APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Thesis Director — Robert C. Stephens

Oral Examination Committee Members — Arthur W. Dixon

E. C. Vaughn

Robert W. Watson

May 5, 1964
Date of Examination

WILKINSON, WAYNE B. Personal Symbolism in the Study of Selected Tales of Edgar A. Poe. (1964) Directed by: Dr. Robert O. Stephens.

The purpose of this paper is to study selected tales of Edgar Allan Poe in the light of the expressive theory of criticism. Linking of the studies of Poe's biography and his imaginative works has become more frequent and more meaningful due to the development of the sciences of psychology and psychiatry. In the expressive theory of criticism, the artist becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criterion by which it is to be judged. The primary source and subject matter of a work of art, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the artist's own mind; furthermore, symbols are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the mind. In this context, one may define symbolism as a form of indirect, metaphorical speech intended to carry or suggest a hidden reality. But for the purposes of my study, I have distinguished three classes of symbols: (1) the extrinsic or arbitrary symbols; (2) intrinsic or descriptive symbols; and (3) insight or interpretive symbols.

When studying the works of Poe, one must not ignore Poe's own theory of art for art's sake since it is important to recognize that Poe's theories conflict with the expressive theory. I have set forth Poe's concepts and attempted to explain why Poe does not actually write as he maintains that he does. I have shown how Poe,

perhaps unconsciously, reveals his own personal experiences and conflicts as well as achieves a certain unique "effect." Through the use of the extrinsic symbol to describe scenes in the tales, Poe is able to create an atmosphere conducive to achieving his artistic purposes. I have shown how Poe's obsession with death is revealed by the interpretation of the intrinsic symbols in the tales. In the discussion of the insight symbol I have described how this obsession is linked to Poe's Oedipal attachment to his mother. Poe transfers his suppressed desires for his mother to the characters in his tales as well as the women in his life.

Finally, I have shown how Poe has incorporated each of these expressive symbols into one tale, "The Fall of the House of Usher." I have discussed the presentation of the characters and the setting and their effect on the reader. After establishing the various symbolic relationships between characters and setting, including Poe's appearance in the tale, I have discussed psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations while paying particular attention to the relations between Usher and his sister, Madeline. Psychological symbols, basically Freudian, provide a key to the explication of the tale. All of Poe's imaginative works assume higher levels of meaning and importance if one develops an awareness of his self-revelation through the personal symbol.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE MAN IN THE SYMBOL

Whether there is much autobiography in Poe's imaginative work, in his poems and tales, is not definitely clear and has long been a matter of debate among his critics and biographers. In spite of warnings against reading biography into the details of imaginative literature, it is often maintained that there is a large element of self-revelation in Poe's work. Biographer and critic Killis Campbell points out that there are more biographical elements in Poe's work than one might realize.[1] One must concede the fact that the letters, book reviews, and critical and prose essays reveal many of Poe's thoughts and beliefs, but the tales and poems pose problems that are not so easily solved. Some works such as "Annabel Lee," "Ulalume," and "To My Mother" may be recognized as allusions or tributes to his mother, wife, and mother-in-law. Campbell points out that autobiography is more extensive and more readily apparent in the tales than in the poems.[2] For example, "William Wilson" clearly

[1] Killis Campbell, The Mind of Poe and Other Studies (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1933), p. 130.

[2] Campbell, p. 135.

represents Poe's school experiences in London during the period in which the Allans, Poe's foster parents, were in England where John Allan was engaged in the tobacco business for several years. Poe not only drew on his personal experiences or observations but also gave expression to his own beliefs, prejudices, and dislikes such as his contempt for Transcendentalists and his dislike of literary figures such as Longfellow and magazines such as Dial. On the other hand, he records sentiments or interests that are recognizable as his own, such as his ideas on imagination or perversity or his interests in secret writing, ratiocination, and scientific discoveries.[3] Moreover, in many of his stories, Poe depicts himself or reflects some aspect of his own personality. Several critics, like Patrick Quinn, points out that Poe's heroes are all doubles, one of another, and that the physical and mental traits of Poe are what they all have in common.[4]

In a psychoanalytical study of Poe in the American Journal of Psychology, Lorine Pruette illustrates several apparent psychological disturbances in Poe that manifest

[3] Campbell, p. 140-142.

[4] Patrick F. Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Poe (Carbondale, 1957), p. 226.

themselves in his writing.[5] Also, Joseph Wood Krutch, a controversial biographer of Poe, points out that no more completely personal writer than Poe ever existed.[6] Krutch maintains, however, that Poe's work is completely imaginative and is the result of a complete maladjustment to life, and in order to understand Poe's work one must understand Poe.[7] Poe's work, says Krutch, represents a desperate flight from reality, from a world filled with problems with which Poe could not cope. Krutch's study is only one of the many psychological or psychoanalytical studies of Poe as he is revealed in his work, and these studies continue to provide new interpretations of the tales and poems in the light of analyses of the author. Often the works are used as a basis for psychological study of the man, and again the life of the author may become the basis for interpretation of the story. The development of the sciences of psychology and psychiatry has provided a key to the interpretation of many symbolic events that were previously dismissed as unreal or supernatural. Psychological interpretations have linked

[5] Lorine Pruette, "Psycho-Analytical Study of Edgar Allan Poe," American Journal of Psychology, XXXI (October 1920), 370-402.

[6] Joseph Wood Krutch, Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius (New York, 1926), p. 17.

[7] Krutch, p. 18.

characteristics of Poe and his work so that it is difficult to study one aspect without the other. Thus the fact that a causal relationship exists between the life and literary products of Poe seems to be pretty widely accepted; therefore, instead of simply existing as attempts to achieve a certain effect of madness or horror, the imaginative works become symbolic expressions of the author. The interpretation of certain of these expressive symbols in terms of the relationship between Poe and his imaginative literature is the primary purpose of this paper.

The Expressive Theory of Criticism

"The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author; and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the oldest and best-established methods of literary study."[8] M. H. Abrams, in The Mirror and The Lamp, points out that the theory of art has always harbored doctrines which imply some correspondence between the nature of the artist and the nature of his work.[9] Abrams also states that there are three kinds of critical

[8] René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York, 1956), p. 63.

[9] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1958), p. 229.

activity which rely on the same assumption that art and personality are "correlated variables." One looks to an author for the explanation of his work; another reads an author out of his work; and the third reads a work in order to find its author in it. The first type is primarily an investigation of literary causes, and the attempt is to isolate and explain the special quality of a work by reference to the special quality of the character, life, linage, and milieu of its author. The second type is biographical in aim; it sets out to reconstruct the author as he lived and uses the literary product merely as a convenient record from which to infer something about his life and character. The third, however, claims to be specifically aesthetic and appreciative in purpose. It regards aesthetic qualities as a projection of personal qualities, and in its extreme form, it looks upon a literary work as a transparency opening directly into the soul of its author.[10] All three of these approaches have frequently been applied to the life and work of Poe. In fact, for most readers it is difficult to divorce the madness and horror of Poe's work, especially the tales, from the image of the man that is formed by the circumstances of his life or the figments

[10] Abrams, p. 227.

of biographers' imaginations.

This way of thinking, in which the artist becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged, may be called the expressive theory of criticism.[11] In general terms, the central tendency of the expressive theory is that a work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling and embodying the combined product of the artist's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.[12] The primary source and subject matter of a work of art, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the artist's own mind; furthermore, symbols are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the mind.[13] From this statement there emerges the familiar modern view that certain works of literature are dual symbol-systems, pointing in two directions, ostensibly representing the outer world, but indirectly expressing the author.[14] Thus severed from the external world, the objects signified in the work "tend to

[11] Abrams, p. 227.

[12] Abrams, p. 22.

[13] Abrams, p. 25.

[14] Abrams, p. 241.

be regarded as no more than a projected equivalent--an extended and articulated symbol"--for the inner state of the mind.[15] The style, characters, and total subject matter of a work of literature must be regarded as molded by, and, therefore, as expressing, the shaping forces in the personality of its author. As a result one finds the division of a work of literature into a surface reference to characters, things, and events, and a more covert symbolism which is expressive of elements in the nature of the author.

Symbolism as Expression

The expression of universal and ideal relations which could not otherwise be expressed is the goal or purpose of the symbol. Much importance has been attached to symbols in the interpretation of psychological, and especially psycho-analytic, literature, which, according to my thesis, is what many of Poe's short stories are. In spite of extensive widespread usage, the terms literary symbol and symbolism are perhaps too elusive to make a satisfactory definition possible. Nevertheless, in the field of literature the word symbolism suggests certain connotations just as definite as other similarly vague

[15] Abrams, p. 25.

words like romanticism or aestheticism.[16] Symbolism has trouble defining itself, but so does poetry. In order to discuss Poe's use of symbols, it is necessary, first of all, to establish a definition of symbolism in terms of its use in this paper.

As music uses sounds, painting colors, and sculpture matter, so literature uses words to create an image of time, space, or dynamic patterns of feeling. Therefore, words themselves become a type of symbol. But perhaps ordinary words should be called signs or referents because they simply point to or name objects. For example, the word dog stands for the animal, and in this sense the word as a sign has a one-to-one relationship; the word dog equals the animal, or, to be more specific, the word and the animal produce the same image in the mind. However, the words of a symbolic work are those which have served as the names of the objects and continue to do so, but the objects are no longer held in their old relations to one another but assume new relations. Symbolism must begin with existing words, but it is as if the logical sign of the prose were replaced by a new sign, which could be called a symbol, and the new sign contains in its total meaning the old sign, plus some new and foreign

[16] Joseph Chiari, Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé (New York, 1956), p. 47.

meaning. For example, in Moby Dick the whale acquires symbolic meaning but at the same time retains its narrative significance.

Symbolic systems tend to emphasize the immediate relationship from part to whole, from symbol to meaning. But as the preceding paragraph suggests, there are various levels of symbolism. For the purpose of this work, I shall distinguish three classes of symbols: (1) the extrinsic or arbitrary symbols; (2) intrinsic or descriptive symbols; and (3) insight or interpretive symbols.[17] The extrinsic symbol is the tag or substitutional sign which has been illustrated earlier. The intrinsic symbol may be equated with what is often called the traditional or conventional symbol, and examples of this type of symbol are numerous in religion, art, and literature. For example one recognizes the cross, the circle, and the triangle as religious symbols of Christ, eternity, and the trinity. Some symbols may be ambiguous; for example, the rose may be a symbol for Christ, but it may also be a symbol of love--either pure or erotic. Many objects or even animals may serve as symbols of abstract qualities or other concepts that could not

[17] Wilbur M. Urban, Language and Reality (London, 1939), p. 414.

otherwise be expressed. The insight symbol, however, goes deeper, so to speak, than the extrinsic or the intrinsic symbol. Insight symbols do not merely represent characters and relations; they provide for the interpretation of more profound or abstract concepts.[18] It is characteristic of both intrinsic and insight symbols that images or ideas are taken from narrower and more universal and ideal relations which, because of their pervasiveness and ideality, are not directly expressible.[19] The insight symbol does not merely describe or make more concrete as the extrinsic symbol does; it is a "gateway into something beyond."[20] The personal symbol, such as Yeats' gyre or Melville's whale, may be classified as examples of the insight symbol. Although the extrinsic and intrinsic symbols are present in most literary works, it is primarily the insight, or interpretive, symbol that I shall consider in the works of Poe.

Generally speaking, one may define symbolism as a form of indirect, metaphorical speech intended to carry or suggest a hidden reality. Therefore, anything which bears witness to the supernatural or universal analogy in

[18] Urban, p. 415.

[19] Urban, p. 415.

[20] Urban, p. 416.

the world, any sign which tradition has invested with a supernatural meaning or powerful emotional tone, any allegory, any myth, or any poetic image indicative of the poet's mental and affective preoccupations, is used as a symbol, a correspondence, or a means of suggestion.[21] Although such a definition may be valid, the meaning of anything that one recognizes as a symbol is determined by a context; therefore, a chief problem of symbolism is the sound interpretation and evaluation of the symbols. In a narrow sense interpretation is simply the development of meaning or reference of the symbol, but this establishing of equations is sufficient only for the arbitrary or descriptive symbols. The response to expressive or imaginative symbol demands fuller interpretation by the manner of its presentation, by the claim it makes on the reader, and for the sake of the meaning which one senses within it. Although the sign contained in the symbol may be identified, the symbol also embodies a complex of feeling and thought beyond the reference and the limits of discourse.

Poe's Literary Theories Compared with the Expressive Theory

There are, of course, dangers in interpreting expressive symbols that must be carefully avoided. Perhaps

[21] Chiari, p. 47-48.

the most logical objections to the expressive theory of literature are enumerated by René Wellek and Austin Warren in their Theory of Literature. One primary quarrel with this method of literary study is that it is often impossible to present proof or factual bases for parallels that are set forth.[22] Abrams also insists that the conclusions drawn from purely literary evidences must be evaluated in light of an accurate biographical account drawn from external sources.[23] One must also be able to distinguish between the personal attributes which an author projects directly into his work and those which he disguises and distorts in order to hide certain facts from his reader or himself.[24] One must determine what the author of the literary work is trying to do, but one must take into consideration not only what the author says he is doing but also what he actually does. Poe, for instance, has set forth a rather definite theory of literary composition, but it is doubtful that he always practiced the methods he advocated. The main sources of Poe's theory of the tale are his two reviews of Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales. The first of these articles appeared

[22] Wellek and Warren, p. 64.

[23] Abrams, p. 234.

[24] Abrams, p. 228.

in Graham's Magazine for May, 1842, and was entitled "Twice-Told Tales, by Nathaniel Hawthorne--A Review." The second article was a review of Mosses from an Old Manse which appeared in Godey's Magazine for November, 1847. As a literary reformer, Poe had definite ideas concerning the composition of the tale, and he took the opportunity that Twice-Told Tales offered as a means of expressing them. Poe was among the first, if not actually the first, to conceive of the short story as belonging to the highest region of art and to suggest the formal discipline necessary for achieving success.[25] According to Poe, the tale "affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose."[26] He says that the great advantage of producing unity in the tale could not be realized in a longer work. The purpose of the tale should be to achieve "a certain unique or single effect," and each event in the story must carefully be made to help obtain the desired mood or atmosphere.[27] Another important requirement made by Poe is that "truth

25 Ray B. West, The Short Story in America (New York, 1952), p. 5.

26 Edgar Allan Poe, "Twice-Told Tales, by Nathaniel Hawthorne--A Review," The American Tradition in Literature, ed. Sculley Bradley et al. (New York, 1961), I, 866.

27 Poe, "Twice-Told Tales," p. 867.

is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale."[28] Although it should be the primary purpose to achieve effect, it is necessary also that the tale should express a meaningful thought.

In three essays, "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Poetic Principle," and "The Rationale of Verse," Poe also states his beliefs concerning poetry and the poetic process. In "The Philosophy of Composition" he professes to detail, step by step, the process by which he wrote "The Raven."[29] Poe states that the first intention of the author should be to create a poem that would "suit at once the popular and the critical taste." Poe says that a literary work should not be too long to read at one sitting; in fact, he asserts that there can be no long poems. The poem must be long enough to achieve the desired effect but not so long that unity might be lost. "Beauty," says Poe, "is the sole legitimate province of the poem,"[30] and "melancholy is the most legitimate of all the poetic tones."[31] The most melancholy topic for

[28] Poe, "Twice-Told Tales," p. 867.

[29] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (New York, 1902), XIV, 193-208--hereafter cited as Works.

[30] Works, XIV, 197.

[31] Works, XIV, 198.

poetry is death; furthermore, "the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world--and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."[32] Poe points out the necessity of originality, complexity, and suggestiveness.

This mechanical building of a poem hardly conforms to the criteria of art as expression; Poe's announced theory is primarily what one would call "art for art's sake" or the objective theory. The fact is, however, that there have been countless discussions on whether or not Poe actually created "The Raven" in the manner described in "The Philosophy of Composition." It seems more likely that Poe had the poem already written and then used it as a basis for a discussion of his theory of creation. Most critics indicate that Poe probably did not write poetry according to the methods outlined in his essay. Krutch, for example, says that Poe's effort is a hoax, whether conscious or unconscious.[33] In addition to revealing the elements of Poe's literary thought, "The Philosophy of Composition" reveals several facts which may be pertinent to the problem with which this paper is concerned. First,

[32] Works, XIV, 201.

[33] Krutch, p. 113.

the tone of melancholy which pervades much of the work of Poe, as well as his own personal existence, is described as holding a prominent position in the literary work. Along with the obsession of melancholy is introduced Poe's attraction to the subject of death and, more specifically, the death of beautiful women. One finds Poe confronted at a very early age with the death of his mother, his foster mother, and, later in life, his wife. The parallel seems to be too obvious to avoid. Poe becomes the self-tortured "lover" who is the victim of the "Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance" of which the raven is emblematic. In the tales Poe does fulfill the requirements which he established, but even though the stories appear to be only skillful works that achieve an effect of madness or horror they are also expressions of the conflicts of Poe's life. On the surface Poe's work follows the theories of literature which he established, and Poe's theories seem to conflict with the expressive theory of literature. On the symbolic level, however, the imaginative works are the unconscious revelation of the author.

CHAPTER II

THE EXTENT OF PERSONAL SYMBOLISM IN POE'S WORK

The first class of symbol which I shall discuss in relation to the life and works of Poe is the extrinsic or arbitrary symbol. This type of symbol, which has been previously defined as the word used simply as a sign of an object, is evidently present in all literature; however, in Poe's work more emphasis is placed on the individual words than in most writing. Perhaps the most important requirement of the tale or the poem, according to Poe's theory, is that a certain unique or single effect should be achieved. Poe's method of obtaining effect is primarily the careful choice of words. The word, or extrinsic symbol, must convey the exact image that the author wishes to establish in the mind of the reader. The deranged and perverse establishment of the effect of horror is perhaps the outstanding accomplishment of the extrinsic symbol by Poe. Indeed, it is this effect of horror, combined with the maladjustments of the author, that have formed the popular conception of Poe as the mad writer of mystery and horror stories.

This conception of Poe's "madness" may be factually established to a certain extent. As I have mentioned

before, Poe's work is largely the expression of the neurotic personality of the author. His unnatural preoccupation with women, his engrossment with melancholy, and his obsession with death are traits indicative of the enormous task which Poe has unconsciously undertaken. How does one explore the mind with mere words? Is it possible for one to describe the conflicts and disillusionments of a tragic life with words? Poe by his choice and manipulation of the extrinsic symbols comes as close as possible and, in the process, creates a work of art. Often Poe as narrator enters the mind of the characters in order to relate the complexities there that struggle for expression, and the mind which Poe examines and reveals is usually his own. In addition to the effect, which is usually produced through the thoughts and actions of the characters, Poe obtains a predominant mood or atmosphere in his work through the use of the extrinsic symbols. His skill in describing the setting produces a vivid image in the mind of the reader conducive to the achievement of the desired effect.

Through the use of words as signs or extrinsic symbols, Poe is often able to achieve in the description of a person or a place an even higher level of symbol. The effect of each of the well-chosen words in the literary work join together to become an effect that is

greater than the sum of the individual words. In "Ligeia" the narrator describes the bridal chamber as follows:

> The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window--an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice--a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window, extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting, depended, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-colored fires.
>
> Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about--and there was the couch, too--the bridal couch--of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief phantasy of all. The lofty walls gigantic in height--even unproportionably so--were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds,

> with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry--tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies--giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In this description Poe creates the appropriate atmosphere for the following action and achieves the effect of perverseness and horror that is one of the major characteristics of the tale. But in addition to these usual tasks of the extrinsic symbol, the description also performs other functions important to the narrative. First of all, the narrator's hate for Lady Rowena is revealed as well as a foreshadowing of his intention of

making her life miserable. The chamber also gives insight into the type of mind of the narrator, a mind filled with obsessions for the lost Ligeia, hate for Rowena, and horrible perverseness that controls his existence. Like Poe, however, the narrator shows scorn and contempt for normal mentality--he wonders why no one can recognize the death chamber which he intends the bridal chamber to be.[1] By careful selections and joining of words the author is able to reveal many subtle hints necessary for the understanding of literary art; thus the meaning of the tale or poem is elevated by the genius of the author.

The Intrinsic Symbol

The second type of symbol is more complex than the extrinsic symbol. The interpretation of intrinsic or descriptive symbol usually provides for a new level of meaning for the reader. Perhaps the most prevalent use of this descriptive symbol in Poe's work is the representation of the obsession with death and sex that has been pointed out earlier. Poe himself states that the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetic topic possible. A study of Poe's biography reveals a possible explanation for his repeated use of the topic because Poe

[1] R. P. Busler, "The Interpretation of 'Ligeia,'" College English, V (April 1944), 368.

was continually faced with the death of women to whom he had become attached in his own life. For example, when Poe was not quite three years old his mother, Elizabeth Arnold Poe, died in Richmond, Virginia, after a period of illness and poverty. Since his father had died earlier, Poe, at this impressionable age, with his brother and sister, was left without parents and sent to live with foster parents.[2] Again during his early life, Poe was distressed by the death of Mrs. Stannard, the mother of one of his classmates. It is said that he mourned her death and remained for some time by her grave. Later as Poe gained his release from the army to return to the home of his foster parents in Richmond, Mrs. Allan, to whom he had become closely attached, died. Finally, Poe was certainly disturbed by the decline in health and death of his young wife, Virginia. Thus at intervals of his life, Poe was made shockingly aware of the tragedy of the death of women who were dear to him. Through biographers one is able to witness the effects of these deaths on Poe, but I maintain that the same evidence is revealed in Poe's imaginative literature.

Perhaps the most obvious intrinsic or descriptive symbol of death that appears in the poems and tales is

2 James S. Wilson, Facts About Poe (Charlottesville, 1926, p. 8.

the use of blackness. The tales concerned with death are usually pervaded with blackness or the darkness of night. The most obvious use of black as a symbol of death is the black apartment in "The Masque of the Red Death," the wild ghastly chamber in which Prince Prospero is killed by the intruder--the symbol of the plague. The prince enters the black room and struggles briefly with death before being overcome. Poe's reference to death's black shadow in "The Tell-Tale Heart" is another example of black as symbol of death as it stalks its victim. In "The Pit and the Pendulum" the narrator is surrounded by "the blackness of eternal night." These examples of the embodiment of Poe's fixation on death are repeated in his work so often that they seem to become symbols of the black darkness of Poe's mind that is tortured by the menace of death. Death is the "conqueror worm" that ultimately becomes the hero in Poe's own personal tragedy.

The Insight Symbol

Red also represents blood, horror, and sudden death as in "The Masque of the Red Death," but this color also conforms to the more traditional implications of erotic passion.[3] In addition to the traditional value of color symbol, a personal insight symbol reveals Poe's existence

[3] Pruette, p. 389.

in his tale. An elaborate use of flower symbolism involving this color appears in "Eleonora," a tale which strongly reflects the experiences of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden but even more clearly refers to a part of Poe's life. On May 16, 1836, Poe and his cousin, Virginia Clemm, were married in Richmond, Virginia, and Virginia's mother, Maria Clemm, came to live with the newly weds. Poe romantically describes their existence in "Eleonora" by saying that they "lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley,--I, and my cousin and her mother."[4] The narrator (Poe) and his cousin, Eleonora (Virginia), lived for many years in their "happy home" among the "many thousands of forest trees" and "many millions of fragrant flowers" before they began to worship "the god Eros" "beneath the serpent-like trees." The introduction of erotic love into the lives of the cousins is illustrated in the following passage:

> The passions which had for centuries distinguished our race, came thronging with the fancies for which they had been equally noted, and together breathed a delirious bliss over the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. A change fell upon all things. Strange, brilliant flowers, star-shaped, burst out upon the trees where no flowers had been known before. The tints of the green carpet

4 Works, IV, 237.

> deepened; and when, one by one, the white daisies shrank away, there sprang up in place of them ten by ten of the ruby-red asphodel. And life arose in our paths; for the tall flamingo, hitherto unseen, with all gay glowing birds, flaunted his scarlet plumage before us. . . . And now, too, a voluminous cloud, which we had long watched in the regions of hesper, floated out thence, all gorgeous in crimson and gold, settling in peace above us, sank, day by day, lower and lower, . . . shutting us up, as if forever, within a magic prison-house of grandeur and of glory.[5] (My italics)

This birth of passionate love that is portrayed through symbol is one of Poe's more adventurous voyages into the kingdom of Eros, but one recognizes that the type of relationship suggested above probably never existed for Poe. Because of Virginia's age and her illness, it is almost certain that Poe's marriage never led to his acceptance of Virginia as a normal marital partner. Poe loved Virginia, but it was the same love that he had for his mother, Mrs. Allan, Mrs. Stannard, and even Mrs. Clemm. Poe's wife was elevated to his idealized conception of woman. "The loveliness of Eleonora [Virginia] was that of the Seraphim; but she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers." Passionate love apparently did not exist for Poe; therefore there is only one step remaining in the classic pattern. For Poe,

[5] Works, IV, 239.

the red and the black--sex and death--are inevitably linked. Once Eleonora has witnessed the growth of passion described above, she recognizes "that the finger of Death was upon her bosom--that, like the ephemeron, she had been made perfect in loveliness only to die."[6] Her lover vows never to become involved with any "maiden of the outer and every-day world" nor to bind himself in "marriage to any daughter of earth"; the vows could be safely made because the narrator (Poe) realized that he was incapable of normal relations with any woman.[7] Eleonora dies; "the ruby-red asphodels withered away; and there sprang up, in place of them, ten by ten, dark, eye-like violets. . . . And life departed from our paths; for the tall flamingo flaunted no longer his scarlet plumage before us."[8] After Eleonora's (Virginia's) death, the narrator (Poe), like Adam, left the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass (Eden) for the "vanities and the turbulent triumphs of the world."[9] The interpretation of the insight symbol in Poe's work depends largely upon psychological analysis of both the writing and the author; the symbolic expression

6 Works, IV, 240.

7 Marie Bonaparte, The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation (London, 1949), p. 151.

8 Works, IV, 241.

9 Works, IV, 242.

of the author in the works is a necessary premise in this type of study. For example, the tales illustrate the psychological importance of the effect on Poe of the deaths of several women to whom he had become closely attached. Marie Bonaparte, in the psychoanalytic study of Poe and his work, states that his unconscious memories of his mother's long months of illness and decline and, finally, death became one of the most important determinants of his life.[10] The close relationship between Poe's life and his tales that is suggested in the comments that have been made concerning "Eleonora" is neither an accidental nor isolated occurance. In "Berenice" the narrator again marries a cousin who is taken away by a fatal disease. This story, also, suggests the important place that Virginia was destined to fill in Poe's affections, life, and work, and how she came to reincarnate, in his unconscious mind, both his sister and his mother who was to remain the one great love of his life.[11] The description of Berenice combines the features from two models, Virginia and Elizabeth Arnold Poe. Bonaparte suggests that the description of Berenice in the coffin that appeared in early versions of the tale is a description of Poe's mother after her death and explains Egæus'

[10] Bonaparte, p. 7.

[11] Bonaparte, p. 213.

obsession with the eyes and teeth.[12] Also a sexual factor enters into the Oedipus attachment of Poe for his dead mother. It is suggested by Bonaparte that Poe's fixation on his mother brought about sexual impotence and a moral aversion to all sexuality since sexuality to him could only mean sadistic destruction and necrophilia.[13] Thus Elizabeth Poe remained alive in Poe's mind just as Berenice remained alive in her grave.

In "Morella" the narrator again is involved in a marriage without passion or sexual love, a marriage such as the one Poe evidently had. Again, like Elizabeth Arnold and Virginia, Morella is wasting with disease. Just as Poe transferred his feeling for his mother to Virginia, the father transfers his idealistic love for Morella to the daughter. In "Ligeia," which Poe considered his best tale, the same theme appears again. The narrator cannot remember where he first met Ligeia, nor did he ever learn her family name, but Ligeia seems to be another embodiment of Elizabeth Arnold Poe. The description of Ligeia is almost an exact description of his mother who continued to haunt his unconscious mind. And again the

[12] Bonaparte, p. 217.

[13] Bonaparte, p. 218.

signs of approaching death appear in Ligeia, but she has an intense desire for life and struggles against the conqueror worm. After Ligeia's death her husband marries Lady Rowena, whom he soon comes to hate because she represents a betrayal or a profanation of his memory of Ligeia. He confesses pleasure derived from his torture of Rowena and her dread avoidance of him, but he justifies his actions by his pure, etheral love for Ligeia.[14] For Poe, Rowena represents Mrs. Allan or Virginia or any other woman who represents his betrayal of his mother.[15] The dead Ligeia (Elizabeth) is avenged by the death of Rowena, and again the mother is reincarnated in another person. Thus, Poe unwittingly declares that every love from Frances Allan to Virginia and her successors would never be other than a reincarnation of his undying love for his mother--still living in his unconscious--and ever to be reactivated by each new passion.[16] Time and again, in these stories and others, Poe portrays the ideal woman who sickens and dies, yet does not really die, because she remains alive in the literary works which are symbolic expressions of the author's mind.

[14] Busler, p. 368.

[15] Bonaparte, p. 232.

[16] Bonaparte, p. 235.

CHAPTER III

REVELATION THROUGH THE EXPRESSIVE SYMBOL: "THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER"

Perhaps the most adequate embodiment of symbolic self-expression in the tales occurs in "The Fall of the House of Usher." According to T. O. Mabbott, a family of Ushers actually played a part in the early life of Poe. During the illness of Poe's mother, the Poe children were cared for by an actress, Mrs. Harriet Usher, and her husband, Luke. It seems, also, that the Ushers had two surviving children, James Campbell and Agnes Pye Usher, who were both neurotic and died very young. Thus Mr. Mabbott suggests that Poe is using with the greatest liberty the true story of a family that died out.[1] Even if this family is the basis for Poe's story, it is probably one of the least important biographical facts; Poe was writing about himself. From the very first lines "The Fall of the House of Usher" invites symbolic interpretation.

Achieving the Unique Effect through Figurative Language

In the opening lines Poe's use of the extrinsic

[1] T. O. Mabbott, "Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Explicator, XV, Item 7.

symbol establishes the pervading atmosphere of the story. The narrator's reaction to the appearance of the House of Usher is given in the description which sets the mood of the story. The setting has a double importance, descriptive and symbolic. It first operates descriptively, as suggestively appropriate and picturesque background for the unfolding of events. It later operates symbolically; certain features of the setting assume an ominous animism and function; they become important active elements instead of mere static backdrop.[2] The opening scene of the story not only serves to establish the atmosphere of doubt and misgiving, but also to suggest the moral and psychological sources from which the atmosphere emerges. What perturbs the narrator in the appearance of the house and its grounds is that he is faced with a vision of decay. It is not the condition of death which he sees, but that of death-in-life.[3] The narrator experiences "an utter depression of the soul," but he is unable to understand the effect of the scene.

> What was it--I paused to think--what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of

[2] Darrel Abel, "A Key to the House of Usher," Interpretations of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. (New York, 1959), p. 51.

[3] Quinn, The French Face, p. 239.

> the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there <u>are</u> combinations of very simple objects which have the power of affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth.

The gentleman who comes riding up to the house of Usher is the personification of rational convention. Like all Poe's narrators, even the most unbalanced, he would like to cling to logic and to the common-sense material world. But he has set out on a journey which is designed to break up all his established categories.

The house which is the center of the gloomy picture seen by the narrator is more than simply a decayed old mansion. The dual reference to the House of Usher is not only to the mansion but also to the ancient family which has dwindled in a "direct line of descent" until Roderick and Madeline are the "last of the ancient race of Ushers." Thus one may recognize in House of Usher "an appellation which seemed to include . . . both the family and the family mansion." This equation of the house and the Usher family does not end at this point. "From the opening sentence of the story one has the point-for-point identification of the external world with the human constitution. The House is the total human being, its

three parts functioning as one; the outside construction of the house is like the body; the dark tarn is the mirror or the mind . . .; and the fissure is the fatal dislocation or fracture which, as the story develops, destroys the whole psychic being of which the house is the outward manifestation."[4] There are interesting and unavoidable correspondences between the physical appearance of Roderick Usher and that of his house. When describing the house, the narrator speaks of the "vacant eye-like windows" that are again called to mind by the "eye, large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison" of Usher. The "discoloration of the ages" may very well describe the "cadaverousness of complexion" of Roderick Usher as the decayed walls of the mansion. The "minute fungi . . . hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves" of the house provides the same image to the reader as Usher's "hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity." The narrator's reaction to the vacant windows, the decayed exterior, the web-like fungi, and the atmosphere which characterizes the house is evoked again as he studies the features of Usher. These parallels seem to be drawn too closely to be coincidents; they exist in order

[4] Edward H. Davidson, "The Tale as Allegory," Interpretations of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. (New York, 1959), p. 74.

to bind the fate of Usher and the mansion. The mansion, therefore, comes to stand also for Usher. The inconsistency between the "still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones" of the mansion represents the difficulty maintained composure of Usher in the face of his physical and mental deterioration.[5] The fissure extending from the roof of the building to the tarn becomes a symbol of the weakness that may someday cause the fall of the mansion, but it also suggests some defect that shall also bring about the fall of Usher. The fact that the crack runs into the tarn and that the house is reflected in the tarn seems to present a kind of prophetic picture of the fall.[6]

The Poe-Usher Relationship

There is one other important point I should like to make concerning this description of Roderick Usher before continuing the discussion of the story. The details that are used to describe the physical appearance of Usher also provide a fairly accurate self-portrait of the artist.

> Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat

5 Abel, p. 57.

6 Quinn, The French Face, p. 239.

> thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity--these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten.

Not only does this physical description fit Poe, but the mental state of nervous agitation and fear seems to apply readily to the author at the time "The Fall of the House of Usher" was written. There can be little doubt, most critics agree, that one finds the author in Usher.[7] Therefore, one sees the poverty-stricken Poe, both his health and literary powers evidently in decline, struggling to maintain his composure in the face of what seems to be, and ultimately is, destruction. Once again the problems which Poe writes about are his own.

An outstanding characteristic of Usher is his obsession with music, art, and literature. An example of Usher's "wild improvisations," which he accompanied with guitar music, is a ballad called "The Haunted Palace." Again Poe uses a building as a symbol to portray human characteristics. The song reflects the atmosphere of the Usher mansion. The first stanza portrays the castle as

7 Quinn, The French Face, p. 244.

having a head, and from this head float and flow banners that closely resemble the hair of Usher that "floated rather than fell about the face." Spirits are seen through "two luminous windows" which are clearly the man's eyes; the "fair palace door" is the mouth. Thus Poe has not portrayed a palace but has created an image of a man's head. The ruler of the estate, reason, is assailed by "evil things," and a change takes place. No longer does a "troop of Echoes" sing the "wit and wisdom of their king;" now a "hideous throng" rushes out through the "pale door" and laughs. The laugh is one of hysteria--of madness. The narrator states that he perceives as Usher sings "for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne."

Since Poe, the narrator, recognizes Usher's progression toward madness, and since Usher may be considered an embodiment of Poe, one is faced again with the problem of Poe and madness. It may be noted that Poe published "The Haunted Palace" separate from "The Fall of the House of Usher," and he referred to it as a portrayal of a disordered mind. Rather than enter into a discussion of Poe's psyche at this point, I shall simply state that "The Haunted Palace" is one of the major symbols of the story since it expresses the theme: "the increasing

disorganization and final collapse of Usher's personality."[8] Another artistic creation of the demented mind of Usher is the abstract painting which evidently is a symbol of the underground vault which appears later in the story. In addition to the interest in music and painting, Usher supposedly spent much of his time reading. On the night of the storm the narrator reads to Usher from the "Mad Trist" of Sir Launcelot Canning. The symbolic interpretation of this story goes deeper than the external parallels between the lines from the romance and the events that take place in the narrative. One recognizes the prophetic significances of the symbols which Roderick Usher creates; however, these symbols "flow from the same dark source as the evil in symbols which exist independently of Usher; that evil is merely channeled through his artistic sensibility to find bold new expression."[9]

Psychological and Psychoanalytical Interpretations

Having discussed some of the basic symbolic equations necessary to the interpretation of the story, I shall now turn to a more important aspect that has been intentionally avoided until this point--the relationship between

[8] Arthur E. Robinson, "Order and Sentience in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" PMLA, LXXVI, 72.

[9] Abel, p. 55.

Roderick Usher and his sister, Madeline. Closely related to symbolism is a Freudian approach to "The Fall of the House of Usher," and this brother-sister relationship invites Freudian reading.[10] A Freudian reading, however, makes Madeline's function in the story largely symbolic; she has no real significance outside of her relations to Roderick.[11] On a completely symbolic level, Usher becomes the only actual character in the story, with house, narrator, and Madeline all objectifying elements or clashes within his personality.[12] Therefore, Roderick and Madeline "are not two persons, but consciousness in two bodies, each mirroring the other, intensifying the introversion of the family character."[13] The isolation and concentration of the vitalities of the Ushers brings about the decay of the line.[14] Madeline becomes a visible embodiment of the alter ego. She is the emotional or instinctive side of her brother's personality which has stagnated under the domination of the intellect.[15] Usher

[10] Robinson, p. 10.

[11] Robinson, p. 77.

[12] Robinson, p. 75.

[13] Abel, p. 54.

[14] Abel, p. 54.

[15] William Bysshe Stein, "The Twin Motif in 'The Fall of The House of Usher,'" Modern Language Notes, LXXV, 111.

represents the mind or intellectual aspect of the total being; Madeline is the sensual or physical side of this psyche. The tale is a study of the total disintegration of a complex human being, not in any one of the three aspects of body, mind, and soul, but in all three together.[16]

Now the question arises as to why Roderick should want to murder Madeline, especially since it involves the destruction of a part of himself. Usher expresses a feeling of gloom and fear concerning the apparent approach of the death of Madeline that would leave him as the last of the family of Usher. Even if Roderick is actually convinced that Madeline is dead when he puts her in the tomb, how does one explain the fact that he does not release her during the "many minutes, many hours, many days" in which he has been intensely aware of his mistake? It seems that Usher manifests a deliberate death-wish toward all but the intellectual side of his personality. Roderick Usher suffers from the diseased mind which has too long abstracted and absented itself from physical reality; in fact, the physical world, and even the physical side of himself, fills him with such repugnance that he can maintain his unique world or self

[16] Davidson, p. 75.

of the mind only by destroying his twin sister or the physical side of himself.[17] If Roderick is representative of death-in-life and of the death wish, Madeline becomes in the end not only the embodiment of life-in-death, but also of the will to live, indeed of a last, powerful convulsion of that will in the dying race of the Ushers.[18] Madeline returns from the coffin and in one convulsive motion brings her brother to his death; the body and the mind die together. The death of reason or intellect produces the state of madness described in "The Haunted Palace," the symbolic foreshadowing of Roderick Usher's fall. After the mind and body die, the mansion collapses, "for it has all the while represented the total being of this complex body-mind relation which Poe has studied in the symbolic guise of a brother and sister relationship."[19]

But what is the driving motivation of the characters--and of Poe--in "The Fall of the House of Usher"? Is the struggle of Life-Reason against the threats of Death-Madness the only conflict in the story? Madness has become an accepted trait of the Poe myth, but another more complicated approach of Freudian psychology deals

[18] Leo Spitzer, "A Reinterpretation of 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Comparative Literature, IV, 353.

[19] Davidson, p. 75.

with the sexual significances of the relationship between Roderick and Madeline Usher. There is little outright evidence of incest on the literal level of the story, but there is much insinuation.[20] The fact that neither Roderick nor Madeline ever marry but choose to isolate themselves from the rest of the world is suspicious, but perhaps the history of the Usher family explains these actions. Roderick's reaction to the illness of his "tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years," is also suggestive of some strange relationship. Finally, one might be curious as to what the "evil things" mentioned as the cause of the fall of the monarch's estate in "The Haunted Palace" might be. Allen Tate states that readers are not shocked by Roderick's love for his sister because it is not really physical.[21] Tate suggests that the symbolic compulsion that drives through, and beyond, physical incest moves toward the extinction of the beloved's will in complete possession, not of her body, but of her being; there is the reciprocal force, returning upon the lover, or self-destruction.[22] "The lover, circumventing the body into the secret being of the

[20] Robinson, p. 76.

[21] Allen Tate, "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," Partisan Review, XVI (December 1949), 1211.

[22] Tate, p. 1212.

beloved, tries to convert the spiritual object into an object of sensation: the intellect which knows and the will which possesses are unnaturally turned upon that part of the beloved which should remain inviolate."[23] By possessing her inner being, then, the brother has killed, or thinks he has killed, his sister.[24] The sister then returns from the tomb, and in falling prone on the brother suffocates him in a sexual embrace. Tate says, "The physical symbolism of the fissured house, of the miasmic air, and of the special order of nature surrounding the House of Usher and conforming to the laws of the spirits inhabiting it--all this supports the central dramatic situation, which moves towards spiritual unity through disintegration."[25]

The brother-sister relationship in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is perhaps best understood in terms of Poe's mother fixation that has been discussed previously. Madeline, like Eleonora, Berenice, Morella, and Ligeia, becomes the symbolic representation of the mother-wife transfer which evidently took place in Poe's unconscious. Bonaparte says that the mansion becomes a symbol of mother, with Usher as the son, who, "for many years, never

[23] Tate, p. 1213.

[24] Tate, p. 1213.

[25] Tate, p. 1214.

ventured forth."[26] The mansion, therefore, becomes a symbol of Elizabeth Arnold, Poe's mother; Roderick Usher represents Poe; and Madeline, perhaps, comes to stand for Poe's own sister, Rosalie. Just as Roderick never left the mansion, Poe never left behind the memory of his mother. But Madeline, like the ladies mentioned before, also represents Poe's sick and dying wife, Virginia, to whom Poe has transferred his repressed love for his mother. The pattern continues with the description of the strange disease of a "cataleptical character" which causes Madeline, like Berenice, to be buried alive. Bonaparte suggests that the tomb, within the walls of the Mother-Mansion which has been portrayed also in the painting by Roderick Usher, may be expressed in analytic terms as the phantasy of return to the mother's womb.[27] During the storm in which the "gaseous exhalations . . . enshrouded the mansion," as Poe must have remembered his enshrouded mother, the narrator reads to Usher from the Mad Trist, a legendary theme which Bonaparte says is the perfect expression of the Oedipus wish.[28] The dragon, symbol of the father, is killed, and the mother is set free to

[26] Bonaparte, p. 241.

[27] Bonaparte, p. 245.

[28] Bonaparte, p. 249.

belong to the victorious son. Perhaps the incestuous desires that plague Usher-Poe are the "evil things" which bring about the fall of reason in "The Haunted Palace." Usher-Poe realizes that he must be punished for this evil. Moreover, he must be punished for having betrayed his mother in loving Madeline-Virginia. Thus when Lady Madeline, representative of the deadly mansion, returns from her tomb to seek her brother, it is as the emissary of justice.[29] Poe's fantasy of the return of the mother from the grave to claim her son in death--a fantasy in his unconscious until the day in Baltimore when it came to pass--is fulfilled by Madeline's return and the subsequent fall of the house of Usher.[30]

The Fall of Poe

Due to the various levels of symbolic interpretation of the story, there are many possible approaches to the study of "The Fall of the House of Usher." I have chosen to deal with the tale in light of the expressive theory of criticism, and I maintain that Poe is the point of departure for the most effective study. The first step, therefore, is to equate the characters in the narrative with personalities of the author's environment. If one

[29] Bonaparte, p. 250.

[30] Bonaparte, p. 250.

is able to establish these parallels, a more substantial basis for the explication of the story is obtained. Motivation for various events in the story may then be traced to Poe's physical or mental state as he wrote. With adequate biographical information, it is possible to establish fairly certain causal relationships between the author's life and his work. Thus the conflicts in the lives of the characters of "The Fall of the House of Usher" stem from similar psychological disturbances of the author. One finds Poe at the time he wrote this story tortured not only by the subconscious relationships in his life but also by his consciousness of his own impending mental and physical fall.

CONCLUSION

PERSONAL SYMBOL AS A LITERARY DEVICE IN THE STUDY OF POE'S IMAGINATIVE WORK

The dual nature of Poe's tales becomes a primary issue in the interpretations stated in this paper. Poe's work is still accepted by a great many readers and critics as attempts by the author to achieve certain effects of mystery or horror. Traditionally, Poe is the mad genius--plagued by poverty, alcohol and drugs, and strange, unexplainable obsessions with horror and death--who mechanically manufactures superficial but entertaining literature. Even on this level Poe has obtained a prominent position in the field of literature. I maintain, however, that there is a more important and profound level of interpretation which should not be ignored in the study of Poe and his literary accomplishments. As I have pointed out in this paper, there seems to be a more complex relationship between the author and his works than one might recognize in a casual reading. With the refinement of the sciences of psychology and psychiatry, newer and better tools for explication become available to the reader and critic.

This psychological approach to the study of

literature demands also a study of the author. It is in terms of the psychological phenomena in the life of the author that Poe's tales acquire the various levels of complexity characteristic of great literature. I have pointed out in this paper some examples of the relationship between Poe and his work, and I maintain that much of the imaginative work is expressive of the physical and psychological conflicts in the life of Poe. Of course Poe does not consciously reveal all of the conflicts which I have discussed in this paper; in fact, it is only through careful investigation and study that one is able to establish a sound basis for the use of the expressive theory of interpretation. The major device used in the tales to achieve this more sophisticated level of meaning is symbolism. The extrinsic and the intrinsic symbol seem to be contrived by Poe primarily to achieve the effect which he felt was the most significant purpose of the tale; however, the insight symbol seems to evolve from the unconscious mind of the author. Only through the interpretation of this highly personal symbolism is one able to realize the more profound and rewarding aspects of the study of Poe.

SELECTED LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

Abel, Darrel. "A Key to the House of Usher," Interpretations of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. New York, 1959.

Abrams, M. H. The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. New York, 1958.

Allen, Hervey. Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe. New York, 1949.

Bayley, Harold. The Lost Language of Symbolism. New York, 1951.

Beebe, Maurice. "The Fall of the House of Pyncheon," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XI, 4-8.

Bittner, William. Poe: A Biography. Boston, 1962.

Block, L. J. "Edgar Allan Poe," Sewanee Review, XVIII (October 1910), 385-403.

Bonaparte, Marie. The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation. London, 1949.

Brownell, William C. American Prose Masters. New York, 1923.

Busler, R. P. "The Interpretation of 'Ligeia,'" College English, V (April 1944), 363-372.

Campbell, Killis. The Mind of Poe and Other Studies. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1933.

Chiari, Joseph. Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé. New York, 1956.

Chivers, Thomas. Life of Poe. New York, 1952.

Cody, Sherman. Poe: Man, Poet, and Creative Thinker. New York, 1924.

Davidson, Edward H. "The Tale as Allegory," Interpretations of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. New York, 1959.

Feidelson, Charles. Symbolism and American Literature. Chicago, 1953.

Foss, Martin. Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience. Princeton, 1949.

Gill, William F. The Life of Edgar Allan Poe. New York, 1877.

Hamilton, Robert. "Poe and the Imagination," Quarterly Review, CCLXXXVIII (October 1950), 516-522.

Harrison, James A. The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. 17 Vols. New York, 1902.

Knights, L. C. and Basil Cottle, ed. Metaphor and Symbol. London, 1960.

Krutch, Joseph Wood. Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius. New York, 1926.

Langer, Susanne, K. Feeling and Form. New York, 1953.

Lawrence, D. H. "Edgar Allan Poe," Studies in Classic American Literature. New York, 1923.

Levin, Harry. Symbolism and Fiction. Charlottesville, 1956.

Mabbott, T. O. "Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Explicator, XV, Item 7.

Matthiessen, F. O. American Renaissance. New York, 1941.

Matthiessen, F. O. "Poe," Sewanee Review, LIV (September 1946), 175-205.

Moran, John J. A Defense of Edgar Allan Poe. Washington, 1885.

Olson, Bruce. "Poe's Strategy in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Modern Language Notes, LXXV, 556-559.

Pruette, Lorine. "Psycho-Analytical Study of Edgar Allan Poe," American Journal of Psychology, XXXI (October 1920), 370-402.

Quinn, Arthur Hobson. American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey. New York, 1936.

Quinn, Patrick F. The French Face of Edgar Poe. Carbondale, 1957.

Ransom, J. C. "Symbolism: American Style," New Republic, CXIX (November 2, 1953), 18-20.

Robinson, Arthur E. "Order and Sentience in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" PMLA, LXXVI, 68-81.

Senior, John. The Way Down and Out: The Occult in Symbolist Literature. Ithaca, New York, 1959.

Schroeter, James. "A Misreading of Poe's 'Ligeia,'" PMLA, LXXVI, 397-406.

Sparks, Archibald. "Edgar Allan Poe: Bibliography," Notes and Queries, CLIX (December 27, 1930), 465.

Spitzer, Leo. "A Reinterpretation of 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Comparative Literature, IV, 351-363.

Stein, William Bysshe. "The Twin Motif in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Modern Language Notes, LXXV, 109-111.

Tate, Allen. "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," Partisan Review, XVI, (December 1949), 1207-1219.

Tindall, William York. The Literary Symbol. New York, 1955.

Urban, Wilbur M. Language and Reality. London, 1939.

Wellek, René and Austin Warren. Theory of Literature. New York, 1956.

Wheelwright, Philip. Metaphor and Reality. Bloomington, 1962.

Wheelwright, Philip. *The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism*. Bloomington, 1954.

Winwar, Frances. *The Haunted Palace: A Life of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York, 1959.