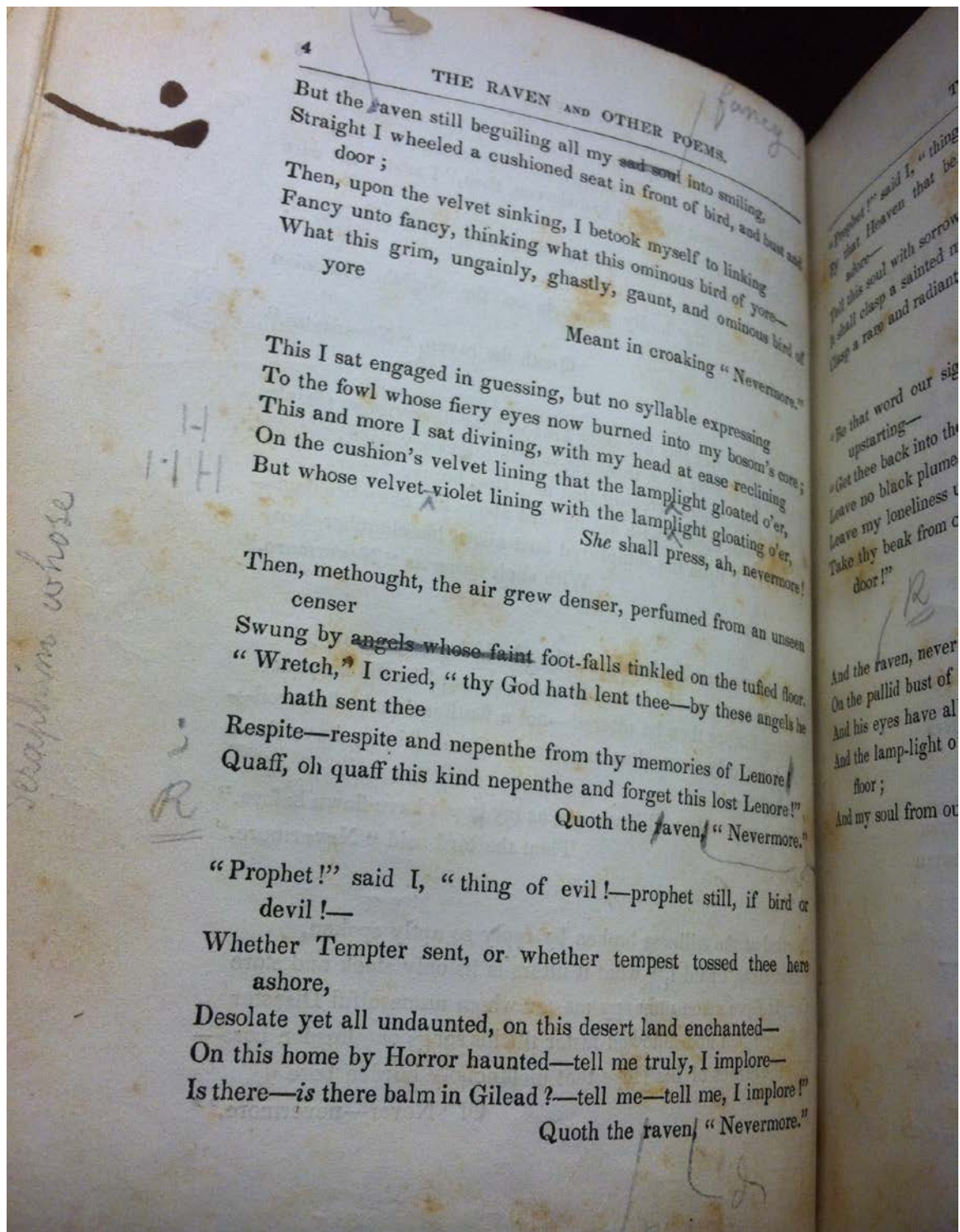


Figure 4. Poe's Revisions to "The Raven." *The raven and Other Poems.*

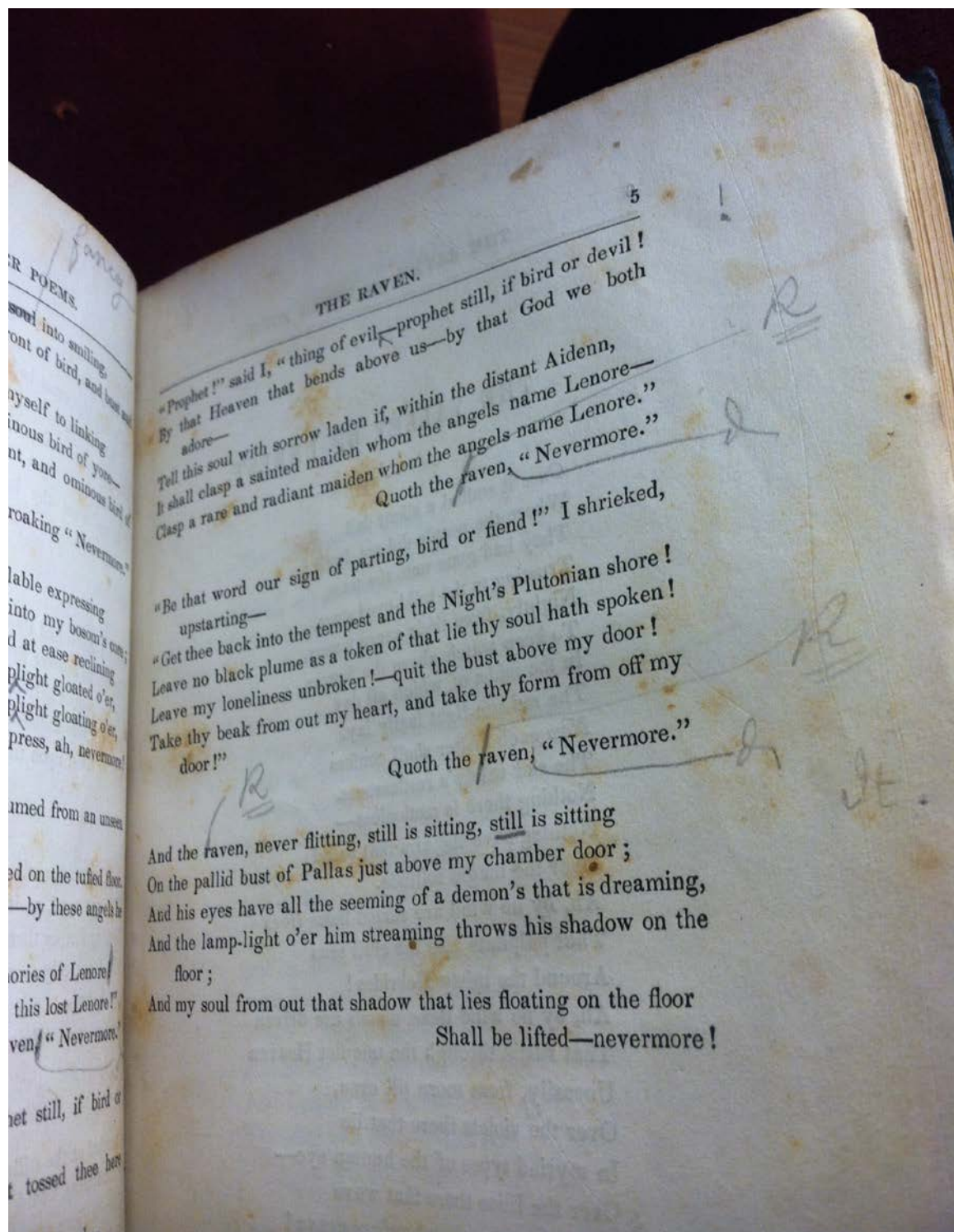


Figure 5. Poe's Revisions to "The Raven." *The Raven and other Poems*.

Appendix C
Metric Rhythm of “The Raven”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Once up | **on** a | **mid** night | **drea** ry | **while** I | **pon** dered | **weak** and | **wea** ry 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

O ver | **ma** ny a | **quaint** and | **cur** i ous | **vol** ume | **of** for | **got** ten | **lore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

While I | **nod** ded | **near** ly | **nap** ping | **sud** den | **ly** there | **came** a | **tap** ping 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

As of | **some** one | **gent** ly | **rap** ping | **rap** ping | **at** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Tis some | **vis** i | **ter** I | **mut** tered | **tap** ping | **at** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4

On ly | **this** and | **noth** ing | **more** 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Ah dis tinct ly I re mem ber it was in the bleak De cem ber								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
And each sep arate dy ing em ber wrought its ghost up on the floor								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Ea ger ly I wished the mor row vain ly I had sought to bor row								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
From my books sur cease of sor row sor row for the lost Le nore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
For the rare and ra di ant mai den whom the an gels name Le nore ²								16
1	2	3	4					
Name less here for ev er more								7

² Highlighted lines represent lines where two unstressed syllables appear one after the other. In order for these lines to follow the established pattern the two unstressed syllables need to be counted as one syllable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And the | **sil** ken | **sad** un | **cer** tain | **rus** tling | **of** each | **pur** ple | **cur** tain 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Thrilled me | **filled** me | **with** fan | **tas** tic | **ter** rors | **ne** ver | **felt** be | **fore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

So that | **now** to | **still** the | **beat** ing | **of** my | **heart** I | **stood** re | **peat** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Tis some | **vis** i | **ter** en | **treat** ing | **en** trance | **at** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Some late | **vis** i | **ter** en | **treat** ing | **en** trance | **at** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4

This it | **is** and | **noth** ing | **more** 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Pre sent | **ly** my | **soul** grew | **stron** ger | **hes i** | **tat** ing | **then** no | **lon** ger 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Sir said | **I** or | **Mad** am | **tru** ly | **your** for | **give** ness | **I** im | **plore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

But the | **fact** is | **I** was | **nap** ping | **and** so | **gent** ly | **you** came | **rap** ping 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And so | **faint** ly | **you** came | **tap** ping | **tap** ping | **at** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

That I | **scarce** was | **sure** I | **heard** you | **here** I | **o** pened | **wide** the | **door** 15

1 2 3 4

Dark ness | **there** and | **noth** ing | **more** 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Deep in | **to** that | **dark** ness | **peer** ing | **long** I | **stood** there | **wonder** ing | **fear** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Doubt ing | **dream** ing | **dreams** no | **mor** tal | **e** ver | **dared** to | **dream** be | **fore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

But the | **si** lence | **was** un | **bro** ken | **and** the | **still** ness | **gave** no | **to** ken 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And the | **on** ly | **word** there | **spo** ken | **was** the | **whis** pered | **word** Le | **nore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

This I | **whis** pered | **and** an | **e** cho | **mur** mured | **back** the | **word** Le | **nore** 15

1 2 3 4

Mere ly | **this** and | **noth** ing | **more** 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Back in to the cham ber turn ing all my soul with in me burn ing								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Soon a gain I heard a tap ping some what lou der than be fore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Sure ly said I sure ly that is some thing at my win dow lat tice								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Let me see then what there at is and this mys ter y ex plore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Let my heart be still a mo ment and this mys ter y ex plore								15
1	2	3	4					
Tis the wind and noth ing more								7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

O pen | **h** ere I | **f** lung the | **s** hut ter | **w** hen with | **m** an y a | **f** lirt and | **f** lut ter 17

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

In there | **s**tepped a | **s**tate ly | **R**a ven | **o**f the | **s**aint ly | **d**ays of | **y**ore 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Not the | **l**east o | **b**ei sance | **m**ade he | **n**ot a | **m**in ute | **s**topped or | **s**tayed he 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

But with | **m**ien of | **l**ord or | **l**a dy | **p**erched a | **b**ove my | **c**ham ber | **d**oor 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Perched up | **o**n a | **b**ust of | **P**al las | **j**ust a | **b**ove my | **c**ham ber | **d**oor 15

1 2 3 4

Perched and | **s**at and | **n**oth ing | **m**ore 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Then this eb on y bird be guil ing my sad fan cy in to smil ing								17
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
By the grave and stern de co rum of the coun te nance it wore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Though thy crest be shorn and sha ven thou I said art sure no cra ven								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Ghast ly grim and an cient Ra ven wander ing from the Night ly shore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Tell me what thy lord ly name is on the Night's Plu to ni an shore								16
1	2	3	4					
Quoth the Ra ven Ne ver more								7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Much I | **mar** veled | **this** un | **gain** ly | **fowl** to | **hear** dis | **course** so | **plain** ly 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Though its | **an** swer | **lit** tle | **mean** ing | **lit** tle | **rel** e | **van** cy | **bore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

For we | **can** not | **help** a | **gree** ing | **that** no | **liv** ing | **hu** man | **be** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

E ver | **yet** was | **blessed** with | **see** ing | **bird** a | **bove** his | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Bird or | **beast** up | **on** the | **sculp** tured | **bust** a | **bove** his | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4

With such | **name** as | **Ne** ver | **more** 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

But the | **Ra** ven | **sitt** ing | **lone** ly | **on** the | **pla** cid | **bust** spoke | **on** ly 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

That one | **word** as | **if** his | **soul** in | **that** one | **word** he | **did** out | **pour** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Noth ing | **far** ther | **then** he | **ut** tered | **not** a | **feath** er | **then** he | **flut** tered 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Till I | **scarce** ly | **more** than | **mut** tered | **Oth** er | **friends** have | **flown** be | **fore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

On the | **mor** row | **he** will | **leave** me | **as** my | **Hopes** have | **flown** be | **fore** 15

1 2 3 4

Then the | **bird** said | **Ne** ver | **more** 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Start led at the still ness bro ken by rep ly so apt ly spo ken								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Doubt less said I what it ut ters is its on ly stock and store								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Caught from some un hap py mas ter whom un mer ci ful Dis as ter								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Fol lowed fast and fol lowed fas ter till his songs one bur den bore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Till the dir ges of his Hope that mel an chol y bur den bore								15
1	2	3	4					
Of	Ne ver	ne ver	more	3				6

³ Instead of an extra syllable this line is minus a syllable. Prior to revisions the line consisted of seven syllables.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

But the | **Ra** ven | **still** be | **guil** ing | **my** sad | **fan** cy | **in** to | **smil** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Straight I | **wheeled** a | **cush** ioned | **seat** in | **front** of | **bird** and | **bust** and | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Then up | **on** the | **vel** vet | **sink** ing | **I** be | **took** my | **self** to | **link** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Fan cy | **un** to | **fan** cy | **think** ing | **what** this | **om** i nous | **bird** of | yore 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

What this | **grim** un | **gain** ly | **ghast** ly | **gaunt** and | **om** i nous | **bird** of | yore 16

1 2 3 4

Meant in | **croak** ing | **Ne** ver | **more** 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
This I sat en gaged in guess ing but no syl la ble ex press ing								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
To the fowl whose fier y eyes now burned in to my bos om's core								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
This and more I sat di vin ing with my head at ease re clin ing								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
On the cush ion's vel vet lin ing that the lamp light gloat ed o'er								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
But whose vel vet vi o let lin ing with the lamp light gloat ing o'er								16
1	2	3	4					
She shall press ah ne ver more								7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Then me thought the air grew den ser per fumed from an un seen cen ser								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Swung by ser a phim whose foot falls tin kled on the tuf ted floor								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Wretch I cried thy God hath lent thee by these an gels he hath sent thee								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Res pite res pite and ne pen the from thy mem ories of Le nore								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Quaff oh quaff this kind ne pen the and for get this lost Le nore								15
1	2	3	4					
Quoth the Ra ven Ne ver more								7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Pro phet | **said** I | **thing** of | **e** vil | **pro** phet | **still** if | **bird** or | **dev** il 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Wheth er | **Tempt** er | **sent** or | **wheth** er | **tem** pest | **tossed** thee | **here** a | **shore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Des o | **late** yet | **all** un | **daunt** ed | **on** this | **de** sert | **land** en | **chant** ed 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

On this | **home** by | **Hor** ror | **haunt** ed | **tell** me | **tru** ly | **I** im | **plore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Is there | *is* there | **balm** in | **Gi** lead | **tell** me | **tell** me | **I** im | **plore** 15

1 2 3 4

Quoth the | **Ra** ven | **Ne** ver | **more** 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Pro phet | **said** I | **thing** of | **e** vil | **pro** phet | **still** if | **bird** or | **dev** il 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

By that | **Heav** en | **that** bends | **a** bove us | **by** that | **God** we | **both** a | **dore** 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Tell this | **soul** with | **sor** row | **lad** en | **if** with | **in** the | **dis** tant | **Ai** den 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

It shall | **clasp** a | **saint** ed | **maid** en | **whom** the | **an** gels | **name** Le | **nore** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Clasp a | **rare** and | **ra** di ant | **maid** en | **whom** the | **an** gels | **name** Le | **nore** 16

1 2 3 4

Quoth the | **Ra** ven | **Ne** ver | **more** 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Be that word our sign of part ing bird or fiend I shrieked up start ing								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Get thee back in to the tem pest and the Night's Plu to ni an shore								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Leave no black plume as a to ken of that lie thy soul hath spo ken								16
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Leave my lone li ness un bro ken quit the bust a bove my door								15
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Take thy beak from out my heart and take thy form from off my door								15
1	2	3	4					
Quoth the Ra ven Ne ver more								7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And the | **Ra** ven | **ne** ver | **flit** ting | **still** is | **sit** ting | *still* is | **sit** ting 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

On the | **pal** lid | **bust** of | **Pal** las | **just** a | **bove** my | **cham** ber | **door** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And his | **eyes** have | **all** the | **seem** ing | **of** a | **de** mon's | **that** is | **dream** ing 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And the | **lamp** light | **o'er** him | **stream** ing | **throws** his | **shad** ow | **on** the | **floor** 15

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And my | **soul** from | **out** that | **shad** ow | **that** lies | **float** ing | **on** the | **floor** 15

1 2 3 4

Shall be | **lift** ed | **ne** ver | **more** 7