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Isabella Kelly's Twist on the Standard Radcliffean Romance

Tenille Nowak

The Abbey of St. Asaph, published in 1795, was the second Gothic novel written by Isabella Kelly. Composed during the Gothic heyday, this novel is one of hundreds of similar texts that were offered for the reading public's delectation during the 1790s. As such, modern readers may be tempted to eschew it in favor of texts penned by more recognizable Gothic writers such as Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and later Mary Shelley, and even Edgar Allan Poe. However, *The Abbey of St. Asaph* should not be arbitrarily dismissed simply because, at first glance, it appears to be just another run-of-the-mill Gothic novel. Admittedly this piece was never acknowledged as *the* trend-setting Gothic text of 1795, but it does offer readers, both past and present, an entertaining story that contains several elements worthy of further examination. The construction of *The Abbey of St. Asaph* clearly demonstrates Kelly's familiarity with the standard Gothic tropes of the late eighteenth century, but perhaps more importantly this novel demonstrates that Kelly recognized the necessity of doing something different if she hoped to be successful in the saturated Gothic market. Though she uses the standard Radcliffean romance as her blueprint, Kelly branches out by incorporating some typical Gothic tropes in an unusual manner and thus offers us a novel with a unique twist on Gothic supernatural and humor.

As any biography on Isabella Kelly suggests, she, like several other eighteenth-century female authors, was likely responsible for providing the sole income for her family. Limited by what society considered acceptable employment for middle-class women, these women seized on novel-writing as a means of securing a living without being forced to compromise their morals or modesty.¹ While some authors used their real names, many were perhaps still concerned that writing novels, which until that period was considered almost strictly a male occupation, would bring public censure down upon them. Thus, many women used aliases or signed their novels "A Lady," which would have allowed them more authorial freedom. But whether they used an alias or signed their actual names, these women eventually effected a shift in the direction of the Gothic novel by incorporating into their texts "sensitive heroines and sentimental ideals of semi-feudal communities and . . . deliver[ing] lectures on the dangers of excessive sensibility for women" (Todd 285). In addition, they often "emphasized a sensitive response to the pathetic or affecting in life and art" (Todd 285). This combination of elements proved quite appealing to readers and resulted in an explosion of the popularity of what became known as the Radcliffean romance with both middle- and upper-class readers. However, because of the obviously formulaic nature of these novels, critics often lambasted the new novels as being unoriginal and unimaginative imitators of Ann Radcliffe. Indeed, the critics who reviewed *The Abbey of St. Asaph* apparently intended to dismiss it as just another Radcliffean imitator, but this classification was in fact not as detrimental to the novel's sales as might have been anticipated. Indeed, for a woman who needed to provide money for her family, adopting an already proven genre as the vehicle for doing so would have been a savvy move, since she was practically guaranteed a large audience, and large audiences would likely prompt the publisher to contract

with the author for subsequent novels. In addition, rather than implying that all Gothic novelists lacked originality, one could argue that for at least some of these authors, Kelly included, their strict adherence to an already successful format indicated an acute awareness of their readership's cravings and a wish to meet those expectations.

Like many Gothic novels written during this period, *The Abbey of St. Asaph* was published by William Lane of the Minerva Press. Being one of the more popular publishing houses, the Minerva Press rose to the public's demand for Gothic novels by producing

about one-third of all the novels published in London. . . . Most were formulaic Gothic 'German' romances, produced in editions of 500 or 750 and never reprinted. A 'Minerva Press' novel became a common term to describe a particular type of light society romance or thriller, much condemned in conduct literature. (St. Clair 244)

Of the roughly 600 Gothic novels produced by the top five London publishing houses during the last three decades of the eighteenth century, the Minerva Press was responsible for printing no fewer than 300 of these texts, one being *The Abbey of St. Asaph*.² The prominence and success of the Minerva Press, along with its close association with the Gothic novel,³ suggests that the demand for this type of reading material was quite high. By choosing Lane as her publisher, Kelly was perhaps anticipating that a specific audience would be exposed to her novel, which would in turn result in quick sales and possibly lead to Lane's publishing another of her novels.

Before its release, *The Abbey of St. Asaph* was not only advertised in several periodicals and novels but also reviewed by a number of critics. William Enfeld, critic for the *Monthly Review*, begins on a positive note, stating that Kelly's "mingled tales are interwoven with a sufficient variety of subordinate incidents to render the whole tolerably amusing; and some good moral reflections are interspersed" (229). However, the reviewer's apparent irritation with the similarities between the vast number of Gothic novels available quickly becomes apparent, and his review devolves into a complaint about the novel's lack of originality. Enfeld notes that "[s]he has thought it necessary, in compliance with the present rage for the terrible, to conduct the reader into a horrid cavern . . . and there to terrify him with a fiery spectre, . . . and with a moving and shrieking skeleton" (229). He finishes by summarily dismissing any positive aspects of this novelist's work by griping that "[t]he gross improbability and ludicrous absurdity of this . . . work are sufficient to annihilate the small portion of merit, which might otherwise have been ascribed to this performance" (Enfeld 229). Harsh words, indeed. Yet Enfeld's dismissal of this text as a stereotypical novel that caters to the "present rage" is echoed in the brief blurb that appeared in the *Critical Review*: "In humble imitation of the well-known novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, the *Abbey of St. Asaph* is duly equipped with all the appurtenances of ruined towers, falling battlements, moats, draw-bridges, Gothic porches, tombs, vaults, and apparitions" ("The Abbey of St. Asaph," 349). Admittedly, *St. Asaph* does have much in common with other Gothic romances, so one can easily see why critics were so quick to disregard it as a Radcliffe imitator. However, because these reviews focus on what the text has in common with the hundreds of other Gothic novels that were also being published, they overlook the small hints of attempted originality that separate it from the multitudes.

Released as a "triple-decker," *The Abbey of St. Asaph* was a fairly typical Gothic novel that initially sold for nine shillings. This is notably less expensive than Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, another three-volume work that was offered a year later by Cadell and Davies for 15 shillings. However, Radcliffe had already become a household name with the sales of her *The Romance of*

the Forest (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Regarding the pricing of typical Gothic novels, then, *The Abbey of St. Asaph*'s price was not unreasonable for an author who had only published one other novel to date. For example, Francis Lathom's two volume work, *The Castle of Ollada*, was released at the same time by the Minerva Press at the price of six shillings, which suggests a standard rate of approximately three shillings per volume for authors who had not yet established themselves as premier Gothic novelists. (*The Castle of Ollada* was Lathom's first novel). Unfortunately, the publication information offered on *The Abbey of St. Asaph*'s original title page and that which was compiled by Peter Garside in his *The English Novel: 1770–1829* do not reveal how many copies were originally produced, but it is likely that Lane printed the standard 500 to 750. The popularity of circulating libraries during the time virtually ensures that most if not all of those copies were sold. However, because of the public's insatiable appetite for a continuously fresh selection of Gothic novels, this text, like so many others, was not reissued during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴

The Radcliffean romance, which *The Abbey of St. Asaph* certainly is, made up the largest Gothic sub-genre by far. These novels, which repeat "the early conventions of early Radcliffe" (Miles, "The 1790s . . .," 59) were a "kinder, gentler fiction . . . [that contained] a good dash of romance in the popular understanding of the word as well as the scholarly one, while retaining the classic trilogy of necessary Gothic components—isolation, complicated setting, a threat possibly supernatural but more likely to be human and male" (Tracy 103). And indeed, this novel, as highlighted by its reviewers, abounds with Radcliffean elements. However, it is not how this author imitates Radcliffe's works that makes her text worthy of further study but rather how her incorporation of both Radcliffean and standard Gothic elements distinguishes her from other imitators.

Radcliffe's novels quite obviously provide the blueprint for this text, but readers should instead consider Kelly's endeavors to impress her own style on an already successful format. This "flair" manifests itself in several stylistic elements, which most notably include an interesting twist on Radcliffe's explained supernatural (where mysterious and apparently magical events are later proven to be the result of physical agents) and a departure from the typical employment of Gothic humor. The inclusion of these elements suggests that, as she developed her writing style, Kelly wished to expand her technique and her subject matter beyond that of the customary Gothic novel, perhaps with the hopes of making her own mark on the Gothic market.

Radcliffe's use of the explained supernatural in her novels is undoubtedly one of the reasons she (and her particular style of writing) became so enormously popular. Because "belief in the supernatural realm appears to be a feature of all societies . . . [and]supernatural planes are deemed to be superior to the visible and material and are feared and held in awe accordingly" (Bloom 232), eighteenth-century readers not only thrilled to Radcliffe's stimulating tales, but also were likely titillated by the possibility of the inexplicable's presence in the humdrum world which they inhabited. Isabella Kelly, like other Radcliffean followers, employs this technique in her own novels, although admittedly with not quite as much grace as the original. The most notable echo of Radcliffe's technique comes through quite clearly in an episode in which Jennet is lost in the ruined Castle of St. Asaph. While seeking an exit from the gloomy edifice, Jennet is halted by "the most terrific shrieks, and lamentable groans" (Kelly, II 222). Before her eyes,

a figure ascended, which slow and gradual rose to a stupendous height, the extended arms lengthened in proportion, and forming a circle, totally inclosed her. The head was large, and almost shapeless; something like a countenance appeared in front, but horrible beyond imagination; the eyes seemed globes of fire; and the

gaping jaws emitted sulphurous flames; the bristled hair stood erect; and a vesture which floated loosely around the spectre, represented by pale gleams of light, the forms of every noxious reptile. (Kelly, II 222–223)

The spectre speaks, lightning flashes, bells toll, and of course, upon being addressed by the horrifying vision, Jennet faints dead away, only to awaken later, unmolested yet frightened almost out of her mind. Such is the substance of any decent Radcliffean romance. And like Radcliffe, Kelly eventually reveals a perfectly rational explanation for the frightening scene. The alleged phantom is none other than a guilt-stricken individual, who, in an attempt to prevent disclosure of his nefarious actions, contrived an elaborate scene in which he appeared, covered in a phosphorous solution and taking on the dreaded name of Owen of Trevallion, to warn away any who would venture near. Obviously patterned after Radcliffe's own "supernatural" episodes, which were generally contrived by some immoral character as a means to achieving a wicked end, the root of this supernatural incident in *The Abbey of St. Asaph* rests in nothing more than a villain attempting to evade exposure.

Though this scene may encourage readers to believe that this writer was in fact nothing more than a hackneyed imitator of Radcliffe (the critics certainly thought so), there is another episode that I believe clearly demonstrates Kelly's early attempts to impose her own unique stamp on the Radcliffean Gothic novel. She decidedly deviates from Radcliffe's established pattern in a subsequent and also apparently supernatural episode. But unlike many of Radcliffe's scenes, this one does not resolve itself by the exposure of some villain attempting to use mock-supernatural elements to further his or her own agenda. The event in question centers on what some scholars may call "graveyard" humor (not to be confused with the Graveyard School, which emerged in the early 1740s). Crudely echoing a scene from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the writer (somewhat awkwardly) crafts an episode intended to terrify both the reader and heroine. Having already experienced one frightening spectre, Jennet's imagination (and that of the readers) is primed to ascribe a supernatural explanation to anything that appears out of the ordinary, particularly as she is wandering lost in the gloomy and daunting subterranean crypt (which is of course a necessary component of any good Gothic novel). When she encounters a skeleton lying on the ground, Jennet is nonplused. But when the skull begins to shake and suddenly detaches itself and rolls, shrieking, towards the young heroine, it is to be expected that "perfectly enfrenzied, [she] rushed from the baleful scene, and falling motionless at the entrance of another apartment, lost remembrance in total insensibility" (Kelly, III 15).

Though it appears to be textbook Radcliffe, the most notable element of this scene is its (later) distinctly un-Radcliffean resolution. While the skeleton indeed had been originally removed from its coffin by another human being, the freakish mobility and vocal utterances of the skull are actually attributed to a completely different, non-human source. Upon investigation, it is revealed that the skull has in fact become the unwitting prison of a very large and frantic rat (Kelly, III 127–128)! Desperate to break free, the rat struggles mightily and dislodges the skull from the rest of the skeleton, conveniently just at the moment Jennet appeared, and the uneven surface of the crypt resulted in its rolling straight towards the panic-stricken heroine. A fairly unusual, but by no means supernatural, conclusion to what the author intended as a frightening episode for her young protagonist and readers.

Although *The Monthly Review*'s critic William Enfeld specifically criticized this episode as grossly improbable and ludicrously absurd (229), I argue that the scene should not be read as an example of this author's inability to craft a truly terrifying incident, but instead should be considered as a demonstration of an astute (albeit somewhat clumsy) understanding of the fine

line that often exists between humor and fear. As Paul Lewis notes in his article “Mysterious Laughter: Humor and Fear in Gothic Fiction,” there are “a variety of ways in which the relationship between these emotions can be manipulated by writers” (312). These manipulations hinge primarily on the reader’s (and character’s) response to threatening events (in this case, Jennet’s response to the rolling, shrieking skull), and what that response unveils about the psyche of the spectator. Jennet’s initial response, to flee and then faint, is a demonstration of what Lewis termed the “Fear Overwhelms Humor” scenario. Because Jennet allows her preconceived notions about her depressing surroundings to color her perception of the event with which she is confronted, she becomes terrified and flees rather than pausing to intelligently investigate the bizarre circumstances. Thus, instead of allowing Jennet (and the reader) to reason that skulls do not suddenly decide to separate themselves from their skeletons, and then allowing them to chuckle over the image of the skull bouncing and rolling its way over the uneven ground, Kelly “replac[es] humor with fear” (Lewis 320), and thus erases the possibility of rational thought and sanity (as evidenced by Jennet’s frantic flight and subsequent fainting).

Later, Kelly further demonstrates her efforts at navigating the fine line between humor and fear when she reverses the relationship between the two. When it is eventually discovered that something as unromantic as an obese rat is responsible for the “supernatural” actions of the skull, I would argue that at this point in the novel she is employing what Lewis termed the “Humor Overwhelms Fear” scenario. Usually typical of parodies, the “triumph of humor over fear . . . ridicul[es] the excessive conventionalism and horror of the Gothic movement” (Lewis 315). This is an interesting move for a Gothic author, especially one who was obviously relying on the popularity of that genre to ensure the success of her own novel. One possible and, I think, plausible explanation is that Kelly recognized the appeal the supernatural had with her projected audience, yet had a difficult time reconciling it with her own rational beliefs. This conclusion is supported through her character, Doctor Lewis, when he exclaims “how simple are the circumstances, from which apparent prodigies arise, if traced to their source, and investigated with a little attention” (Kelly, III 128). Because Doctor Lewis is specifically characterized as “unconscious of guilt, a stranger to fear, and armed with the righteousness of a quiet mind” (Kelly, III 127), it is quite appropriate to argue that he was intended to act as the voice of reason, not only for the characters but for the readers as well. By calmly and rationally pointing out that the skull could not possibly be controlled by supernatural powers, Doctor Lewis expels the fear that permeated the episode and encourages a return to rational thought . . . once the rat is released from the skull, humor (in hindsight) is allowed to seep back into the scene. The readers and the characters are now able to laugh over their “silly” assumptions, although one must recognize that the laughter is probably strained with the remembrance of just how easy it was to get swept up in the fear created by the situation.

Kelly’s inclusion of traditional Radcliffean elements clearly places her as a member of the Radcliffean school of Gothic fiction; however, it is her departure from Radcliffe’s pattern of explained supernatural that is particularly worthy of notice, because it clearly indicates that she was not simply imitating another’s work but was instead attempting to use it as a springboard for her own unique style. Thus, again I argue that this novelist’s works deserve a deeper investigation, rather than being dismissed as a “humble imitation of the well-known novels of Mrs. Radcliffe” (“The Abbey of St. Asaph,” *Critical Review* 349). But Kelly does not limit herself to modifying the popular Radcliffean style. Further evidence of her individual style is apparent in her inclusion of other humorous elements. Like her twist on the explained supernatural, her use of humor is two part, demonstrating both her awareness of what “should”

typically appear in Gothic novels and displaying her personal attitudes of what the standard application of Gothic humor implies about the lower classes.

The presence of humor in Gothic novels may be, for modern readers, a concept that is incongruous with all that the genre would predictably entail. But as has been noted above, humor does often make an appearance amidst the gloomy caverns and dark and stormy nights. One interesting element of Gothic humor, though, is the fact that it usually focuses on the lower classes or peasantry, and is of a more ridiculing nature than a jesting or a slapstick one. Pick up almost any Gothic novel and you will encounter clownish servants, bumbling peasants, and amusingly ignorant plebeians scattered throughout the pages. Perhaps offered as a sort of “comic relief,” this portrayal of the lower classes and their foibles draws an indisputable boundary between them and the upper class. The depiction of these characters in this manner clearly suggests that Gothic authors were, in essence, offering a thinly veiled commentary on the typical eighteenth-century perceptions of the lower classes (i.e., that they were foolish, superstitious, and often childish in their behavior), and also places the Gothic as a precursor to Dickens. In contrast, the upper classes are generally portrayed as rational and mature in their actions, although admittedly some of them are plagued by moments of superstition and their behavior (particularly that of the villains) occasionally borders on the immature and downright petty.

It is with her incorporation of this well-known Gothic trope that Kelly’s attempts at creating an original style once again become evident. She appears to be using the standard “humorous” depiction of the lower classes as a sort of jumping-off point for her own application of this Gothic element, which again signifies that her employment of the Radcliffean formula was not, as the critics complained, simply imitative. As with her inclusion of the explained supernatural, she begins by offering several scenes which demonstrate her familiarity with the stereotypical humorous portrayal of the lower classes. One notable example portrays Farmer and Mrs. Aprieu as the typical, superstitious peasants. When Jennet attempts to convince her adopted mother that the castle ruins are not haunted, Mrs. Aprieu insists that Doctor Martin is the devil, that Sir Hugh Trevallion has sold his soul to him, and that the castle is the scene of countless black deeds (Kelly, II 154–160). Mrs. Aprieu’s staunch refusal to listen to Jennet’s very logical reasoning regarding Doctor Martin’s not being the devil quite clearly places her in the category of an ignorant (and therefore amusing) peasant. Further, when Jennet discusses Mrs. Aprieu’s beliefs with her brother, she warns him to “let not your judgment be perverted by such ridiculous superstition” (Kelly, II 159). Thus, a clear line is drawn between Jennet and her adoptive parents. The implication is that Jennet’s education (provided by Lady Douglas) and the Aprieus’ lack of it is the primary element that separates them, both intellectually and within the class system. Though Jennet obviously loves her adopted parents, her educated mind requires her to view her adopted mother’s beliefs with a logical, and skeptical, mind. One can practically see her rolling her eyes at her mother’s rambling insistence that the castle ruins are haunted. The reader is afforded a chuckle as the scene progresses and Mrs. Aprieu’s claims become increasingly absurd.

A second example of Kelly’s familiarity with the “typical” humorous portrayal of the lower classes occurs when Jennet emerges from the reputedly haunted ruins of the Castle of St. Asaph. Exhausted and bruised, she attempts to hail some passing peasants to assist her. However, they are “running with all the celerity they usually did, when passing near the ruins . . . [and] at the sound of her voice, without once looking behind them, screaming they flew with incredible swiftness, and was soon out of sight” (Kelly, II 226). The humor of the scene is quite obvious: it is broad daylight, Jennet is certainly a non-threatening figure who is quite obviously in need of

assistance, and yet the peasants (who are already running past the ruins because of their superstitions) immediately bolt as if the legions of hell themselves were on their heels. Once again, the rationality that characterized many of the upper class (educated) characters in Gothic novels is notably absent in the peasants, and Kelly almost takes the scene to an extreme: the peasants are so caught up in their conditioned superstition that they do not even recognize that it is a woman's voice hailing them, not the distinctly male voice of Owen of Trevallion, the ghost who is rumored to haunt the Abbey. In addition, the peasants are so terrified that they completely ignore the fact that the voice is calling for assistance rather than making the "terrific shrieks, and lamentable groans" that were the typical noises made by this particular spectre (Kelly, II 222). As intended, one can only shake one's head at this characteristic Gothic portrayal of the silliness and superstition of the lower classes.

While the two preceding scenes may imply that Kelly was simply adopting the accepted applications of Gothic humor into her text, there is a series of episodes in which I believe she suggests she thought the peasantry was not the only group of people who could provide "comic relief." Most notably, the author, almost daringly, moves beyond the "acceptable" parameters of Gothic humor and makes one of the eighteenth century's most respectable figures, a justice who was charged with the "commission of the peace for the parish of St. Asaph" (Kelly, III 33), an equal recipient of her ridicule. Doing so not only suggests what her personal attitudes were regarding the "differences" between the classes (that they were all capable of acting foolishly at times) but also encourages her readers to reevaluate what countless other Gothic novels had conditioned them to believe about the differences between the classes. More importantly, the manner in which she portrays this character, Sir William Morgan, indicates that she was not offering a harsh criticism of his particular profession, but rather was demonstrating how even the most esteemed individuals sometimes get carried away by their emotions and act foolishly.

When Sir William Morgan is first mentioned in *The Abbey of St. Asaph*, the reader is prepared to encounter a respectable, venerated individual who is not only well liked but rational and circumspect. As one of the people who are responsible for maintaining peace and justice in St. Asaph parish, Sir Morgan is quite obviously a character who embodies the stereotypical attributes of the Gothic upper class. And indeed, the readers' expectations are not disappointed. He is educated, reserved, and eminently respectable. Yet Kelly throws a twist into the typical portrayal of this justice of the peace. Upon discovering that a grievous injustice has been done to Sir Eldred Trevallion, Sir Morgan immediately orders the arrest of the perpetrators. However, because Sir Eldred and Sir Morgan had "always lived in the habits of the strictest intimacy and friendship" (Kelly, III 50), the intelligence that his bosom friend was in fact alive soon prompts Sir Morgan to abandon all dignity and "demonstrate[] his joy, by throwing off his wig, and dancing on it" (Kelly, III 59). Kelly even directs her readers' reception of this astonishing scene by noting that "[I]udicrous as was his demeanour, it was perfectly natural in him, and fully evinced the unaffected pleasure he felt on the occasion" (Kelly, III 59). This statement is particularly important, as it blatantly informs readers that, despite usually portraying the upper class attributes of wisdom and solemnity, Sir Morgan also possessed a silly side that was "perfectly natural" and only waiting for the right catalyst to release it. Further, Sir Morgan repeatedly demonstrates his glee by dancing on his wig numerous times, as well as tossing it in the air, so much so that the other characters even tease him about it. Sir Lionel notes that Sir Morgan "has kicked his [wig] about so unmercifully, that I am persuaded there are not three hairs left upon the cawl" (Kelly, III 121), and insists, to the laughter of the other characters, that the newly recovered Sir Eldred purchase his friend a new wig, since "a justice without a wig!

why, he would lose half his consequence!” (Kelly, III 121). I argue that this novelist’s deliberately humorous portrayal of the normally staid and sober justice was in fact an intentional, yet gentle chiding of her middle- and upper-class readers for the stiff and unemotional behavior with which they conducted themselves in the presence of others . . . obviously, if a justice of the peace could be so carried away by excitement and joy that he not only rips off his wig (a concrete symbol of his position and intelligence), but throws it on the ground and dances on it like a young child, then it is occasionally acceptable for readers to demonstrate the tiniest bit of enthusiasm when confronted with good news. Further, Sir Morgan endured no consequences other than a little good-natured teasing from his close friends; they did not lose respect for him or view him in a diminished light. Instead, he likely became more human to them. Thus, Kelly seems to be arguing, there is no reason why others cannot also “let their hair down” in certain circumstances.

By taking the typical Gothic portrayal of humor out of its ordinary or expected realm, Kelly, in essence, establishes a common ground between the different classes. Although she labels Sir Morgan’s actions as “ludicrous,” doing so enables her to equate his behavior with the often ridiculous conduct demonstrated by the lower classes in Gothic novels. Thus, her veiled commentary is clear: All people, regardless of their rank and education, are equal in their susceptibility to strong emotions. Indeed, it is part of what makes them human. Further, an understanding of what prompted a seemingly out-of-character demonstration can lead to a deeper appreciation of what lies beneath the surface. Thus, though the peasants in Gothic novels are usually responsible for providing “comic relief,” they should not be judged solely on the behavior that makes them so. In essence, one’s reactions to emotionally charged events should not be the only factor used to determine one’s personality and intelligence.

Without a doubt, Isabella Kelly’s works are worthy of further investigation, and my intent here has been to offer a starting point for those readers who wish to delve beyond the late eighteenth-century critics’ opinion that *The Abbey of St. Asaph* was nothing more than a hackneyed imitation of Radcliffe. Though the author does employ many of the standard Gothic tropes, her personal style and unique incorporation of these conventions has resulted in a novel that offers its readers something a little beyond the ordinary Gothic fare. And although *The Abbey of St. Asaph* is generally not considered her masterpiece, it still provides readers with a good sampling of what this previously overlooked Gothic novelist is capable of producing. By pushing the boundaries of what was deemed “acceptable” for the typical Gothic novel, Isabella Kelly sets herself apart from many other writers who were content merely to imitate those who came before.

Notes

¹ This concept of “professional femininity” adopted by female writers in the previously male-dominated field of writing is addressed in-depth by Diane Long Hoeveler in *Gothic Feminism*. She defines women’s approach to writing Gothic works as disguised as a “cultivated pose, a masquerade of docility, passivity, wise passiveness, and tightly controlled emotions,” which allowed them to “popularize and promulgate a newly defined and increasingly powerful species of bourgeois female sensibility and subjectivity” (xv).

² These figures were collected from Peter Garside et al.’s *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*.

³ Dorothy Blakely notes that the Minerva Press was so closely identified with popular fiction that its name eventually became “little more than a convenient epithet of contempt” (1).

⁴ A facsimile reprint of this novel was edited by Devendra P. Varma and released by the Arno Press in 1977.

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Rendering the Vampire's Reflection: Documents as Images in Stoker's *Dracula*

Andrew Grace

Intellectual historians and social science theorists have consistently marked the nineteenth century as a defining period in modern thought. For Foucault, contemporary institutions of power (prisons, asylums, hospitals, public schools, etc.) arise in the nineteenth century. For Daston and Galison, scientific objectivity develops in accordance with the century's growing interest in professional sciences. For Poovey, the century witnesses the systematic use of statistics as tools of political economy. Published in 1897, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reflects all of these intellectual shifts. John Seward runs an asylum. Abraham Van Helsing belongs to an international fraternity of scientists, and Dracula studies blue books full of statistics about the British Isles in order to plot his invasion. Yet the novel's frequently commented-upon but rarely analyzed form, rather than its compelling content, forges its strongest connections to the intellectual history of the nineteenth century. As an epistolary novel that includes newspaper clippings and medical journals, as well as excerpts from personal letters and diaries, *Dracula* presents a rich text for examining the ways in which knowing subjects negotiate epistemological authority by the end of the nineteenth century.

This paper examines how three newspaper clippings contribute to the body of the text as a site of epistemological inquiry. The clippings provide a sensible focal point for my examination for several reasons. At the simplest level, they draw a variety of underprivileged viewpoints into the text. The presence of these voices, mediated by the newspapers' reporters as well as the novel's protagonists, highlights the inequities surrounding epistemological authority within the text. Furthermore, the clippings reflect the novel's participation in the cultural standards of nineteenth-century Realism, standards which influence the terms for translating verbal narration into visual information. Finally, the ways in which the clippings simultaneously participate in several easily recognizable traditions—the ways in which they resemble and dissemble various objects in Journalistic reporting, the Realist novel, the Gothic mode, Science writing, etc.—position the novel as an exemplar text of Rancière's aesthetic regime of the arts, which he claims displaced the representative regime in the nineteenth century.⁵ Viewing the novel as part of the aesthetic regime suggests that images, rather than metaphors or metonyms, define its constitutive elements, and establishing images as the novel's constitutive elements facilitates examining its epistemological dynamics. In other words, focusing on images clarifies how the novel negotiates the creation and authorization of knowledge. As I demonstrate later in this paper, if we read the clippings metaphorically, the text prioritizes the role of sensation, and if we read the clippings metonymically, the text prioritizes the knowers' standpoints. Only by reading the "triple power" of images in the clippings can we recognize how the text prioritizes interpretation as a crucial component of the knowledge-making process (Rancière 30).

By dramatizing the relationship, the role of interpretation within the knowledge-making process, the inclusion of the newspaper clippings within the text of *Dracula* enables to the novel to contribute to one of the central debates within and about empiricism, the debate about why

observers form different conclusions from encounters with the same objects. Empiricists have wrestled with this question since the inception of the philosophy. It permeates Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and Locke devotes considerable space to preempting possible objections to his empiricism that are based on contradictory responses among observers. He preempts such objections in various ways as he outlines the characteristics of all three components of the relationship, objects, observers, and referents, throughout the essay. For instance, with regards to objects, Locke distinguishes between the ideas related to an object's "primary qualities"—"bulk, figure, texture, and motion"—and the ideas related to its "secondary qualities"—"colors, sounds, tastes, etc." (Locke 49). He claims that ideas related to primary qualities resemble the object itself, while ideas related to secondary qualities exist only within the mind of the observer. This distinction enables Locke to maintain his premise that ideas exist within objects, without responding to skeptical anecdotes about coffee that was simultaneously too sweet for one taster and too bitter for another.

Locke continues to downplay the importance of individual differences when he describes the characteristics of perception. Since his theory relies more upon the impeccability of human perception than it does on other operations of the human mind, such as reflection, discernment, or reason, Locke simplifies the definition of perception to "only when the mind receives the impression" (Locke 56). This definition frees Locke from the burden of accounting for the different "complex ideas" that humans form after receiving the same "simple ideas" from encounters with an object. He even notes, "concerning perception, that the ideas we receive by sensation, are often in grown people altered by judgment, without our taking notice of it" (Locke 58). Finally, he devotes the entire third book of his essay to outlining the proper uses and most common abuses of words. In particular, he emphasizes that the signification of words is "perfectly arbitrary" in response to "those fallacies, which we are apt to put upon ourselves, by taking words for things" (Locke 180, 72). By discussing the limits of language, Locke implies that contradictory responses to encounters with objects may be the result of applying different arbitrary signs to the same response. In other words, one woman's "sweet" might be another woman's "bitter."

By attributing different responses to shared sensory experiences to observers mistaking ideas for resemblances, mistaking judgments for perceptions, and mistaking words for things, Locke set the tone for four centuries' worth of empiricist rhetoric about settling disagreements about phenomena. Ever since Locke outlined all of his meticulous distinctions in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, empiricists have attributed disagreements about phenomena predominantly to confusion between the observers. Observers may be confused about which qualities other observers are addressing. They may be confused about at which moment an object leaves an impression on other observers. Perhaps most commonly, they may be confused about what another observer really means by a particular word or phrase. In this way, empiricists can maintain that, as long as two or more observers receive an impression from the same quality of an object at the same time and successfully refer to this impression with the same set of signs, they will form compatible conclusions about the object.

Hence, the trend among professional scientists, who must communicate with one another out of necessity, has been to conduct experiments that enable them to gather information about specific qualities at specific moments in time and adopt the most standardized system for communicating their findings that they can devise. Lorraine Daston demonstrates how the evolution of empiricist thought revolved around the difficult process of developing successful practices for communicating about phenomena when she details the history of a perspectival

objectivity, which is commonly regarded as “scientific objectivity,” from its origins in the moral and aesthetic philosophies of eighteenth-century empiricists such as Adam Smith and David Hume through the technological advancements that supported the professionalization of the sciences in the nineteenth century. As such, Daston associates the origin of the contemporary use of the term “objectivity” with the transformation of the natural sciences from hobbies for enthusiastic gentry and philosophers into internationally institutionalized professions for university researchers. In “Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective,” Daston defines aperspectival objectivity as “the ethos of the interchangeable and therefore featureless observer—unmarked by nationality, by sensory dullness or acuity, but training or tradition; by quirky apparatus, by colourful writing style, or by any other idiosyncrasy that might interfere with the communication, comparison and accumulation of results” (609). Among the multitude of discussions about objectivity within the histories, critiques, and philosophies of science, Daston’s definition uniquely emphasizes the ways in which “scientific objectivity” can be understood as a standard of communication rather than a standard of truth or a frame of mind.

Daston’s analysis of objectivity as a standard of communication presents a fruitful basis for understanding the means and limitations of science as a method for validating knowledge. She explains, “The net result [of adopting more mechanical methods for standardizing results] was often a loss of valuable information that had previously been an integral part of the observation report—whether the observer was suffering from a head cold, whether the telescope was wobbly, whether the air was choppy—but information too particular to person and place to conform to the strictures of aperspectival objectivity” (612). Within Daston’s formulation, scientific objectivity responds to the possibility of confusion that plagues empiricism by systematically reducing knowledge claims to unobjectionable levels. However, as Daston notes, this reduction necessarily eliminates valid but incommunicable information from scientific knowledge claims. While this kind of reduction is consistent with the original aims of Locke and other empiricists, who were more concerned with recognizing the limits of human understanding than with solving all of the mysteries of the universe, it can instigate a new set of problems.

First, the popularity and effectiveness of scientific objectivity as a form of communication has contributed to the common belief that knowledge claims adhering to objective standards are truer than knowledge claims that adhere to more idiosyncratic standards. Daston frames this problem by asking “Why, for example, should public knowledge—observations most easily communicated to and replicated by as many people as possible—lay metaphysical claim to being the closest approximation of the real?” (613). When individuals or societies invest in the belief that scientific knowledge provides the best access to “the real,” they oftentimes begin to denigrate knowledge claims about abstract ideas that resist easy translation and communication. Discourses of humor, morality, and theology become matters of mere opinion, while the phrase “it has been scientifically proven” becomes a means of ending debates. As a result of this disparity, individuals who wield scientific authority gain access to power and privileges in society that are only tangentially related to the limited knowledge claims they make about world. In this regard, other fields that wrestle with competing knowledge claims, such as the law and journalism, tend to mimic scientific standards for communicable information, even when decidedly idiosyncratic systems of ethics and customs mediate their interests in sensory experiences.

Second, just as scientific authority can influence the dynamics of social power, cultural power structures can influence the standards for scientific authority. Science-studies scholars such as Peter Galison and Bruno Latour, as well as feminist epistemologists such as Donna

Haraway and Sandra Harding, have elaborated upon various dimensions of this influence. In *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* Harding draws attention to the issues surrounding objectivity in particular. She argues that science carries both “liberatory and oppressive possibilities”⁶ and that the influence of existing power structures over scientific methods not only bolsters those structures but also hinders science. She ties this double-bind directly to the issue of objectivity: “One way to focus on this problem is to discover that we have no conception of objectivity that enables us to distinguish the scientifically ‘best descriptions and explanations’ from those that fit most closely (intentionally or not) with the assumptions that elites in the West do not want critically examined” (Harding 97). Although Harding published her book a year before Daston published her short history of a perspectival objectivity, her critique is consistent with Daston’s description. Information that undercuts existing power structures may, at first, appear “idiosyncratic.” For example, by removing personal information from their reports, scientists maintain the standard that an observer’s gender has no effect on his or her process of gathering and reporting data. For over a century, eliminating the idiosyncrasy of gender from scientific reporting contributed to male domination in the sciences while concealing the possibility that a female observer may ask a different set of questions than a male observer. Furthermore, Harding’s critique helps to answer the question Daston poses at the end of her essay. If the standards of scientific objectivity can silently bolster existing power structures,⁷ then those power structures will orient themselves in order to promote knowledge that fits the standards of scientific objectivity.

Previous critics have examined many angles of *Dracula*’s engagement with contemporary science. In particular, the novel, as an exposé on blood and sex featuring a nineteenth-century alienist, is a popular object for psychoanalytic critiques. Such critiques usually emphasize the novel’s scientific content more than the ways in which its form apes scientific conventions. Yet, *Dracula*’s scientific form does more than emphasize its scientifically intriguing content; it connects the novel to the realist tradition, despite its supernatural subject. Even if readers cannot relate to the novel’s unreal subject, they can relate to the protagonists’ methods of investigating and reporting an unexplained phenomenon. In this way, the novel attempts to introduce its readers to a frightening monster using the same kinds of methods that a zoologist might use to introduce her colleagues to an unusual species of salamander.

As a scientific study, *Dracula* emphasizes the discovery and authorization of facts. By acknowledging that the papers constituting the body of the novel “have been placed in sequence” after the events of the story itself and that some matters, deemed “needless,” have been “eliminated,” *Dracula*’s headnote encourages readers to focus on how the text gathers and conveys research about the title character rather than identifying with the protagonists and reading to discover how they manage their harrowing adventures.⁸ Although most readers probably continue to be more concerned with the harrowing adventures than the scientific premise, the headnote must inform any discussion of how documents operate within the text, because it stipulates the basis for a document’s potential authority.

All of its stipulations reflect Daston’s descriptions of nineteenth-century scientific writing practices by implying that the elimination of human fallibility is the key to establishing universal authority. First, the headnote claims that all of the documents in the novel “are exactly contemporary” with the events they describe, so that there is “no statement of past events where memory may err.” The possibility of the human memory’s faltering is one of the simpler, and simpler to remedy, impediments to authority; the next stipulation attempts to tackle the issue of authority directly by explaining that all of the statements within the text are “given from the

standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them.” Despite its lack of specificity, this stipulation suggests that scientific authority is not separate from social authority. The stipulation might mean that the novel features conclusions drawn only from first-hand experiences by characters with the appropriate formal education to draw them, but it also implicitly reifies the epistemological authority of socially privileged individuals; men get more pages than women, Dr. Seward gets more pages than Jonathan Harker, and the Eastern Europeans and children never get to speak for themselves. Education remains important, but it is only one part of the complex signification of social authority.

Certainly, the novel illustrates its characters’ educations. The heading for Van Helsing’s first letter to Dr. Seward contains an amusing image for today’s readers in its litany of his educational achievements, which are too plentiful to be recorded: “*Abraham Van Helsing, M.D., D.Ph., D.Litt., etc., etc.*” (Stoker 112). A similar list appears later when Patrick Hennessey contacts Dr. Seward: “*Hennessey, M.D., M.R.C.S., L.K.Q.C.P.I., etc., etc.*” (155). Even the characters with less institutional recognition, like Jonathan and Mina, find ways to demonstrate their educations as they attempt to make improbable occurrences sound real. Trapped in Dracula’s nightmarish castle, Jonathan sticks to the basics of the scientific method by refusing to accept any sight, such as Dracula’s lizard-crawl down the castle’s walls, as real until he witnesses it multiple times (34). Meanwhile, in Britain, Mina actively practices her abilities to write descriptions and remember conversations (54).

Her desire to practice is a reminder that there are correct ways to deliver information, ways that differ from subject to subject or institution to institution. This reminder lends credence to Daston’s argument that form, not just timeliness, standpoint, or education, authorizes content. In a novel that obsessively notes who said what, when he or she said it, and where it was recorded, the anonymity of its headnote’s author is conspicuous. Yet this anonymity is vital to the construction of scientific authority, because the strictly rhetorical gesture of concealing authorship suggests that the facts speak for themselves. In *Dracula*, and perhaps in the scientific world at large, this gesture is part of a complicated paradox: The facts must speak for themselves if they are going to remain outside of the shifting cultural circumstances that could threaten their validity; but someone with potentially unstable social authority must establish them as facts first.

How the relationship between the “facts” and social authority functions within *Dracula* depends on how the documents that constitute the text function. Each document can be read as a metaphor, a metonym, or an image; and each approach to reading the documents engages empiricism’s problems with communication in a different way. In particular, each approach to reading distributes the burden of communication a little differently. In a metaphoric reading, the burden of communication falls predominantly on the document, because this kind of reading relies on the assumption that a document can stand in for the information it conveys.

In a metonymic reading, the burden of communication falls predominantly on the author, because it accepts that the document as a piece of information stands in for a larger experience. As a result, readers must believe that the author has the necessary authority over the whole subject to select a representative sampling. Finally, in an imagistic reading, the burden of communication falls predominantly on the reader. An imagistic reading starts from the assumption that the documents themselves are forms of experiential information. In order to understand the relationship between the documents and any objects outside of themselves, readers must engage in acts of interpretation that can bring the two together. Comparing metaphoric, metonymic, and imagistic readings of the newspaper clippings in *Dracula* suggests that, although all three readings can provide valuable insight into the novel’s engagement with

nineteenth-century science and culture, an imagistic reading provides the fullest account of the novel's epistemological dynamics.

In "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media," Jennifer Wicke presents a metaphoric reading of how the clippings relate to the body of the novel. By comparing the assimilation of "mass culture" newspapers into the text of *Dracula* with the vampire's assimilation of his victims' life-blood into himself, she argues that the novel expresses anxiety about the loss of verbal "aura" associated with the technological reproducibility of human speech. Just as the vampire transforms his victims into replicants of himself by draining their essences, the typewriter transforms diverse cultural quirks like accents into homogeneous mass culture, replete with standardized grammar and syntax, by draining their auras.

With regards to the various stages of knowledge production, Wicke's metaphoric reading prioritizes the role of sensation. By arguing that anxiety in the novel stems from the typewriter's threat to speech's aura, Wicke asserts the primacy of the internal, phenomenological experiences evoked by a subject's encounter with an object's aura. As the element of an object that technology cannot reproduce, the Benjaminian "aura" triggers a unique response in each perceiving subject. As with the Burkean sublime, the Benjaminian aura is defined by a potentially overwhelming effect on the individual. By explaining the distinction between the potentially stifling effects of the aura and the potentially motivating power of objects without auras, Benjamin implies that valuing the aura equates to valuing pure sensation.

Alternatively, a brief metonymic reading of the newspapers highlights the importance of a knower's standpoint in the authorization of knowledge by examining the connections between newspapers and British identity. In contrast to the Eastern Europeans, who refuse to maintain the roads or lay wire for telegraphs, the British take advantage of technology to relay information efficiently. In contrast to the mysterious vampire, the British advertise their policies and opinions. While *Dracula* has no reflection in the mirror, the daily papers ostensibly reflect all British citizens' views and lifestyles. In this reading, British identity becomes a source of epistemological authority, because British knowledge-producing techniques are ostensibly more efficient and more transparent than *Dracula*'s or the Eastern Europeans'.

Dracula's ability to elude those techniques while effacing British identities from British subjects, may express some anxiety about the belief that more efficiency and more transparency will actually lead to better knowing, as suggested by the "Marketplace of Ideas" popularized by John Stuart Mill in 1859. Yet the vampire's demise ultimately reifies both the protagonists' faith, that accessing as much knowledge as possible will lead to finding the right knowledge, and the novel's implication that the British identity grants epistemological authority.

Although both metaphoric readings and metonymic readings provide crucial insight into the connections between the novel's newspaper clippings and nineteenth-century epistemological dynamics, they only do so by subordinating the images of the newspapers to other ideas about mass culture and auras, or British identity and the Marketplace of Ideas. Neither approach grants primacy to the images themselves as Rancière does, by postulating the "combinatory capacity" of images. Rancière suggests that understanding the "combinatory capacity" of images is the key to reading in the aesthetic regime when he defines the "triple power" of the image: "the power of singularity (the *punctum*) of the obtuse image;⁹ the educational value (the *studium*) of the document bearing the trace of a history; and the combinatory capacity of the sign, open to being combined with any element from a different sequence to compose new sentence-images *ad infinitum*" (30–31). Unlike his versions of the *punctum* and the *studium*, which can be read in the representative regime as well, the "combinatory capacity of the sign" evolves in the aesthetic

regime when writers and critics have access to the “boundless Store/Library/Museum where all films, texts, photographs and paintings coexist” (30).

According to Rancière, understanding the combinatory capacity of images allows us to recognize an interplay of operations between verbal narration and visual information that exceeds the simple reduction of the visible into the sayable, or the necessarily incomplete translation of the sayable back into the referenced visual. Rancière claims that “‘Image’ [. . .] refers to two different things[:] the simple relationship that produces the likeness of an original: not necessarily a faithful copy, but simply what suffices to stand in for it. And [. . .] the interplay of operations that produces what we call art: or precisely an alteration of resemblance” (6). He goes on to explain that “the commonest regime of the image” presents a relationship between these two things, between the resemblance and the operation, between “the analogy *and* the dissemblance” (7). In addition to resemblance/operation and analogy/dissemblance, Rancière poses this binary relationship in terms of the “sayable and the visible” (7). Thus, examining *Dracula*’s newspaper clippings as signs originating in nineteenth-century journalism but subsequently attached to Realist fiction, the Gothic tradition, and scientific inquiry illuminates how the novel’s protagonists manipulate verbal narration to render information visible in “new sentence-images” (30–31). In other words, the clippings as image-operations generate knowledge, rather than just reporting it.

Despite their differences, both the metaphoric reading and the metonymic reading focus on the newspaper clippings as resemblances. Wicke’s metaphoric reading accepts the definition of “mass culture” presented by the novel, and then critiques the culture of technological reproduction as if it resembled the novel’s portrayal of it. My example of a metonymic reading examines the novel’s depiction of British identity as if the newspapers in the novel resembled those outside of it. As a result of focusing on resemblances rather than operations, these readings emphasize passive elements of epistemological dynamics, potentially overwhelming sensations and cultural authority. Any anxiety the novel may express about these epistemological elements does not trouble the idea that the knowledge itself exists independent of the experts who process it.

In contrast, reading the clippings as both resemblances and operations exposes the possibility that experts create knowledge through the act of interpretation instead of just translating discovered data into useful information. *Dracula* exemplifies texts within the aesthetic regime in part because it explicitly constructs image operations at both the narrative and the meta-narrative levels. Not only does Stoker combine signs from different sequences like journalism, science writing, Realist fiction and the Gothic to create new “sentence-images” in the form of chapters, characters, plot devices, symbols, etc., but his protagonists combine signs from different sequences like the newspaper, the medical journal, the diary, and the folktale to create new sentence-images in the form of knowledge about the vampire’s methods, ambitions, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Because, on multiple occasions during the course of the narrative, the protagonists compile and review the materials that eventually constitute the novel, the two levels of operations oftentimes blur together, which brings traces of meta-fictive Realist and Gothic images into the protagonists’ investigation itself.

At the meta-narrative level, the interplay of operations that constitutes the novel’s newspaper clippings involves at least four image elements: the clippings as data in a scientific text, the clippings as news reports, the clippings as participants in Realist visual codes, and the clippings as Gothic short stories. Since the ostensible form of the text as a scientific inquiry resists the ostensible genre of the text as a Gothic story of terror, and thereby creates

inconsistencies in the novel's logical order of representation, each of these elements carries its own share of resemblance and dissemblance. The clippings do not merely dissemble as scientific signs by presenting Gothic images, nor do they merely dissemble from Gothic signs by presenting scientific facts. Instead, they simultaneously resemble and dissemble all of the genres involved.

Most overtly, the clippings dissemble as scientific signs simply because they are obtuse images of journalism. As the natural sciences and journalism established increasingly standardized professional practices in the nineteenth century, they performed an odd exchange of methodologies that revolved around the century's growing investment in facts.¹⁰ As scientists stripped personality from their reports in order to make their data as accessible to an international scientific community as possible, journalists injected personality into their articles in order to attract as many readers as they could in a fiercely competitive market. Where scientists once relied on their social authority to validate their findings, journalists used to wield anonymity as a guarantee of truth free from fear. While scientists attempted to remove human influence from their experiments by inventing machines to record data, journalists broadened their coverage of daily affairs to include "human interest" stories. Scientists defended their supposedly immutable facts by devising methods to separate them from the ever-shifting worlds of culture and politics, and journalists defended their rights to report culturally contingent facts daily by addressing the ephemeral nature of their own medium. Science's critics and historians have argued that, despite claims of neutrality, science has never fully escaped the market. Likewise, journalism's critics and historians have argued that, despite the pressures of competition, journalists have never fully abandoned the traditions they established as members of subsidized or state-run institutions.

Within their separate spheres, scientists and journalists could discuss facts intelligibly and purposefully. Scientists relayed the information necessary to perform a similar experiment, attain a similar result, and possibly develop new technologies. Journalists relayed the information necessary to stimulate social discourse, build communities, and possibly enact political change. However, in order for scientists to take advantage of information in journalistic reports, they had to strip that information of its situational contingencies, transforming information that had been presented as true for one day into data that would appear to be true universally. Likewise, in order for journalists to report scientific discoveries, they had to situate those discoveries within the contingencies of daily life, transforming data that was meant to appear universal into information that would appear conditional.

Dracula's scientific and journalistic forms connect it to the Realist tradition, despite its supernatural subject. Even if readers cannot relate to the novel's unreal subject, they can relate to the protagonists' methods of investigating and reporting an unexplained phenomenon. However, the novel as a whole dissembles from Realism by attempting to realize an unrealizable subject. Narrators in Realist novels often invite readers to visit the locales they're describing, consult the records that they've studied, or interview the persons they've met. Such narrators suggest that, through these visits, consultations, and interviews, their readers will uncover stories similar to, if not identical to, the ones that they are telling. In contrast, the opening chapters of Stoker's novel, in which Jonathan Harker journeys to Castle Dracula, finds himself imprisoned there, and eventually escapes, outlines a sequence of obstacles that would hinder any efforts to verify his report. Harker cannot locate Castle Dracula on any maps, and the Count's circuitous carriage driving foils the Englishman's own cartographic efforts. Nor does Harker find the Carpathians' approach to history any more satisfactory than their approach to geography. Seeing only an archive of folklore and superstition, Harker cannot isolate the importance of St. George's day or

the details of the Count's lineage. When the Count begins to terrorize the villagers dressed in Harker's clothing, the Englishman all but solicits readers not to interview them about the events he's describing. And in the most astounding affront to Realism, the vampire has no reflection in Harker's shaving mirror. When Dracula throws the polished surface out the window, Harker can no longer defend his tale like Eliot's narrators, by claiming to hold up a mirror to the world around him.

The clippings continue to accentuate the vampire's elusive properties. To the extent that they are about the vampire rather than the subjects they actually describe, the clippings dissemble from the Realism they invoke. As news pieces, the clippings imply that their readers could visit the Russian consul and read the same logs, visit the zookeeper and hear the same things about wolves, or contact the Hampstead correspondent and listen to the same report about neighborhood children and the "bloofer lady." Yet the appearance of newspaper clippings about cargo ships, zoo animals, and children's games, when readers might expect a warning from Harker about Dracula's approaching invasion, speculation from Van Helsing about the vampire's ability to possess animals, or a woeful recounting of an encounter with a woman who looked like his deceased fiancée from Holmwood, functions like the "word[s] or shot[s] in place of the ones that seemed bound to follow" that Rancière claims can produce the alteration necessary for the artistic image (7). For Rancière, the artistic image does not just refer to its object; it displays its own artificiality. By displaying its own artificiality, the artistic image creates the Real from which it deviates, a Real that may only exist in the moment of the alteration.

In this regard, the newspaper clippings produce the "hyper-resemblance" that "does not provide the replica of a reality but attests directly to the elsewhere whence it derives" (8). By perpetuating fictions disguised as news reports that falsely attribute the vampires' actions to other sources, the novel fails to replicate its own Gothic reality. Instead, it attests to its artificiality; and by doing so, it momentarily generates an authentic vampire story as a counterpoint. In other words, reading the clippings as Gothic stories—mysterious murders on the high seas, ravenous wolves driven to madness by nefarious powers, children snatched by beautiful fiend with a taste for human flesh—produces a greater resemblance to the objects of the reports themselves. Thus, by dissembling from Realism, the clippings make the Gothic images more real.

Making Gothic images (murderers, monsters, and cannibals) more real than their Realist equivalents (cabin fever, docile canines, and small dogs) is just part of the payoff for Stoker's exploitation of the combinatory capacity of signs in the aesthetic regime.¹¹ The jumbled sequence of generic resemblances and dissemblances also puts the reader in a situation parallel to the position that the protagonists occupy. Just as readers must process how the resemblances and dissemblances of various genres perpetuated by textual image-elements create knowledge of the novel *Dracula*, the protagonists must process how the resemblances and dissemblances of various objects perpetuated by image-elements within the text create knowledge of the creature Dracula. In both cases, active interpretation creates vital knowledge that the images themselves cannot convey.

At the narrative level, the interplay of operations that informs the protagonists about Dracula involves the vampire and Lucy Westenra, a Russian sailor's story about a wrecked ship, a zookeeper's story about an escaped wolf, some local children's stories about a "bloofer lady," an interviewer's obsession with the story of Little Red Riding Hood, the newspaper reports as material clippings, the "facts" according to the daily news, and finally the "facts" according to the protagonists' scientific inquiry. Just as the inconsistencies in the logical order of representation at the meta-fictive level cause the clippings to resemble and dissemble multiple

genres, the inconsistencies in the logical order of representation at the narrative level cause the clippings to resemble and dissemble different “facts,” the fact that a dog swam ashore, the fact that lone wolves are naturally cautious, and the fact that the children have injuries that resemble small animal bites; but also the fact that the vampire can summon mists and turn into a dog, the fact that the vampire can possess wolves but not enter a home without permission, and the fact that Lucy has risen from the grave with a lust for blood.

In order for the protagonists to create knowledge about the vampire, they have to interpret images from the daily news. They read an image of a dog swimming as an image of a vampire coming ashore. They read an image of an injured wolf returning docilely to its keeper as an image of a bewildered wolf recovering from vampiric possession. They read an image of a “bloofer lady” as an image of undead Lucy Westenra. They can read the images this way because in the aesthetic regime, things are left to speak or be silent themselves (Rancière 13). In other words, there never was an exact image of a swimming dog, a docile wolf, or a “bloofer lady.” From the moment these images were presented in the newspaper clippings, they dissembled from the objects that they also resembled. The journalists were free to interpret them one way, and the protagonists free to interpret them another, but neither the journalists nor the protagonists can simply translate their perceptions of the objects directly into knowledge of the world as empirical philosophers like Locke and the nineteenth-century natural scientists described by Daston sought to do. The effort the protagonists put into disavowing the role of interpretation in their study of the vampire attests to the anxiety surrounding the importance of interpretation in the processes of nineteenth-century knowledge production.

Ultimately, *Dracula* stages a battle between good and bad readers; between readers prepared to reckon with the combinatory capacity of images in the aesthetic regime and readers trapped by the “codified expression[s]” of thoughts and ideas conveyed by images in the representative regime (Rancière 7). As a bad reader of images, Dracula gives them power over himself. He sees the holy power of God codified in a cross, and he recognizes the sanctity of a person’s home expressed in a doorway. As good readers of images, the protagonists combine images from multiple discourses. Without necessarily accepting superstitions as valid on their own terms, they combine religious imagery with scientific study; they employ garlic and blood transfusions. They create the knowledge they need to defeat the vampire from all of the resources available to them, and they try to render the creative process, their acts of interpretation, invisible.

Notes

⁵ Rancière chooses the term “regime” instead of terms like “era” or “movement” to avoid overemphasizing the historical dimension of the differences he discusses. Although he argues that there is a difference in the arts before and after the nineteenth century, he resists the idea that the passage of time caused the difference. In this way, he focuses on how the two regimes prioritize different reading practices, as well as how they promote different kinds of art.

⁶ The use of evolutionary theory to support racist and sexist assumptions about human development exemplifies the kind of “oppressive possibilities” to which Harding alludes, while the use of DNA evidence to exonerate African American men convicted by racist juries highlights its “liberatory” possibilities.

⁷ Obviously, other standards of knowledge and communication have bolstered existing power structures as well; however, they have usually been more overt about the relationship between their standards of knowledge and the power disparities they support. For example, religions that promote male primacy make direct connections between God as a masculine figure, God as the source of all knowledge, and some kind of divine decree that men should possess authority over women.

⁸ Contemporary editions of *Dracula* do not paginate the novel’s headnote in any way, which makes citing it difficult, but underscores the point of the note itself: it is the “view from nowhere” made manifest.

⁹ Rancière explains that the obtuse image “asserts its own power as that of sheer presence, without signification” (23).

¹⁰ All unattributed reflections in this paper about journalistic practices stem from amalgamating the works of Alan Lee, Mark Hampton, and Kate Jackson.

¹¹ The dominance of *Dracula* and vampires in popular fiction is arguably the continuation of this payoff, especially as internet communities develop to debate what features “real” vampires should possess and handbooks about vampires hit the stands at Barnes and Noble.

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Home Is Where the Horror Is

William D. Prystauk

Welcome Home

In 1979's *When a Stranger Calls*, high school student Jill Johnson (Carol Kane) is babysitting the Mandrakis' two children. As she studies while the children sleep, the telephone rings. Though no one responds when she answers, she thinks the caller is a friend playing a game and hangs up. Over time, as the calls continue, Jill becomes unnerved when the male caller says, "Have you checked the children?" She phones the police. As the tension mounts with several more calls, the police finally trace them—and they are coming from inside the house. Jill runs screaming from the home and into the arms of Detective John Clifford (Charles Durning).

Jill knew she had nothing to fear. After all, she had been a babysitter for the family before, was familiar with the house and felt comfortable in the Mandraki home. The children were never a problem and she always had time to study. The last thing she expected was for some stranger to be inside the home and brutally kill the children.

This is the key to the home as a horror device: What was once a safe haven, a sanctuary, a protective womb, becomes a prison, a trap, and a claustrophobic nightmare—and we are not even discussing a person's actual home, but a house one visits. This is because, wherever we go, we carry the essence of what a home is supposed to be. Otherwise, Laura (Martha Roth) in *The Man and the Monster* (1958), Margaret "Maggie" Walsh (Katherine Ross) in *The Legacy* (1978), and Private Cooper (Kevin McKidd) in *Dog Soldiers* (2002), to name a few, would not have felt comfortable in the homes they entered. Laura thought she was just studying piano with a great pianist; Maggie thought her interior design skills had sparked a \$50,000 invitation; and Cooper thought he had found a refuge, a fort. But they all learned that "Wolves in shells are crueler than stray ones" (Bachelard 112). All had been wrong about the surroundings in which they visited. In each instance, the comfort and safety of the home had been turned against them.

The Happy House

"Perhaps while we want to feel the womb-like security in a home, we know that there is a world out there and it is not always safe. The threat of the outside shadow world is real and sometimes in a horror film, infiltrates our sanctity . . ." (Friedenheim, e-mail). Home, for most of us, is a safe haven of familiarity. As Clinical Supervisor and Therapist Ann Friedenheim goes on to say:

Coming home, in an ideal way, should give us a sense of peace, a big sigh of relief, allowing our defenses and masks to fall away. We don't have to have self-consciousness here in this place. This fulfills our sense of belonging to a place, perhaps our surroundings give us an avenue of self-expression in the way we design our space, the objects we choose to surround ourselves, colors, smells, sounds are all familiar. We know if there is a refrigerator rattling what this is. We

know which floor boards creak and so we are not alarmed. (Friedenheim, e-mail)

Thus, we become accustomed to what a home should be from our childhood experiences. Even when defining “the uncanny” or *unheimlich*, Freud refers to Sanders’ definition to explain the *heimlich* or *homely*: “Intimate, friendly comfortable; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house” (Freud, Web). When we are children, the home becomes our new womb; and, for most, peace is found there. This leads to the expectation that every home, apartment, and dwelling will offer those same elements as originally experienced. Thus, our notions of safety and comfort are consistently reinforced as we grow older and move from home to home, or if we even visit a home.

Since most of us see the home as something positive and safe, we also expect those qualities to exist whenever we visit another residence. We bring our life experiences to other people’s houses and embrace the familiarity of walls, windows, doors, kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, etc., at least in developed countries. Going to a new home may be a new experience on the one hand, but once indoors, we realize and accept a modicum of safety, because it is expected due to conditioning as well as familiarity. We have no reason to fear a new home unless we grew up in a house where violence and suffering were the norm, which is not often the case. According to E. Diener and C. Diener’s nearly fifty-year study of France, Japan, and the United States of America, most people are happy (181–85). As of 2010, Francesca Levy of *Forbes* reports that the United States is the fourteenth happiest nation in the world, with only three percent of the nation “suffering,” and the first eighteen nations are either from the Americas, Europe or of European pedigree, such as Australia and New Zealand (Levy, Web). Statistics gathered for the study came from a Gallup World Poll between 2005 and 2009, of thousands of respondents in 155 nations (Levy, Web). Since those people reside in homes of one sort or another, this reaffirms the feeling of peace that is transferred from one place to another. After all, human beings need three elements to survive: food, clothing, and shelter; and a home of any sort satisfies that last necessity.

Illusion of Safety

Many horror movies exploit the sanctity of home and turn those feelings of solace and security into their polar opposites to further enhance the dread of audiences. In 2005, screenwriter Ehren Kruger’s well-crafted *The Skeleton Key* has Caroline Ellis (Kate Hudson) willingly applying for a position to take care of Ben Devereaux (John Hurt) in his old Louisiana manor on the outskirts of a bayou. Although the rundown house does nothing to stir up any angst within Caroline, the real problem is Ben’s wife, Violet (Gena Rowlands), who does not like or trust her, yet seems to tolerate the caregiver.

With her own room and food at her disposal, plus a skeleton key that opens all doors, Caroline settles in, though she is not comfortable with Violet’s eccentricity, including not allowing any mirrors to be displayed on the walls. Yet this is Violet’s home, and as Luke Marshall (Peter Sarsgaard), the Devereauxs’ lawyer tells her, “Well, she’s Old South. She thinks women still curtsy” (*The Skeleton Key*, DVD), especially an attractive young woman from New Jersey who seemingly has all the answers when caring for her husband. Caroline is determined, in spite of Violet, to protect Ben, who apparently had a stroke that affected both sides of his body while he was in the attic—the one place her skeleton key fails to gain her entry. Furthermore,

Caroline knows a stroke would only affect one side of the body. This means Ben's paralysis has come from somewhere else, and she knows Violet has the answers.

Curious as well as determined, Caroline finally makes her way into the secretive attic room. Inside, she finds bizarre curios, Hoodoo religious items and a strange recording about the "Conjure of Sacrifice." She soon concludes that Ben's attack came about from his believing in Hoodoo, and she holds Violet responsible for his misfortune, since Caroline believes the old woman instilled folk magic beliefs upon him. Still, she remains in the home and does her best to care for Ben, even with Violet trying to inhibit her at every turn.

When Caroline finally tries to help Ben escape, Luke and Violet take her hostage. Using their own Hoodoo magic against them, Caroline manages to break free for a short while, until she finds herself back in the confines of the house, in what she believes to be a safe haven: the attic. Relying on a Hoodoo spell of protection, she secures her place in the room in order for Violet and Ben not to reach her. Within the walls of the old Devereaux manor, Caroline believes she is now safe from harm and has conjured her own fort of protection. She soon learns, to her detriment, that the magic she used actually confines her so she cannot leave the home. In essence, the home has isolated her, has become her prison. She is in the top floor, as if a kidnapped princess trapped in a tower, with no means of escape, but she is far from Brontë's "madwoman in the attic." Even so, the manor's isolation means no one will come to her rescue. Caroline is alone and desperate and at the mercy of Violet and Luke.

Tony Pettine, script supervisor on Wes Craven's *My Soul to Take* (2010), George VanBuskirk's *Camp Hell* (2010), and Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010), says that a home "is the illusion of safety, the womb, the castle, the fortress—but once breached it's devastatingly clear how easily violated this sanctuary is" (Pettine, e-mail). Caroline has breached the safety herself with the misuse of a spell that has entrapped her, and the new protective womb she tried to create for herself is nonexistent.

Another breach occurs in *Dog Soldiers*, where a six-man squad of British soldiers on a training mission find themselves alone in the Scottish Highlands against a foursome of werewolves. In desperate need of shelter, the men find Megan (Emma Cleasby), a zoologist, who takes them to an empty house because "... an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites daydreams of refuge" (Bachelard 107). Once inside, and after an attempt to escape in a vehicle fails, the men suddenly feel as if they have a chance at survival. Secure in their defensive position, they fight as trained, though they are coming up short against the mystical beasts that claim them one by one. Even so, they hope that if they can hold out until sunrise and endure the siege, the werewolves will revert to human form.

The one problem Private Cooper and his fellow soldiers cannot run from is one simple fact: The house has already been breached by the enemy—Megan reveals that she has truly been a wolf in sheep's clothing. Worse still, the werewolves have no plans to hunt elsewhere, because the men are holed up in *their* home. The soldiers' sanctuary, fort, and place of safety is now a prison and death chamber because the werewolf family are not only hungry; they are determined to win back their house, their place of solitude. Cooper and company, nonetheless, fight on to keep the werewolves at bay.

Dog Soldiers is clearly reminiscent of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Here a group of strangers come together in a farmhouse to fend off a zombie attack. Again, the hope is that the place will serve as a fortress to protect them. As in *Dog Soldiers*, the home is breached from the inside when Karen Cooper (Kyra Schon) (interesting surname coincidence with the werewolf feature) becomes one of the living dead and attacks her mother.

Most importantly is, whether we are happy and feel safe within a home, we all know something bad can indeed happen. After all, Caroline, Cooper and the survivors in *Night of the Living Dead* did not think they would be safe, they only *hoped* they would be safe. Otherwise, once indoors, they would have abandoned all inhibitions, safeguards and defenses. Instead, they remained suspicious and on guard, and did not completely trust their environments. Therefore, the illusion of safety is something we may all understand on an unconscious level, for bad things do happen, but on a conscious level, this is the last thing we would want to acknowledge (intellect versus emotion). Though sobering, the illusion of safety in the home comes from one of complacency, where “This can’t happen to me” is the mantra, which is readily exorcised by many a horror movie.

Isolation

In many horror tales involving a home one chooses to visit, that place is often isolated from the rest of the world. The Devereauxs live way out in the bayou, and the werewolf family lives many miles from other dwellings. In 1978’s *The Legacy*, the Ravenhurst manor in the English countryside is apart from the world and is thus isolated from humanity.

Maggie and Pete Danner (Sam Elliot) are called away from California by Jason Mountolive (John Standing) to consult with an interior designer of some sort. Though the pair is suspicious since they have never heard of the man and they cannot understand how he has learned of them, Maggie and Pete still decide to break away to England, especially since all expenses have been paid in advance. While on a motorcycle through the lush surroundings, they are inadvertently run off the road by Mountolive’s driver. With their bike in a local repair shop, the pair enters the manor and make themselves at home.

Though Pete’s misgivings and skepticism leads to paranoia about the manor and Mountolive’s intentions, he still manages to eat, drink, relax, and even shower—though that last activity proves to be anything but a pleasant experience. Regardless of their mysterious host and the rich, obnoxious nature of the other guests, they remain inside the home, even in robes or by warm fires on occasion.

Maggie and Pete’s actions may seem strange when they choose to remain in a home where they are distrustful of other people due to their idiosyncrasies, but they are again drawing upon the innate notion of home as a place of comfort and security, substantiating the decree of Maya Angelou that “I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself” (CBS Interactive, Web). They still feel safe and devoid of danger because they are *supposed* to feel safe. Here, once again, Freud’s “uncanny . . . that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (Freud, Web) comes into play on a grand scale. Simple, everyday objects within this supposedly safe abode become means of destruction. A pool prevents a swimmer from surfacing, a mirror shatters and the shards impale another, a piece of ham leaves a person choking on a bone, a fireplace shoots out fire to engulf a house guest, and a cat takes human form while a man turns into a demonic beast before he dies.

With no options and fearing for their lives, the pair escapes by driving away from the mansion. The uncanny, nonetheless, bears down on them once again. Regardless of the turns they take or the different directions they move in, they are always brought back to Ravenhurst. Knowing there is no way out, Maggie and Pete walk tentatively back into the mansion, the giant trap, to await their fate.

According to Victorian literature specialist, Dr. Anne DeLong, “Traditional Gothic is usually about the dread of or escape from the confinement that the home represents” (DeLong,

e-mail). This is true in *The Skeleton Key*, *Dog Soldiers* and *The Legacy*, among many other horror films where the home is prevalent. Caroline, Cooper and his squad, and Maggie and Pete are all cut off from the rest of the world with little or no hope of escape. Their sudden isolation means they have to rely on their own wits to live another day in what is traditionally supposed to be a bona fide place of protection, not a prison.

Cooper and his squad had no choice in the matter, but Caroline could have turned down the offer, while Maggie and Pete never had to accept the invitation. Instead of heeding the warning signs and heading home, Caroline, Maggie and Pete went against gut instinct and chose to remain. This is because they wanted the homes they entered to be safe, and they fought off the feeling these domiciles could be anything else. They convinced themselves to remain because a home is expected to be a place of solace, regardless.

Home as Womb

The ultimate, off-the-beaten-path house is certainly the Norman Bates' (Anthony Perkins) home in *Psycho* (1960). At the top of the hill near his motel, Norman hosts a dinner for his new motel guest, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), where she hears him argue with his mother. Though seemingly safe, Marion is not at all comfortable, since she is on the lam after stealing \$40,000 from her employer.

Other than Norman's "mother," the two are completely alone on their own private island as Kendall Phillips, author of *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture* and an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Syracuse University, explains:

The suburban home was envisioned as just this kind of private island as was, in its own way, the automobile. Marion's flight to freedom, perhaps foreshadowed by the floating camera in the opening scene, is emboldened by her dream of an idyllic life: a life of comfort and prosperity, a home and family away from the urban life of work. Marion's dream must have resonated with audiences in 1960, most of whom were either dreaming of such a suburban fantasy or trying to live up to it. (*Projected Fears*, 78)

Even with the Bates' home far removed from planned suburban communities, Phillips feels that director Alfred Hitchcock is making a comment about such areas, most notably that suburbia has not lived up to expectations. If Marion is searching for her own private island away from suburban life and away from the world, she has temporarily found a place with Norman. Unfortunately, the home and motel are his island, and he does not require company because, as Norman clearly states to Marion, "A boy's best friend is his mother" (*Psycho*, DVD).

Mrs. Bates became the "smothering mother" of extremes, and "It is the smothering mother that becomes the root cause of Norman's psychosis and his crimes. In becoming completely isolated from the world of others, Norman and his mother turn increasingly towards each other, and after Norman kills his mother and her lover, this introverted seclusion becomes entirely narcissistic" (Phillips, *Projected Fears*, 75). Here the home for Norman is clearly a womb, his safe haven for all things. Yet Norman stutters, is uncertain, and his social skills are handicapped due to the reign of his mother that now survives in the home. Since the house is an extension of Mrs. Bates, Norman cannot leave because "there is a comfort as a child that would probably be an extension of a womb if the home and the home[]life is a place of sanctuary" (Friedenheim,

e-mail). The home was certainly Norman's sanctuary and private island where he was protected from all things urban, suburban, or otherwise. His mother and her house are one. Combined, they are the ultimate in motherly protection. Nonetheless, the awkwardness of Norman is absent, and we see him with renewed confidence; when he "dresses in his mother's clothes, speaks with her voice, etc., [he] wants neither to resuscitate her image nor act in her name; he wants to take her place in the real—evidence of a psychotic state." (Žižek 99). Therefore, the Bates' home as a womb has given birth to a new Norman.

Interestingly, since the Bates' home is representative of the mother and is still a womb for Norman, Freud's musings about the feminine traits of the home are seemingly confirmed:

It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* (uncanny) place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. [T]here is a joking saying that 'Love is home-sickness'; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix '*un*' ['un-'] is the token of repression. (Freud, Web)

From this essay, Freud may equate the home and female genitalia to something a neurotic man would say, but he was certainly aware that most men throughout the history of western culture often referred to homes, ships and even cars as feminine—a vessel and womb that would cradle and protect them. Furthermore, there may be much validity to Freud's example when the man dreams: "This place is familiar to me, I've been here before" (Freud), but this indubitably means far more than a woman's genitals.

The home is such a vital element to our development as individuals that it most certainly leaves its mark. Eudora Welty in "Place in Fiction" makes an important observation: "Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention, it bestows on us our original awareness; and our critical powers spring up from the study of it and the growth of experience inside it . . . One place comprehended can make us understand other places better" (Bakratcheva, Web). This is why Jill can be comfortable at the Mandraki home, why Caroline can settle into the Devereauxs' manor, why Maggie and Pete can claim a room in a stranger's mansion, why Private Cooper and company can feel a sigh of relief when running into that lonely home—and why Marion, a woman on the run, can take a moment to have dinner at the Bates' house. Home is home. It is comfort, solace, sanctuary, fortress, and womb. It is a protector for all of us wherever we travel because ". . . all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (Bachelard 5).

Ann DeLong, however, contends that homes have been traditionally patriarchal:

I feel somewhat conflicted about the identity of home with womb, since it puts so much pressure on women to be maternal/nurturing/sacrificial, etc. It's also somewhat objectifying. I mean, couldn't the home just as easily reflect the father, in its sense of childhood memories or associations, or of traditional inheritance and patriarchal legacy? Also, in 19th century Gothic the home/house is often also equated with the head in a somewhat Freudian sense—the hidden passageways and dark enclosed spaces representing repressed parts of the psyche, for example.

(DeLong, e-mail)

In spite of that, this patriarchal component has been in name only. Many are familiar with the House of Windsor or House of Plantagenet, and for the horror genre, the House of Usher and its climactic fall. But the home is still a vessel that keeps us safe and warm and nurtures us. Maybe the names of houses, mansions and castles, with their phallic spires, towers and parapets, have taken masculine names to suppress and subjugate the feminine, and we can even imagine Freud sporting a wry smile each time he slipped a key into the lock of his front door. Yet, the home is undoubtedly representative of a womb.

Associating a home to a womb comes about since both offer guarded as well as cultivating environments to those inside their protective walls—because this is what both are designed to do in nature as well as architecture. This notion of *womb*, therefore, goes far beyond the idea of gender, perception, and consciousness. For if the womb is the place of our origin and is vital to our development as a species, our concept of home finds its origins within the dwelling's walls and is vital to our development as a people.

Home Turned Against Us

When watching a horror movie where a home appears and proves detrimental to the characters, this is the reason for our feeling the impact: We do not want to see the sanctity of home—our home—violated. Although the focus here is on horror movies where one visits a place of residence, other house-related films cannot be ignored, especially when the almost sacred notion of home is turned against us. Phillips' is right when he declares that Hitchcock accomplished this with *Psycho*:

Hitchcock's ubiquity led audiences to enter 'Psycho' with an assumption of safety Hitchcock brought his monster even closer . . . literally housing Norman Bates on a familiar American highway, he violated the perceived promise of safety and left his audience shocked and hysterical. The shock of 'Psycho's' major twists is made all the more disturbing because it is, in essence a kind of betrayal. (Phillips, *Projected Fears*, 71)

No fool to playing on an audience's fears, this is exactly what Stephen Spielberg did with *Poltergeist* (1982). In this "new home—new horror" category, Freud's "uncanny" rears its frightful head once again when the Freeling family is attacked by a clown puppet, a tree, a mirror, and a closet in search of souls. Screenwriters Spielberg, Michael Grais, and Mark Victor have exploited childhood fears of a puppet's coming to life and grabbing us from under the bed, and for animating the spooky outdoor tree that breaks through the window to steal us from our slumber, while the mirror reflects something happening to us that we do not want to witness. The Freeling's entire home works against them to capture little Carole Anne (Heather O'Rourke).

In 1980's chilling drama, *The Changeling*, the grief of John Russell (George C. Scott) over the death of his wife and daughter awakens the ghost of a murdered child in his new home. Here, the doors slam when the ghost child is angry, sounds grow more profound, a wheelchair attacks, and eventually the house comes down in a raging fire.

Even the same old home can welcome in a new horror. Takashi Miike's notorious *Audition* (1999) has a third act that makes people afraid to open the door to people they know—especially a lover—when Asamai Yamazaki (Eihi Shiina) pays Shigeharu Aoyama (Ryo Ishibashi) a visit.

When Susan Maine (Shelley Hack) thinks she has found a perfect father for her daughter, she has no idea that she has opened her home—her womb—to a brutal killer in *The Stepfather* (1987).

Houses are also used as places of imprisonment. Nine strangers wake up in *House of Nine* (2005), a beautifully furnished home with bricked up windows and no means of escape—unless they kill each other until but one remains. In *The Collector* (1965), Freddie Clegg (Terence Stamp) has a penchant for all things beautiful. Besides keeping butterflies in jars, he also keeps women in rooms. Finally, in *An American Crime* (2007), Sylvia Likens (Ellen Page) is held hostage and tortured in the heart of suburbia, which is tragically a true tale and reiterates the notion that we are never safe wherever we go.

The home does not necessarily need to be a stand-alone structure. Apartments have had their fair share of horror at the expense of tenants. In *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Rosemary Woodhouse (Mia Farrow) must fend off annoying neighbors during her bizarre pregnancy. Whereas in *[REC]* (2007), all the tenants must fight for their lives from the police outside as well as some of the neighbors they are trapped with inside. (An American version, *Quarantine*, came out in 2008.) Meanwhile, the apartment dwellers in *Crawlspace* (1986) have to keep an eye on their landlord, who is certainly keeping an evil eye on them.

Whether it is a new or old home, whether you know who is stopping by or if they are a stranger, these horror films strike at the heart of what we covet most: personal safety. “Horror undermines our comfort zones and teaches us to look for monsters in closets. *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* actually stopped me from helping strangers on the side of the road. Horror seeks to remind us that we are not in control” (Pettine, e-mail). This lack of control in a horror movie is what can turn the home into a prison or a tomb—a place where the illusion of safety is exploited. Since the home is so vital to us, suddenly realizing four walls can become a claustrophobic and isolated place of horror, and possibly a tomb, is extremely frightening as well as disheartening.

Home Invaders: Torture Porn

An existing home with an established family that suddenly experiences horror has been filmed many times before. Most of those films, however, occurred during the mid to late eighties, when crime was on the rise in America. According to the Bureau of Justice, property crime (burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft) increased all across the nation in the latter part of the eighties until the early to mid-nineties. During that time, murder, forcible rape, and aggravated assault was on the rise (“Reported Crime,” Web).

This is when movies regarding horror in the home truly came into play. Freddie Kruger (Robert Englund) sprang into action in 1984’s *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. In 1986, *The Stepfather* was released, and in 1988, Chucky (Brad Dourif) came to life in *Child’s Play*, along with an obsessive pet simian in *Monkey Shines*. Coming back for more, *The Stepfather II: Make Room for Daddy* (1989) once again drove notions of evil stepmothers out of anyone’s Disney-tainted mind. All of the films brought fear directly to the viewer by stalking, attacking, maiming, and killing people in their own homes. Freddie tore into people in their bedrooms while they slept, Chucky laid waste to an apartment with a mother and child, a monkey kept a handicapped man on the brink of death in his living room, and the stepfather made certain no place was safe inside the home. Each movie played on the fears of being trapped in one’s house with nowhere to go. After all, where can one run to when the safest place becomes the primary point of insecurity?

In the 2000s, with violent crimes falling in frequency as opposed to the early nineties, “horror in the home” movies were still on the rise. Many of these films were not made in the

United States, but mainly Asia (Japan's ultra-bizarre *Visitor Q* (2001), and Korea's brilliantly photographed *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003) and *Cello* (2005), and France (*Inside* and *Them* were both released in 2006). Many of these films brought to the home the "torture porn" seen most often in slasher films like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and 2005's *Hostel* and *Wolf Creek*, as well as the famous *Saw* series of movies.

Torture porn, the exploitation of human suffering, has been best described by MSN's Don Kaye:

There is virtually no sexual activity involved, although the victims are usually nude or partially nude. Instead, it expresses the idea that its viewers are intensely, pruriently aroused by the sight of human bodies—usually young, nubile ones, and quite often female—getting torn into bloody chunks in the most awful ways imaginable. (Web)

When torture porn hits home, tension and suspense increases exponentially because the anguish is thrust upon an individual or a family supposedly safe with locked doors, closed windows, and the police but a phone call away. The home will once again have been breached, and the occupants will be left to fight for their lives in the most sacred of personal spaces.

The most notable "torture porn in the home" movies are very disturbing. With the French film *Inside*, a pregnant mother, Sarah (Alysson Paradis), needs to fend off a crazed woman (Béatrice Dalle) from killing her in her own home. Sarah has already suffered—she was recently in a car accident that claimed her husband. Worse still, it is Christmas Eve and she is preparing to go to the hospital so her baby can be delivered on the holiday. Yet, the hostile woman, who first came to the door asking to use the phone, wants in at all costs. The woman tells Sarah that she knows her—and wants the unborn child. Soon, Sarah is tormented throughout the night, and all who come to her rescue are brutally dispatched by the woman. Sarah remains trapped in her own home, inside the bathroom with nowhere to go, much as Caroline was trapped in *The Skeleton Key*.

Inside is excruciatingly bloody with a horrifically powerful ending sure to leave most people numb. To date, this movie is at the top of the list for using the most realistic blood captured on screen. The suspense, enhanced by Sarah's desperation, as well as her isolation in the claustrophobic bathroom, is breathtaking. Besides seeing one's home become the scene for a blood bath, to know that the protective womb of home cannot protect poor Sarah, as her womb cannot protect her unborn child, is truly harrowing.

That same year, France delivered another similarly dark feature. Billed as being based on a true story, which is completely unfounded, Clémentine (Olivioa Bonamy) and Lucas (Michaël Cohen) are attacked in their home by a gang of masked children. At first, there are strange phone calls, followed by the downstairs' television's mysteriously turning on by itself. Soon, the night explodes in rage as the pair are viciously stalked and assaulted. Film Critic Lisa Nesselson says, ". . . the house seems to turn on them—doors slam, sharp objects materialize through keyholes" (Web). Their own home does become their enemy since it is under renovation, creating many ways for the gang to gain entry, as well as leaving their attackers with many places to hide. The pair does know the house, but they are no match for the crazed group. (An American version of *Them*, entitled *The Strangers*, was released in 2008.)

The third and most unnerving of the stories is writer/director Michael Haneke's remake of his own motion picture, *Funny Games* (2007). Ann Farber (Naomi Watts), her husband, and her son soon have their summer home invaded by two young men. The family members are battered,

tortured and suffer at the Eddie Haskell-like hands of their two, seemingly well-bred torturers. What makes the movie more frightful than the other aforementioned torture porn is its mistreatment of an entire family, most notably the young boy, Georgie (Devon Gearheart), who is ridiculed, forced to wear a sack over his head, and made to watch his parents, his protectors in their “safe” home, suffer. Many movies, even horrors, usually avoid the inclusion of children in such environments, but Haneke pulls no punches as the young boy and his family face trauma, minute by agonizing minute.

What all three torture porn films have in common is the element of true sadism that occurs inside the home by strangers. The only difference is that the homeowners in *Inside* and *Them* work diligently to protect their home and not let their antagonists gain access, whereas the Farber family makes the fatal mistake of welcoming their soon-to-be torturers indoors.

All of these movies make it perfectly clear that no matter how safe we think we might be, we are completely vulnerable. This takes the words of John Ruskin, from his *The Nature of Woman*, and totally subverts them: “This is the true nature of home. It is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division” (Web). So why would we want to see such films? Deep within us all, we already know calamity can strike at any time or place, yet we move forward in our lives and fail to give in to fear—but the horror movie reminds us to remain vigilant and not give in to complacent delusions.

Much has been written about this topic, but Phillips offers a worthwhile reason as to why such movies would be appealing, even when they affect us on a base level:

... the horror film is an important barometer for the national mood and an important cultural space into which citizens may retreat to engage and examine the tendencies in their culture and to make choices about how to interpret and react to them. In the final analysis, the lesson of the history of the American horror film is clear: the things that we fear, and the ways that we express this fear, tell us a great deal about us. (*Projected Fears*, 198)

This means the current wave of torture porn in the home is reflecting what has become known as a “home invasion.” A “home invasion is when robbers force their way into an occupied home, apartment or hotel room to commit a robbery or other crimes. It is particularly frightening because it violates our private space and the one place that we think of as our sanctuary. Home invasion is like the residential form of an automobile carjacking and it’s on the rise” (McGoey, Web). Sadly, there are no official statistics regarding these abysmal crimes. Nevertheless, they are key for many horrors where our homes are imposed upon. Furthermore, in the three previous films, the implication is that what happened to Sarah, the French couple, and the Farbers can happen to any one of us—even when we become far too content and take the safety of our homes for granted.

Definitely not a torture porn by any means, Roman Polanski’s dramatic *Rosemary’s Baby* has sweet and innocent Rosemary Woodhouse (Mia Farrow) wanting nothing more than to have a child. She is in a new apartment with her husband and is soon raped at the claws of the Devil—but Rosemary does not even realize she has been violated in the safety of her own home as well as impregnated with the hell spawn. Regarding her plight—Rosemary’s unconscious, repressed feelings brought upon by pregnancy—*Tigerland* scribe Ross Klavan says, “I think in American culture there’s a particularly strong, almost neo-Victorian sense of looking away from those unsought feelings and fantasies and almost a demand to keep things happy and rational. The horror film kicks that to the ground” (e-mail). Once again, we are reminded that home may prove

to be a place of terror, torture and termination—and we readily go to the theater or rent a film to view such a reminder. Horror movies simply knock the rose-colored glasses off our faces to expose the dark side of our lives we often try to forget is even there due to misconceptions of contentment.

In many of the torture porn films, the stranger, the torturer, the killer is willingly or almost willingly let into the home, as in the case of *Funny Games*, *The Strangers* and *The Last House on the Left* (1972, remade in 2009). The last is very unsettling because a husband and wife unknowingly let three people into their home who raped and shot their daughter. Friedenheim believes we let our guards down and invite strangers into our homes because,

When someone comes into our homes or they are at the door and they are a stranger, we will always have a conflicted feeling and questions about “who are you and what do you want?” We may want to send them away even if they are in trouble or need help. Then, we may have another voice that tells us that we are supposed to greet strangers, treat them like a neighbor and other religiously imposed sanctions. Our attempt to be a “good person” even if we have an inner voice telling us “no!” will make us let someone in the house or make us treat them kindly in spite of a warning light going off inside. (e-mail)

This logic also applies when visiting a home.

House Guests

In a way, the private island of suburbia has never left us. The suburban landscape still thrives, and the close-knit communities often found in cities, due to dense population, is often lost beyond the concrete jungle of apartment buildings and skyscrapers. More people from suburbia may find closer neighbors in the surrounding cubicles at work than in the outlying houses around their home. Therefore, when leaving the sanctity of our home for someone else’s, we may automatically feel some element of trepidation. This does not mean, however, that we will not enter this other homestead.

In Francis Ford Coppola’s version of *Dracula* (1992), John Harker (Keanu Reeves) travels to the nether regions of moribund Transylvania to the castle of Dracula (Gary Oldman). Though frightened and confused by traveling gypsy women, riding in a carriage on the edge of a cliff that is driven by a bizarre coachman, and after witnessing strange blue flame rising from the earth, Harker still climbs the steps towards the foreboding wooden door. He still enters the dark and withering castle and even eats, sleeps, and shaves amongst Dracula and his uncanny antics.

Despite how strange the situation, Harker maintains his social manners and remains with his host. In his heart then, he must believe he is as safe in this home as in any other. The same goes for Laura (Martha Roth) in *The Man and the Monster*. She not only enters this horror home under her own free will but remains there, even though one door is usually locked at night with grunts and piano playing coming from behind its walls. In *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), Francis Barnard (John Kerr), knowing he is not welcome, remains in the home of his brother-in-law, for he has no need to think Don Medina (Vincent Price) could have had anything to do with the death of his sister. The idea that all homes are safe seems to reign supreme. This happens because we equate any home with the one that originally protected us from harm. “There is an odd transference we assume in new housing situations. Visiting someone’s home is a clear example” (Phillips, “Re: Horror-related Question,” e-mail).

Granted, John Harker, Laura, and Francis Barnard had no idea what they were really getting into, but what of those who know exactly what they are walking into? In *The House on Haunted Hill* (1959), *The Haunting* (1963), *The Legend of Hell House* (1973) and *Death of a Ghost Hunter* (2007), all of the participants step into each home knowing what fate might await them. In each case, as bizarre as it sounds, the people remain indoors and even sleep in each home—which may be haunted by hostile spirits. Nell Lance (Julie Harris) is losing her mind in *The Haunting*'s Hill House, Ben Fischer (Roddy McDowall) is a former survivor of Hell House's carnage and goes back for more, choosing to remain indoors as long as he can, and Carter Simms (Patti Tindall) is swayed by five grand to stay in the Masterson house to prove it is haunted. Facing the odds and facing the fear, these three ghost hunters, along with others, remain within the homes that haunt them.

Whether a simple home or a mansion, the basics we associate with a home and everyday living are present. There are bathrooms, bedrooms, and dining rooms, and most occupants seem to sleep well, even at night when a ghost may be coming their way. Maybe this is why, usually at the behest of others, Nell, Ben, and Carter remain, sometimes against their better judgment. Only in *The House on Haunted Hill* are the stakes seemingly the highest, because the occupants are challenged by Frederick Loren (Vincent Price) to spend the evening.

If the five guests remain until morning—and survive—Frederick will give each individual \$10,000. To heighten the tension, each guest arrives by hearse and is given a pistol for protection. Yet, once again, they manage to dine, remain civil, and even find time to sleep. As Melissa Holbrook Pierson reminds us, “Deep down, my home, my cradle, is still where it always was. Your home is still within you, the box it made then hid inside” (58). Summarily, we take this box, this memory of home, with us everywhere we go. We use this memory, this ideal, to keep us safe, warm, and content regardless of the venue, such as a haunted mansion, a rundown castle, or a lonely house. We still expect a protective womb and sanctuary. Gaston Bachelard goes on to say, “The unconscious is housed The normal unconscious knows how to make itself at home everywhere” (10). This occurs no matter what may lie in wait for us because we are so conditioned since birth, since being in our first homes, that all will be well.

Oddly enough, and regardless of the horrific haunting at Hill House, Nell wants to remain. As *The Haunting* progresses, Nell's mind continues to break down. She's in a downward spiral amongst disembodied cries of a baby, stark and ever-increasing pounding, expanding doors that seem to breathe as if the house is alive, and a domicile whose multitudes of decorations do nothing but torment her as the light and shadow of day and night play along them. Even so, Nell has absolutely no desire to leave. Feeling she has never belonged anywhere—never had a home to call her own—she wants to remain in the house that beckons her. While the other house guests beg her to go, and ultimately force her outdoors, Nell knows she belongs at Hill House and will never leave.

Poor Nell remains in spite of the horror because she believes she has never been a part of something before. She had taken care of her importunate mother for eleven years and now sleeps on a couch in her married brother's house. Other than owning half of her brother's car, she truly has nothing of her own. Nell can, however, see the past; and this is why Dr. Markway (Richard Johnson) wants her to help him investigate Hill House and its many legends—because it is “a house born bad” (*The Haunting*, DVD). Psychically linked to the mansion's previous history and the bizarre deaths it may have caused, Nell wants to become a permanent part of the structure, a spiritual fixture attached to its history and mythos. It is as if this is her only chance to immortalize her lowly self: the girl worn down by her nagging mother's illness, and by her

brother's family who have no respect for her. Yet, the house *wants* her, where no other has wanted her before. From Nell's character, her often childlike behavior and perspective, shyness, and social ineptitude truly hint that as a thirty-eight-year old woman, she is still a virgin and has had little to do with the outside world.

Clearly, Nell has not embraced her childhood home as a womb, but has been in search of such a place to possess her. Instead of leaving Hill House to find a home that can love her back, she is attracted to the foreboding mansion because it reminds Nell of her demanding, invalid mother. The mother who had smothered her as much as Mrs. Bates smothered Norman. Unlike Norman, she does not want to become her mother, but wants to be absorbed into the walls of the house as if being consumed by her mother's womb in a sort of internalized abortion. "I'm disappearing inch by inch into this house" (The Haunting, DVD), states Nell, but this may not be occurring because she wants to become a part of the whole, she may want to lose herself out of guilt since it is implied that she killed her mother. In any event, like Norman, she has found her private island and does not want to abandon its tyrannical stature—even in death.

Here, especially when Nell climbs the spiral staircase and is begged by her compatriots to come down, she is certainly reminiscent of Brontë's "madwoman in the attic"—the crazed, independent woman struggling against a misogynistic world that limits her possibilities in life to be happy. But Hugh Crain built Hill House, and though it does not bear his name, a man created the mansion, again with its phallic spires, towers, and spiral staircases; and all the deaths have been those of women. Virgin Nell, incapable of receiving her mother's love, may have fallen victim to the home because it represents the patriarchal idolization DeLong mentioned. Hill House is the man, the father figure she has yearned for, while the residence also represents the womb ready for a miscarriage.

If Nell had never visited Hill House, one can only wonder how her life may have played out. Here too, if Jonathan Harker had never set foot in Dracula's castle, he may not have had the resolve to fight for his life as well as that of his beloved Mina. Ben Fischer may not have faced his fear at Hell House and exposed the truth behind the vicious spirit of Emeric Belasco. And Carter Simms may not have discovered what becomes of us after death. One does not just visit a horror home; one learns an intimate lesson, even if this lesson takes one to the grave.

Therefore, if you watch a horror film where visiting someone's home proves to be detrimental, it may have a lasting effect on you. As Phillips states, "I think it is back to the illusion of privacy and safety. There is also an idea of the ownership of space—being in 'someone else's house' is sort of to be part of their world" (e-mail). When we enter someone's domain, we are truly at his or her mercy, for better or worse. Of course, we hope for the best, as all of the house guests here have, regardless of whether they knew what lay in store for them. Then again, in the basement of our minds, in the unconscious, we all know that home, whether our own residence or someone else's, may not be as safe as we would like it to be—but rational thought seems to dictate that a home is a protective womb, fort, and sanctuary first before it can be anything else.

Bringing It Home

Repeatedly the idea of a safe home's being anything but, is thrust upon us at the movies, reminding us that "home sweet home" may not be what it seems. Since we spend most of our lives behind closed doors, dreaming, relaxing, bathing, sleeping, eating, and making love, it is no wonder that darkness can sometimes breed there, just as it did in the Bates' house. After all, bad things do happen in the home to all of us, whether it is a health emergency, such as a fall or heart

attack, a disaster, such as a fire or flood, or even a crime, such as a robbery or act of abuse. According to Michael Warren, most accidents do in fact happen in the home, and the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center states that the “leading causes of home injury death between 1992 and 1999 were falls and poisoning” (Warren, Web; “Injury Statistics,” Web). Furthermore, the CDC reports that home and recreational injuries account for nearly a third of all injury-based emergency visits (“Injury Prevention & Control,” Web). Regardless of how safe we feel, and despite our hopes and best intentions, bad things do happen in the home.

Horror movies about the home bring our base fears to light. We want our homes to be safe and tranquil and to remain a sanctuary from the horrors we know are always just beyond its walls. The last thing we want is for a home to be a place of danger, angst, and distress; and in turn we bury the idea that the horror can just as easily come from within the walls. Coming face to face with potential terror in the home on-screen is powerful enough to jolt us at our core. After all, if home—the safe womb—has been with us since childhood, to have our sense of home turned inside out and upside down truly exploits our emotional foundation, because such horror is practically unimaginable and often deemed impossible.

“I think what’s really frightening about these films is that they blatantly depict the vision of the home, the feelings about home—any home—that we hoped would remain unconscious. Home is a refuge . . . but it is also, unconsciously, a prison and a house of horror . . . what happens in a horror film is that we come face to face with our buried feelings about home” (Klavan, e-mail). Even seemingly mundane acts, like being grounded, instantly turn the home into a prison—especially if one must spend time in his or her room without a phone, television, or computer. Agoraphobia, where one fears crowds or public spaces, can make someone a self-imposed prisoner where they live. Finally, of course, we have the severely disabled trapped under one roof. All of these may lead to other problems, including feelings of claustrophobia and an overwhelming depression from being isolated and detached from the outside world due to lack of contact and communication.

The elusive island Marion sought, the refuge Cooper desperately needed, and the \$50,000 invitation Maggie was so enamored by, led to death, pain, and confusion. The concept of home, therefore, is a double-edged sword with safety and warmth on one side, and imprisonment and death on the other—just as we wrestle with the emotional need for safety, which is in direct conflict with our intellectual demand to remain skeptical. Horror movies spotlighting the house simply serve as a warning for us to not be complacent—in our own homes as well as in those we visit. Because, at any time, the uncanny may strike and make it known that “home is where the horror is.”

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The Splitting of Mind and Matter as in a Dream: Poe's "Ligeia"

Crystal C. Coombes

Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its dénouement before any thing be attempted with the pen.

—Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition"

Edgar Allan Poe's structured approach toward the craft of writing became the first recognized literary composition model of its time. Poe's artistry, developed from theater arts, captured a new generation of readers in an era that realized significant social change and represented a literary shift that became the basis of the Romantic Gothic period. Poe combined Gothic elements of craft with his narrative flair and multilayered artistic style to create a unified effect. The product becomes Poe's signature Gothic, first person, intimate narrative description of the states of the mind and heart wrapped within convoluted settings and circumstances. The aesthetic ramifications of Poe's approach are a dynamic story, one which ushers in both lust and psyche-driven horror. Although literary critics have argued that Edgar Allan Poe's work contradicts his own philosophy of composition and that his stories are themselves creations of his deviant mind, many have failed to appreciate the simplicity of Poe's application of effect and his unique and mindful use of the Romantic Gothic genre to reach into the psyche of the reader of his literary period.

Poe is credited with creating and implementing a strategic approach for use when composing his prose, as detailed in Poe's own "The Philosophy of Composition." His aesthetic model permits evaluation of the elements of craft, the unifying effect of a story's structure, and the creation of plausible belief in the reader. Some conclude that Poe's fiction represents the deviance of his own mind (Griswold 2). Others contend that Poe's work suffers a lack of consistency and overall purpose, especially in his use of what Poe deems the most important unifying effect—beauty (Walcutt 422). Still others believe that Poe understood his audience, the market of his day (St. Armand and Bloom 3–4), and was capable of producing tales that exhibited his craft and his chosen genre at a master level, that beauty was not limited to subject but included the cohesiveness of structure (Polonsky 43; Amper 36; Stovall 418; Buranelli 26, 40, 55–56).

Questions that arise in a comparison of Poe's working knowledge and use of elements of the craft, as well as presentation of selected subject matter in tales such as "Ligeia," "The House of Usher," and "The Black Cat," include those of authorial motivation in choice of theme, tone, and plot. Although several scholars allege that Poe's work is a reflection of Poe's own insanity, I maintain that Poe captures fundamental theories of form, function, and aesthetics. That is, he uses one of the most accepted genres well and develops his plot arc so keenly that his tales meet and surpass the standard of mind-bending fiction. Floyd Stovall writes that Poe "deliberately conceives the single effect to be wrought, and then invents such incidents, arranges them in such order, and presents them in such a tone as will produce on the reader the preconceived effect"

(420). The fact that Poe's work continues to stimulate discourse—especially divergent points of view—represents the enduring nature of his genius and supports what Susan Amper suggests: “meanings are not frozen; seeing the simultaneous existence of different ways to view works of literature brings us closer to the heart of the literary experience” (36).¹²

In Poe's “Ligeia” especially, elements of Gothic Romanticism prevail. I propose to review “Ligeia” from both the structural perspective—that is, analyzing its observance of Poe's identified unifying effect—and from a Jungian critical perspective, seeking to reveal that Poe crafted his story elements and dénouement with a keen understanding of the mind of the reader. Approaching Poe's work in this manner, I seek to affirm that Poe understood not only how and what he wanted to accomplish in writing “Ligeia,” but also that his work was a crafted product of an accomplished writer, not the by-product of a disturbed mind.

I

As an addition to his growing body of work, Poe crafted “The Philosophy of Composition” as a template describing his approach toward his creative efforts, toward the art of constructing a poem, or prose, terms Poe interchanged often (Garrison 136).¹³ Poe's essay uses Poe's own poem “The Raven” as an example, while Poe deconstructs his creative process step by step. Poe outlines elements of his craft that, together, create a unifying effect allowing over-arching dénouement to each of his works. The uniqueness of Poe's philosophy is that he reveals a system, diverse and complex, whose structure does not change but whose application permits elemental changes when applied to the creation of a story. That is, Poe uses layering, or a frame within a frame within a frame, in both story and in his philosophy. Poe creates rooms where structure provides for the story. Dennis Pahl suggests, “Thus, constituted, these settings [and use of elements of craft] may be said to stand in an analogous relationship not only to the poem's own self-enclosed structure but to what is supposed to be the ideal reader's experience of the poem: a perfectly unified experience” (1–2).¹⁴ In other words, Poe's structure becomes the single effect and the effect becomes the tale's structure—to some degree, unique to each reader—and yet, without boundaries, effectively permitting the lines between the story and reality to blur. Poe constructs the reader's experience without the intrusion of the vessel of the experience; its structure becomes its dénouement.

Poe first defines the desired dénouement of each of his poems and prose, perhaps answering the questions, What should the reader take away from this work? or What explanation or resolution of the plot is desired? The linchpin of Poe's composition theory is the selection of a single unifying effect—beauty, truth, or passion (“Philosophy” 678)—which establishes the structural foundation to each work and intones its dénouement. Poe supports the unifying effect by his conscious choice in setting, tone, theme, and characterization, adding language, detail, point of view, and style. Important to the integrity and impact of the selected effect is the length of the work. Poe writes, “It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting” (677). Poe's attention to even this structural detail, which contributes to, and perhaps causes, a work's dénouement, is intentional. For it is within a single sitting that readers can absorb and be absorbed into the experience of the unifying effect, can become participants in the sequence of events, and can fully realize the impact of Poe's tale through their own uninterrupted imaginations.

While some critiques have focused only on the inconsistencies of Poe's application of his method to “The Raven,” (the example Poe chose to illustrate his methodology), I suggest that the aesthetic methodology itself has been overlooked and misinterpreted. In the years since its

publication, Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" has met with criticism, often with its basis in Poe, the person, and not Poe, the artist. Questions abound regarding Poe's motivation for this work. Was it quickly penned because of Poe's financial circumstance? Could it have been Poe's humorous attempt to mock his own work? Was Poe insane and so his work a reflection of that insanity? Was his essay a hoax, as T. S. Eliot suggested,¹⁵ exacted upon the literary establishment of the time? Were the inconsistencies in its terms and application too numerous, making the methodology fundamentally unsound?

Clearly, a focus on Poe's literary life during the years just after Poe's death in 1849 and the prominence of emerging psychoanalytical theory of that time influenced critics to over-analyze Poe's body of work as well as Poe himself. A strong case can be made that, much like any other person, Poe endured hardships, loss, and tragedy.¹⁶ However, the emphasis placed on such personal issues as the foundation of Poe's methodology and subsequent body of work falls short. By failing to separate the man from his work, many critics have failed to acknowledge the unique structure of Poe's approach and to give Poe credit for his systematic method.

Poe's approach to the craft of writing seems consistent with the historical transition from the dramatic performance to fiction, in other words from stage to stories. Using several principles of drama, a medium Poe was familiar with not only because of his exposure to the theater at an early age but because of his own scholarship,¹⁷ Poe constructs a methodology that creates a product consistent with the mindset of the literary consumer, or reader, of his era. Thomas H. Uzzell points out that "one ideal of drama derives from the entertainment or excitement effect it may produce, and that other is possibly by its use of portraying character with maximum emphasis" (360). To suggest that Poe uses the elements of drama to create his unifying effect is to thus pinpoint Poe's genius. With a foundation set in the elements of drama, Stovall suggests that Poe's technique is what evolves and that a unifying intent becomes the unifying principle of the short story, that all Poe wrote was "the product of conscious effort by a healthy and alert intelligence" (421). Joseph J. Moldenhauer writes, "Poe pursued a unitary theory of metaphysics, nature, art, and the human mind" (829). In this manner, Poe creates the experience of stage in his literary fiction.

To understand the fluid nature of Poe's unifying effect, one must consider its potential multilayered definitions as they combine with artistic style. In the period since Poe's death, many literary critics have sought to conceptualize Poe's unifying effect of beauty, for example, into a narrowly conceived definition.¹⁸ Charles Child Walcutt, an early critic of Poe, suggests that the concept of "beauty" used by Poe becomes more than an effect and is likened to a subject, an entity, or aspect of subject, thus making Poe's lack of definition a flaw inherent in Poe's methodology (442); whereas N. Bryllion Fagin simply suggests Poe's use of dramatic elements substantiates the fluidity found in the definition and use of the effect of beauty, as a means to an end, or toward eventual dénouement (165). Fagin affirms that an "economy of means by which to produce this effect is a basic principle in the theatre" (166) and thus supports Poe's intent. Moldenhauer writes that Poe's "term beauty can be approached . . . within several frames of reference: the formal, the spiritual, and the psychological . . . [each] interrelated and . . . mutually supporting (834). More recently, George Kelly suggests in his work "Poe's Theory of Beauty" that Poe "developed a comprehensive theory of beauty which pervade[s] his critical thoughts, imparting to it a curious originality and a remarkable consistency" (521). Apparent in these examples is the depth of meaning that *can or could* be applied to one type of unifying effect—beauty—but which could as easily apply to each of Poe's three defined effects. Poe suggests, then, that an effect creates quality, and if so, that the effect is the *experience* ("Philosophy" 678).

Unity of effect—or experience—is possibly the most absolute criterion, while concept complexity, adaptation, and suggestiveness play supporting roles defining meaning (683). What follows is that the unity of the chosen effect throughout the work prevails because of the diversity of experience it creates (Moldenhauer; Pahl; Kelly).

Could Poe's methodology, allowing for elements of craft and artistic impression, be as simple as Poe has stated? Marvin Laser finds that Poe's "association of pleasure and indefiniteness . . . ultimately form[s] one of the fundamental principles of his aesthetic theory (70); Poe [seeks] answers to questions of the mind and of relevance and interpretation through 'investigation of human psychology'" (71) in experience, specifically. The use of a unifying effect becomes the basis for the well-crafted plot in each of Poe's tales and permits artistic license within the genre. Poe's clear and detailed formula becomes a basis for mastery of plot and of craft, becomes Poe's foundational methodology which translates in his writing and use of style. Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" is, therefore, a structural template that provides room for artistic meaning, imagination, and maximum intensity of the *experience in totality* of the literary work itself.

II

To review Poe's work on a critical level, one must consider its basis in the Gothic and Romantic period, as well as its impact on the reader. Gregory Jay and Harold Bloom substantiate Poe's use of "language, plots, symbols, and ideals that are his legacy from Gothic fiction" (84). Contemporary theorists (Muller and Richardson; Culler) approach Poe as Derridaeans or deconstructionists; their methods and rhetoric suggest associations with de-centering and signification. But consistent with his symbolist approach, the nineteenth-century critic and poet Charles Baudelaire concludes that Poe's use of "unity of impression" (134) empowers Poe's short story form and provides an immense advantage to such a singular effect. However, it is within the realm of recent reinterpretation of archetypal Jungian critical theory (Rowland; Hillman; Dawson) that the power of Poe's effect can be best understood, since this is the realm of the mind and of experience.¹⁹

James Baird writes, "To reduce art to evidence for psychology is to deny the authority of the artist as creator" ("Preface" 39). It is Baird's conviction that Jungian theory should be mindful of its limitations; that is, to remember that the critic using such Jungian literary analysis understands its application to the "basic experience" of being an ordinary human being, a "vision arising from the mysterious depths of the unconscious and given form through the medium of the artist" (40). This strategy is consistent with Jung's own critical approach, one that relies heavily on ideas developed by Jung from and in response to imagery found in texts and from his exposure to German Romantic literary forms. In his essay "Literary Criticism and Analytical Psychology," Terence Dawson suggests that "Almost all the evidence for [Jung's] major ideas comes from various kinds of texts . . . from the *psychological implication of the texts* that caught his imagination" (270).

Though in no way absolute or comprehensive, the following summary of Jungian concepts and terms permits deeper discussion of Poe's work and effect. The emergence of Jungian psychology from 1907 to 1960 culminates in a number of significant works by Jung in the period between 1922 and 1930, one of which, "Psychology and Literature" (1930), further refines Jung's approach to the critical review of a text. Dawson writes, "No literary critic writing during these years produced work with such broad-ranging, prescient and coherent theoretical implications" (280). During this time, Jung's focus moves naturally to the application of his

psychological theory in larger culture and in disciplines such as sociology, establishing its relevance as a literary critical theory.

Jungian critical theory's emergence in the literary world followed. Its first years were reflective of the separation of Jung from Freud, a transition that permitted notice of psychoanalytic theory in academic circles beyond those predominantly associated with psychology. By 1960, Jungian criticism enjoyed modest acceptance, but it was soon viewed as overly mechanized. In this period, Jungian terms were rigidly applied by some, while for others the movement in literary criticism toward themes specific to individuals and their relationship with the text found Jungian criticism at its highest level of intellectual debate. By 1980, though interest in Jung was significant, interest in Jungian criticism waned (Dawson 274–286). Analysis of literary works using Jung assumed the posture of “instant Jung”; and as Dawson concludes, “Jungian criticism [became] reductive and distressingly predictable” (286). Jungian theory succumbed to movements that were person-centered (Rogers) and whose focus sought to explain behavior as having cognitive rather than emotional roots (Skinner), meaning as a result of thoughts and not psychological forces. Such focus made application of Jungian theory appear outdated and out of touch but failed to consider how literary works impact the reader as individual and collective experience (Iser; S. Frye 6).

Today, Jungian criticism is experiencing a re-emergence, which provides clearer focus and a return to Jungian criticism's use of several key concepts. This fresh application of Jung's approach suggests six areas from which modern interpretation now develops. Jung seeks a working hypothesis from data, a view toward the depths of a work and not its surface meaning alone. His approach suggests understanding what Dawson advises, that “A character *cannot* explain the text as a whole; no episode can ever stand for the whole” (277) and that art, in fact, is socially significant to the society and to the time in which it is created. Jung connects art to the symbolic, concerned with the present yet seated within the past. Most significantly, Jung recognizes that the text and reader create the experience of the story, of the myth behind the surface meaning (Dawson 274–281). I suggest that Jungian literary criticism thus provides for the divergent meanings found in the interpretation of the human experience as reflected in literary works; provides for the literary experience itself.

In modern Jungian psychological theory, concepts such as myth, archetype, shadow, projection of mental activities from the unconscious to the conscious, and universal aspects of significance and symbolism take focus (Radford and Wilson 318; Rowland, Introduction and Chapter 8; Hauke, 191–222). When applied to Jungian critical theory, such concepts become important to concepts of plot and characterization and are especially applicable to the Gothic Romantic genre and to Poe's body of work. I will build upon the preceding described suppositions, as well as from definitions of key Jungian terms suggested by Mario Jacoby and Daryl Sharp to provide a basis for their application to Poe's “Ligeia.”

Key terms in Jungian critical theory (such as myth, unconscious, archetypes, symbols, imagination, ego, and dreams) derive from Jung's psychological concepts and are relevant in this discussion. *Myths*, or shared stories, are *experienced*. They are “involuntary collective statement[s] based on an unconscious psychic experience” (Sharp 87) or “are spontaneous manifestations from which we can deduce unconscious psychic activity . . . they are as original, intrinsically human creations of the unconscious” (Jacoby 61). As such, myths are the basis of understanding in any story. The *unconscious* becomes the realm of primal images, or *archetypes*. Though this definition evolved over the course of Jung's life, its meaning can be best understood as the “the unconscious disposition, the abstract pattern of images and ideas” (Jacoby 61).

Together, myth and the unconscious form the structure for interpretation, imagination, and literary creativity. Archetypes, or images of the psyche, manifest within the individual (as complexes) or within society and culture as a reflection of its characteristics (Sharp 28). In this application, “Jung makes a distinction between the ‘archetype as such’ and the archetypal images and ideas” (Jacoby 61). *Symbols*, from the Geek *syμβallein*, meaning to “throw together,” provide meaning. Jungian critical theory approaches symbols as triggers that allow the *conscious* to become receptive to their presence and meaning (Jacoby 62–63). *Neurosis* is, then, the lack of understanding, the absence of meaning within symbols that arise from archetypal images and ideas. Jung set a high value on the *imagination* and its ability to interpret symbols as relevant images (Jacoby 64). *Anima and animus* become the archetypes of either the feminine side of man or the male side of woman, respectively, and emerge throughout the lifespan as the self seeks individuation (Sharp 18–25, 67). The *ego* (or self) is the “central complex in the field of consciousness” (49) and acts rather like the repository of the persona, the shadow, and anima and animus. *Dreams* are a manifestation of the unconscious, creating symbolic pictures from the point of view of the psyche, or the conscious and unconscious as a working unit. Dreams are thought to have a classic dramatic structure with a place, time, characters, and plot, including an inciting incident and lysis, or conclusion (47). It is the unconscious—or instinctual—forces that Jung attributes to the “creative function, in that it presents to consciousness contents necessary for psychological health” (146).

Elemental themes that reach to the reader’s very core must combine with craft to reach an audience. Baird explains that “. . . architecture [craft] for Jung is an art of manifesting the basic experience, the vision, through symbols, varying from culture to culture, of the human impulse to reflect . . .” (“Jungian Psychology” 5). The Jungian artist seeks to use story elements to impact the dynamics of the ego, to provide a moral problem that changes or impacts the ego. Jungian theory has its basis in the dynamics between the anima and animus, the male and female energies, as reflected in the conscious (known) and the unconscious (unknown). The ego works to balance the anima and animus energies. The ego is *aware* and drives behavior. The unconscious projects the shadow self into ego’s awareness. Such projections create self-awareness as well as the psychic distortions in the *dynamics* of the ego as they occur. The foundation for this dynamic is revealed through archetypal patterns which define the elemental experience of being human (Jung *Collected Works*). Baird interprets Jung’s patterns as a disposition, thus “. . . individual consciousness is born mysteriously of the hereditary psychic disposition, from the totality of the experience of the race” (Baird, “Jungian Psychology,” 8). These patterns, then, the results of primordial myths, are shared experiences of a collective unconscious that continually reveal themselves when what is unconscious becomes conscious (Jung, “Poetry,” 552). In this manner, the experience becomes the work, and work becomes the experience, as Poe’s methodology suggests.

Translated into a literary application, Jungian critical analysis seeks to identify the dynamics in the story myth (for example, anima and animus as impacted by ego), relate those dynamics to symbolic meaning or archetypal patterns (individual or cultural), and underscore the movement within the story as part of a larger pattern of the self within a collective consciousness (the archetypal patterns within society). The archetypal collective of plots and myths creates an unlimited number of combinations and outcomes for the revelation of shared experience, for dénouement of story.

Since an elemental setting of Gothic Romantic fiction is the realm of the mind and psyche, or the conscious and unconscious, approaching Poe from the vantage point of Jung must include

recognition of psyche as it propels images and symbols within the material of fiction (Baird, "Preface" 43). Jung's approach to literary interpretation may simply be stated: "works of art are to a culture what the analyst's interpretation of private symbolic contents are [sic] to the individual" (223). For Jung, periods such as Gothic and Romantic are relevant to style, whereas aesthetics relate to subject matter (Philipson 222). Gothic literature has been described as the redecoration of the human consciousness through an aesthetic revival that provide[s] Romanticism with a full set of "swaddling clothes" (St. Armand and Bloom 1). Poe's "Ligeia" is prose at its Gothic Romantic best. While delving into the darkest spaces of human motivation, Poe clothes the reader in a tale woven from layers of obsession. His protagonist conveys a level of realism spiced with psychosis that leads to murderous actions and madness, either real, imagined, or dreamed. The combination of structure with style and symbolic elements with dynamics creates fertile ground for the development of fictional plot within a culture. Charles E. May writes, "A story that is unified around a single impression calculated to create a single effect is indeed the artistic equivalent of a psychological obsession" (69). Poe's "Ligeia" becomes such a story.

III

To examine Poe's prose from a Jungian critical perspective, then, is to realize the aesthetic ramifications of Poe's combined use of his philosophy and methodology of composition, as well as his vast understanding of the reader. May notes, "Since no theory of the short prose tale had been developed when Poe was writing, he borrowed theoretical ideas from those genres that did possess a critical history, such as drama and poetry, and applied them to the gothic tale form that was popular during his time" (14). Poe establishes that ". . . every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen" ("Philosophy," 675). Thus, the structure of Poe's technique requires formulaic precision, careful use of technique, elements of craft, and critical action, combining into what might be termed a framework. Herein is the basis for Poe's unity of effect and for the foundation that establishes the drama of story. Components such as form, length, intention, artistic piquancy, and, finally, a crafted climate build tension and underpin plot elements to reveal the story's eventual *dénouement* and are written with *intention*.

Approaching Poe's work with an understanding of Poe's methodology provides exceptional means for examination of his work using classic Jungian elements. In Poe's "Ligeia" the unification of effect suspends the reader in a psychologically plausible Gothic Romantic plot—relevant to the cultural era—and creates the *dénouement* of a Jungian dream drama.

Poe's "Ligeia" appears to be structured along the lines of the unifying effect of beauty (its topic, a beautiful woman); however, the dynamic of the story clearly speaks to the *effect of the intellect* (the representation of a concept via the symbol of the woman). The reader is challenged to ascertain if the narrator is speaking of the present moment or of a memory (perhaps, of an illusion), or even from or within a dream state. The narrator declares, "I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the Lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering" (Poe "Ligeia," 159). Poe begins "Ligeia," then, in the mind's eye—in the world of memory "feeble through much suffering." The plot of "Ligeia" is based on the unifying effect of what Poe terms "Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect . . . [which applies and is] more readily attainable in prose" (Poe "Philosophy," 678). Poe's use of doubling—the mind as both compositional unifying effect (the author's style) and as symbolic meaning—is consistent with Poe's manner of composition,

with his intention, suggesting indeterminacy within the actual events of the story and achieving layering for reader interpretation.

The unifying effect thus established, Poe crafts story elements to create his Gothic tale, to develop a short story, one that allows reading during a single sitting. The reader is introduced to the narrator, establishing an intimate first-person point of view. The reader dwells within the narrator's thoughts, within the realm of what appears to be an obsessed and confused mind. Poe uses language and repetitive phrases, modulation, and hypotaxis to establish the narrator's obsessive tone and manner. The pattern of speech suggests self-talk or the reiteration of events that have had significant emotional impact. Phrases become excessive such as when the narrator visually describes Ligeia's features line after line: "I saw that the features were not of a classic regularity—although . . . I examined . . . I looked . . . I beheld . . . I regarded. . . And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia" (Poe "Ligeia," 160–161). Knapp notes that "the name 'Ligeia' is symbolically evocative . . . [coming from] the Latin *ligo*, meaning 'to bind' or 'to tie' (131). Poe's use of sentence structure and style conveys symbolically the meaning of Ligeia in that the narrator is immediately *tied up* with and in her, captured by her, and emotionally absorbed by the desire of her. This suggests an inner struggle of anima and animus as projected into consciousness, one which conveys the narrator's loss of mind, or psyche, when seeking knowledge.

The object of the narrator's affection and attention securely established, Poe slows action and drives the reader deeper into the mind's eye of the narrator, into the deeper meaning of Ligeia.²⁰ Jung suggests that "The artist seizes on [an] image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness, he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it" ("Poetry," 553). Poe's use of description, especially of Ligeia, informs her presence within the tale. Griffith implies that "Ligeia's eyes were the seat of a profound spirituality . . . rich with metaphysical allusiveness" (73). The repetitive rambling description by the narrator "brings before imagination's eye the image of Ligeia" (Bieganowski 167). Indeed, Poe's doubling of the meanings associated with "eye" and the narrator's earlier statement "I cannot, for my soul" are not lost. As well, the indeterminacy of the circumstance builds upon the narrator's singleness of focus, creating indeterminacy for the reader, who may well question if the narrator's circumstance is real or imagined. Poe's intention is to bring the reader into the soul of the narrator, who has lost his own soul in Ligeia—in knowledge—and into the conflict created for the psyche at a darker level while firmly establishing dénouement, that is, the possibility that the narrator is dreaming.²¹

Poe uses symbolism, layer by layer, to bring the reader into the plot, into the narrator's mind, into the unconscious realm of psychosis, completing a key point in the story's plot arc before moving the reader into deeper meaning in context of the tale and as relevant to the culture in which the tale is being told. The character of Ligeia embodies intellect or knowledge. Ligeia is truth and intellect to the narrator. He remarks: "Her knowledge was such as I have never known in a woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical sciences? . . . the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding . . ." (Poe "Ligeia," 163). In the narrator's obsessed mind, Ligeia emerges as a shadow formation of Jung's classic anima animus struggle, both female and male, the perfect blend of passion and logic, the ultimate knowing disposition—a dream woman. In this manner, Poe gives the character *Ligeia* into deeper symbolic significance—*Eve*. The story "Ligeia" and the character, Ligeia, become what Hoffman suggests is the archetypal myth representative of the original fall of man, a tale with which "the forbidden wisdom, sought here under Ligeia's all-

knowing tutelage . . . [speaks to the desire of divining the] forbidden secret . . . all knowledge, all wisdom, all learning” (244). Though description, structure, and detail, Poe’s unifying effect establishes its symbolism and intones the reader’s experience.

Vincent Buranelli suggests, “There are two peculiarly arresting attributes in Poe’s short stories—atmosphere and the description of mental states” (79). In his use of atmosphere, Poe creates a melancholy, unhinged climate inside the narrator’s mind as well as within the setting. The rooms shared with Ligeia intone wonderment, reflect Ligeia-knowledge-ego—the desires of the unconscious. The pentagon-shaped turret shared with Lady Rowena, however, is lighted by “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” (Poe “Ligeia,” 167) and is occupied by the narrator’s “hatred belonging more to demon than to man” (169). The shift in setting connotes the loss of truth and intellect, or knowledge. Poe’s use of the turret and window foreshadow the complex psychological shift in the character arc of the narrator, as well. The symbolism of a single pane (the mind’s eye), the leaden hue (clouded vision) and “a ghastly luster” (evil thoughts) intones the action of the narrator and creates a clear descriptive mental state. The narrator is trapped within the turret, the tomb, desiring escape and release, trapped within and yet without Ligeia (figuratively and literally), trapped in conflict with the shadow formation of the ego. Another Jungian literary component is achieved through this narrative shift, one that is “concerned with psychological implications of character and plot in fiction” (Strelka vi) and the totality of immersion in the experience. Poe is driving the momentum of the tale deeper into madness, into a loss of mind and thus intellect. At this pivotal plot point, Poe’s narrator projects his grief into the shadow formation of a disturbed ego whose actions may eventually lead to the untimely death of Lady Rowena. Poe uses plot elements to construct a circle of madness within and surrounding the narrator, whose wonder becomes grief becomes psychosis and concludes in delusions of resurrection, or the transmutation of the soul—a Gothic element. The plot and psyche subplot thus become the projections of loss of intellect in either the landscape of nightmarish reality or as experienced in a dream.

Additional symbolism is found in the actual setting—the turret, the tombs, gold, and light representing conscious action, while the ghastly, the black, and the leaden intone unconscious forces. The narrator’s unconscious mind is pushing into his consciousness. Buranelli suggests that “Poe’s signature over his writing is what provokes a search for hidden meanings beneath the apparent ones, for covert aberrations behind supposedly innocent incidents and expressions” (39). Bettina L. Knapp adds “Although Ligeia at the outset of the story is described as being beautiful and captivating . . . she is also portrayed as a shadowy apparition, a kind of mirage, a disembodied spirit, an abstract entity” (132), what I suggest is the narrator’s manifestation of desire for knowledge vis-à-vis a dream. Poe’s effect is thereby realized in each craft element. The reader progresses with the narrator into the darkness that is the loss of self, the loss of soul, the loss of mind (figurative and literal), each having the potential of interpretation as real or no more than the mind’s unconscious forces emerging into the conscious as a dream state. Poe cultivates the reader’s imagination through indetermination—the twisting of interpretation—and in doing so adds yet another layer of potential meaning to the circumstances and events he portrays in the story.

The climax of “Ligeia” provides evidence that Poe’s effect of the mind meets a final dissociation of the psyche when the conflict between will and destiny re-emerges and is contrasted with pure logic and knowledge. The power of individual will over physical matter, specifically Ligeia’s will, is thematic throughout the tale. Earlier, the narrator suggests the

coming dissonance, “Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will” (Poe “Ligeia,” 166). At the death watch of Rowena, the narrator’s mind, the unifying effect of intellect, surfaces to confront its antithesis—mortal will, or reality, upon awakening. The narrator says, “I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia” (171). Recollection pervades the narrator’s struggle with fact. Here, the splitting of mind and psyche is complete. The transmutation of Rowena into Ligeia in the narrator’s psyche intones the horror of the moment. Reality reveals itself consciously as the narrator’s will cannot overcome death, or rather, that intellect cannot control will to overcome death of knowledge as symbolized in Lady Ligeia.

Symbolically, the narrator, now conscious, cannot save what in dreams his unconscious created. Jung would suggest that Poe creates conscience confronting consciousness, that the shadow representation of self is now fully overtaken by madness, no longer logical or intellectual. Knapp notes, “Each of Poe’s nonhuman and half-human *anima* figures overrides and governs the fate of the male narrator, thus psychologically representing an obsessive fantasy, a distortion of what lay buried deep within his subliminal world” (121). Poe reaches the deepest elemental underpinnings of Jungian critical theory, that “The archetypes most clearly characterized from the empirical point of view are those which have the most frequent and the most disturbing influence on the ego” (Jung “Poetry,” 556). The reader is thus left within either the experience of true madness or the experience of a nightmare.²²

In the juxtaposition of will and intellect, conflicting psychological states result in the form of imagination. The narrator’s obsession with Ligeia resolves in *his* eventual re-incarnation of beloved Lady Ligeia.

[With]...disshavelled hair; it *was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight!* And now slowly opened *the eyes* of the figure which stood before me. “Here then, at last.” I shrieked aloud, “can I never—can I never be mistaken—these are the full and the black, and the wild eyes —of my lost love—of the lady—of the LADY LIGEIA!” (Poe “Ligeia,” 173)

Poe’s over exaggeration of the scene, though use of adynata, intones the final snap of the narrator’s psyche. His exaltations are as extreme as the event and resemble the confused state when consciousness meets the unconscious—or the moment upon which one awakens from deep sleep. He has transgressed into darkness complete with symbolic blackness of his soul, carried off upon “the raven wings of the midnight.” Herein, Poe’s intention is fully revealed in the twisted outcome of human will, dark soul, obsession, and resurrection. The Gothic theme drives terror into the mind’s eye, unbridles sanity from intellect.

Poe’s *dénouement* reaches its climax in the uncertainty of the intellect—the unifying effect—at the story’s conclusion. Through application of elements of his craft and symbolism, Poe’s ability to “create a work of art which fulfilled the search of the Romantics for a monomyth and which functions at two distinct levels: the surface level of the picturesque, or the decorative, and the subterranean level of the subliminal and the archetypal” (St. Armand and Bloom 4) is realized. And yet, the reader is left unsure of the truth of the events. This causes psychic dissonance and resonates in the experience of the reader, who, much like the narrator, lingers in the illogical events (within a troubled intellect) of the tale.

The dynamic underpinnings of Poe’s “Ligeia” reside completely with Jung’s application of the unconscious as it is impacted by anima or animus and shadow, within the mind’s ability to

understand what it cannot know or control—the will. In “Ligeia,” archetypal symbolism swaddles unifying effect within the disposition of the mind, within what Jung explains is “the immensity of the unconscious” (Jung “Psychology and Literature,” 102). It is in this setting that Poe uses his philosophy and methodology to resurrect knowledge, if only in a dream, through the eyes of the narrator. From conscious choice, Poe crafts “Ligeia” in such a manner as to leave its interpretation completely open to discourse. As Buranelli writes, “Poe’s use of symbolism in his Gothic stories is a guiding thread to his literary art” (77–78). Poe succeeds in creating a Gothic short story—art—because of his powerful understanding and use of symbolic myth and the reader’s mind, his acute awareness of culture and of the market of his era, and as a result of his creation and application of specific methodology to his craft—consistent with criteria he establishes in “The Philosophy of Composition.” Poe’s innovative approach—and its cornerstone tenet, the elaboration of *dénouement* before pen touches paper—suggests that Poe’s efforts were ones in which his art and his love of his craft prevailed. Certainly, works like “Ligeia” substantiate Poe’s methodology and speak to the conviction of a reasonable and ingenious man.

Notes

¹² Critiques of Poe's work have evolved from those made immediately upon his death in 1849 by Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815–1877), who argued that Poe was mentally unstable, to modern interpretations of both Poe and his body of work as artistic and relevant. Rachel Polonsky, in her essay "Poe's Aesthetic Theory," purports that Poe "redirects critical attention onto technique, to art as a clever illusion which the artist controls like a mathematical or mechanical problem" (43). Polonsky suggests Poe provides a basis for his intention in composition and uses "the darkness and decay and terror [as] a part of the Gothic genre, not [a reflection of] Poe's personality" (38).

¹³ Floyd Stovall suggests in "The Conscious Art of Edgar Allan Poe" that these three essays comprise Poe's critical theory: "The Poetic Principle," "The Rationale of Verse," and "The Philosophy of Composition." Quoting Paul Elmer More, Stovall notes the three form "one of the few aesthetic treatises in English of real value" (417). Implicit in Stovall's argument is that Poe created a template for composition not recognized before in literary history. Collectively, Poe's three essays suggest that Poe sought to define processes for crafting poetry and prose that had not been previously defined, adding merit to critical thought that Poe's intent in this effort was valid, rather than mischievous, and that he approaches his method seriously.

¹⁴ Denis Pahl notes in "Decomposing Poes's Philosophy" that one of Poe's signature structures is the use of layering. This technique is found in Poe's poetry and short stories, as well as in his writing methodology. Pahl suggests that Poe creates rooms in which structure provides for the story. The rooms in "Ligeia" may be those of the mind's unconscious reflected in the container of a dream or dream state. The aim is the lack of boundary, like a dream; experience is shown in words and space and movement. Pahl states, "Poe lays down various rules and principles that are applicable not simply to the poem in question but to all poetic narrative in general . . . equally relevant to Poe's short fiction. (2). "The Philosophy of Composition" reflects what Pahl concludes is Poe's "understanding of analysis; that it is never simply empirical in nature . . . [but] . . . involves the way in which the poetic becomes implicated within the empirical (6). The enclosed setting of Poe's "Ligeia" is not only the rooms, the lab, and the tower, but that of the mind, and subsequently that of the dream. Pahl suggests that "Poe argues for the necessity of an enclosed setting by comparing the outline of such a setting to a frame around a picture" (4). In other words, the story setting must be singular—such as in one room—for the full impact of the unifying effect to be felt. Force and pressure predominate the tone of insanity and push the frame, thus permitting layering within the story and in the construction of the story. In this manner, Poe uses layering as a tool to create dénouement.

¹⁵ Rachel Polonsky reflects on many critics of Poe in her essay "Poe's Aesthetic Theory." One such critic is T. S. Eliot. Polonsky argues that Eliot stood firmly in his opinion that Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" did not confirm Poe's own work, and because of this opinion, Eliot was known to have voiced his impression often that the work was a hoax.

¹⁶ Many biographies about Poe suggest he suffered a number of losses, beginning with abandonment by his father, the death of his mother, and subsequent financial hardships. Once he settled with John and Frances Allan, a wealthy couple living in Richmond, Virginia, Poe thrived and entered the University of Virginia (1926). However, throughout his adult life, Poe experienced continued loss, including the traumatic death of his young wife, Virginia, in 1847. Poe's own physical illness and growing depression necessitated constant care while he continued to write and to lecture. During the final two years of his life, Poe's behavior became erratic,

leading some to suggest that he had suffered the lifelong effects of a brain tumor. Poe died on October 7, 1849, in Baltimore (Sova; Hoffman).

¹⁷ In her biography of Poe, Dawn Sova notes that Poe was raised in the theater, having experienced both his mother and father's thespian vocation first-hand as a child. Additionally, Bettina Knapp suggests in her work *Edgar Allan Poe* that Poe learned from this experience and by observing the cultural and social transitions of his era. Fagin substantiates Poe's natural intelligence and scholarship in this area by clearly connecting Poe's methods to the foundational elements of the theater.

¹⁸ It is important to remember that Poe details three possible unifying effects—beauty, truth, and passion—and that for this example only beauty is describes so that the diversity of interpretation may be made.

¹⁹ The implication of the archetypal Jungian approach is in its return to basic Jungian concepts applied to works rather than to authors. To be archetypal is to say that one seeks both the cultural and personal myths which become the precursor for interpretation of the story (Dawson). This return to myth is strongly suggestive of Wolfgang Iser's "gestalt," Northrop Frye's source tale ("The Archetypes of Literature" 8), or what David F. Peat suggests are "dynamic forces and mosaics of energy within the collective unconscious" (21).

²⁰ Daryl E. Jones writes in "Poe's Siren: Character and Meaning in 'Ligeia'" that Poe's selection of the name "Ligeia" (what I would determine as a calculated component of Poe's initial selection of dénouement) was meant to create a "richly allusive image," that which could be closely alluded to as befitting of a Siren of Gothic proportions, thus creating an "ominously resonant note . . . entirely consistent with Poe's effort to achieve totality of effect" (36). This craft element speaks to the detail of Poe's methodology and mastery of the Romantic Gothic genre and provides further evidence of his mindful application of the elements of his craft.

²¹ Jung suggests in his essay "Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy," as reprinted in *The Portable Jung*, that "The symbols of the process of individuation that appear in dream are images of an archetypal nature which depict the centralizing process or the production of a new center of personality" (324). A key component of Jung's approach to dreams is the thought that they represent active imagination, that "Dream images are seen as the best possible expression of still unconscious facts" (Samuels, Shorter, and Plaut 49). In relation to "Ligeia," should the narrator be simply "dreaming," one could extrapolate that the narrator is disclosing "unconscious motivations operating in relationships [which] present new point of view in conflict situations" (Sharp 48). Thus, the interpretation of the narrator's dream may be that he longs for knowledge as represented in Ligeia, perhaps to save his dying Rowena. Jung's definition of dream states as an expression of what cannot be expressed in waking hours, of the unconscious coming safely into dream conscious and finally into consciousness, conveys the awaking of knowledge—or the revivification of Ligeia (man's will) at the story's end (Jung, *Collected Works*).

²² Roy P. Basler suggests "Poe dealt deliberately with the psychological themes of obsession and madness" (365) and "chose with mathematical accuracy just the effect and just the word which would make the perfect story . . ." (364). I suggest that this element of detail provides for a tale that can be interpreted in a number of ways—as supernatural, horror, psychological thriller, even as a twisted frame within frame with frame of a dream. In fact, the narrator states, "I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw . . ." (Poe, "Ligeia" 170) as a reference for the reader to wonder what madness or state the narrator was truly in.

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A Descent into a Masculine, Allegorical Space: Gender in Edgar Allan Poe's No-Tell Tales

Estella Gutierrez-Zamano

Edgar Allan Poe is one of those great writers who posthumously achieved folkloric status in American culture for his contribution to American Gothic literature and literary history in general. His strident individuality and ability as a litterateur render him as ethereal to modern readers as the phantasmagoric characters he is so famous for creating. As a result, it can be hard to frame Poe, not merely against, but within the gyrating social context of nineteenth-century America. Few know that he weighed in during his lifetime on topics like social reform and democratic government (Marchand 26–39). Since protofeminism nested itself within “humanitarian reform” (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 339), it is unlikely that Poe was without opinion concerning nineteenth-century gender shifts. In fact, Poe believed in innate “sexual differences” and regarded female upstarts in a manner that was alternately chivalric and circumscribing (Marchand 33). He once appealed to fellow critics with “nerve enough to hang a dozen or two of them, *in terrorem*” (Marchand 33) and appears to have engaged in the figurative execution of women in his fiction. In the short stories “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” Edgar Allan Poe expresses his hostility for nineteenth-century protofeminism and reveals his complex relationship to gender by representing women as violable entities of a textual, anatomical, or elemental nature, using the safe, veiled distance of literary allegory.²³

The antagonism for protofeminism present in Poe's fiction is sourced in multiple strands of evidence that thematically relate either to gender or to his writing choices. First, as regards gender, nineteenth-century ideals of masculinity and femininity provided an abundant, confusing repertoire for an aspirational male like Poe (Barker-Benfield 50; Smith-Rosenberg 563, 571; Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 333). Gender was a maelstrom-like force during Poe's lifetime, and his career as a writer and critic entailed greater-than-average exposure to feminist ideals in circulation and to female authors entering the literary market in greater numbers (Baym 289–90).²⁴ Poe's ever-tenuous finances (Ostrom 1–7), however, meant he had to reconcile his antagonism for protofeminism with his need to solicit and retain female readers and colleagues (Richards 258–60). As a result, Poe, who even crafted a story about an ambitious female writer whose earnest naïveté gets her beheaded (Poe, “Predicament,” 333), likely found haven for his gender attacks in an imaginative landscape.²⁵ As regards Poe's writing choices, his work has cryptic, manifold meaning (Rosenheim 2–3) and a complex, ambiguous “under-current” (Poe, “Philosophy” 24), which would have made allegory the ideal means for concealing his social and gender critiques. One way critics contend with Poe's complexity is to bridge his texts in order to study his fiction comprehensively. Cynthia S. Jordan (5), Leonard W. Engel (143), and Arthur Hobson Quinn (209), for instance, find that Poe's stories “interact and comment upon one another” (Kot 399). For all of these reasons concerning gender and Poe's poetics of prose, “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” are conceived as being explicitly linked, allegorical critiques that add to the vibrant, ongoing discussion on Poe and gender.²⁶

Characterizing “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” as allegories is problematic because Poe vehemently denounces allegory in his criticism.²⁷ In a review of Nathaniel Hawthorne, he writes that “there is scarcely one respectable word to be said” about allegory (Poe, “Tale-Writing” 333) because of the irreconcilability between “aesthetic and didactic ends” (Moldenhauer 286). However, there is a single, loose thread in Poe’s disdain for allegory, and it lies in Eline Erzählung von Friedrich Fouque’s *Undine*, interestingly about a female water spirit who confounds and eventually kills her knightly husband, Huldbrand, for transferring his affections to a more servile, mortal woman.²⁸ Poe praises *Undine* for being “allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses” (Poe, “Tale-Writing” 334). Poe, it seems, appreciates *Undine*’s allegorical duplicity. With the exception of a single scene, it is indeed hard to discern the tale of miscegenation embedded in *Undine*, thus suggesting Poe’s enjoyment of Fouque’s complex, concealed examination of a timely social issue. Emerson R. Marks concludes, similar to this analysis, that in spite of his “intemperate denunciations of allegory and philosophical poetry, it is clear that Poe was grappling honestly with the crucial problem of the status of moral and cognitive values in literature” (129). Ernest Marchand, too, describes a state where Poe’s aloofness “has begun to meet with exception” (26). In fine, Poe weighs in on nineteenth-century gender shifts through a genre that affords him anonymity in full public view. Like Fouque, he uses allegory in “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” to examine gender, although what he does is peculiar and cryptic enough to be characterized as reinterpretation of the mode.²⁹

“Berenice,” from its opening, is about contradictions and binaries that set the stage for the gender antagonism that will occur from Egaeus toward his intended, Berenice, the allegorical embodiment of profeminism. The story begins with Berenice’s groom deriving “unloveliness” from “beauty,” “sorrow” from “peace,” and “evil” from “good” (Poe, “Berenice,” 171). Egaeus reminisces about his birth in the chamber of his mother’s death. He reconciles his existence in opposition to his mother’s life, a state of mind that is implicitly suggestive of the gender binary and the inverse relationship between male and female. Poe creates a psychic space that partially foreshadows Berenice’s fate, since it is an ancestral chamber that has shown itself historically unable to contain both a strong adult female and fledgling male. After he buries his mother’s memory in the glory of his own birth, Egaeus opines on the importance of what came before, the inherited aspects of his being, which arguably include traditional notions of gender roles before the profeminist movement of Poe’s reality. As such, the story begins with Egaeus declaring, “the noon of manhood found me still in the mansion of my fathers” (171), which helps to frame Egaeus’ immaturity, stagnant gender ideals, and antagonism for all that Berenice represents. His resistance resides in the polarity of his description; he is sickness, gloom, and deprivation, while she is agility, grace, and energetic ramble (172).

Though called “Berenice,” Egaeus has no interest in the tale in sharing the limelight. Berenice is conspicuously absent from the language and imagery in the opening, and when she finally is introduced as Egaeus’ cousin, she is merely opposition to Egaeus’ literary self-portrait. Egaeus is meditative while she is boisterous, unreflective activity. The binary seems innocent enough, but it establishes Egaeus as mind and Berenice as body, a common nineteenth-century precept that equated women with body, emotion, and nature and men with intellectualism, reason, and culture (Barker-Benfield xiii). However, Berenice is strangely disembodied from the story’s opening because she is physically absent and exists solely as her groom’s forced utterance: “Berenice!—I call upon her name” (Poe, “Berenice,” 172). The hyphenated emphasis is not on Berenice, but on he who does the calling. She is conjured as an image locked up in

Egaeus' memory that he praises through comparison to "Naiad," a water deity (172) a nearly undetectable parallel to Fouque's Undine. He cuts his praise short, however, to give primacy to how he feels toward what has deformed her, "a tale which should not be told" (172) or veiled reference to the evolving gender tale in American history. Egaeus faults profeminism for "pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and, in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person!" (172). Then, he renders Berenice the disintegrating sum of her ailing parts as he constructs an image of her in an increasingly deadened state—what he calls her "positive dissolution" (172)—which is really successful foreshadowing of her devolution from silent, dying outline to mental figment.

Poe devotes the entire beginning of "Berenice" to Egaeus' ramblings and hypochondria. Egaeus has a not-quite disease described as the capacity for profound attentiveness on all things excluding Berenice. This is to reinforce the idea that Egaeus represents profound "ascendancy" of the human mind (Poe, "Berenice," 172). Berenice may have her cataleptic trances, but he has the ability to "lose all sense of motion or physical existence" to, in effect, transcend the diseased and body-contingent position of women represented by Berenice (173). Then, under the guise of sharing recent reading material, Poe lists three titles by Curio, St. Austin, and Tertullian to show that what befalls Berenice, mere female body, is in lock-step with what Egaeus mentally conspires (173). The three works forecast Berenice's resurrection because they are about Christian fideism or faith in Christ's revivification (Amesbury 2). Egaeus' beliefs, though, are staunchly self-referential because they are less about Berenice's ultimate fate and more about the impact on him. As his monomania grows, he compares himself to a masculine "ocean-crag" that resists brutish forces in nature but not the "touch of a flower called Asphodel" (Poe, "Berenice," 173). Nevertheless, Berenice's comparison to a death flower rings hollow because Egaeus' pain preoccupies him more than does Berenice. He later equates Berenice's physicality with the transmogrification of her "personal identity" (174) and, though emphatic about not loving Berenice, decides to reward his ailing non-love with what he values most, himself affianced (174).

Just prior to his proposal, Egaeus describes Berenice as inanimate, inhuman, and lesser than abstraction, as well as an entity to "analyze, not as an object of love, but as the theme of the most abstruse although desultory speculation" (Poe, "Berenice," 174). In a single passage, he strips Berenice of her human framework, her sinew and sentience, and transforms her into female textuality along the lines of Eliza Richards' analysis where she describes the linkage in Poe's work between the female body and her literary progeny (262). Poe symbolizes this association in his reductive description of Berenice. Certainly, her bookish composition might be construed as what makes her compatible with Egaeus; she could be the library volume that complements his "boyhood in books" and mental malady (Poe, "Berenice," 171). However, Berenice is unacceptable in her extant form. Egaeus simply has no interest in Berenice as a flesh-and-blood woman and thus feels forced to rewrite the pages of her being. When she does finally appear as shadowy spectre, she is silence to his thunderous reflection, and as he struggles to stay focused on her, he fails to sustain interest in her interiority. He instead digresses into unnerving, exacting observation of her physical frame. It is at this point that he starts to construct his superimposed sense of Berenice to transform her into a manageable bookish form that better suits his narcissistic predilections. The insistence in his reductive construction is mirrored semantically in his repetitive use of the conjunction, "and," no less than nine times in describing Berenice's appearance (174–75). He rewrites Berenice into being through word-by-word construction as she

looms before him. She is the marginalia to his primary bookish identity that he has the simultaneous power to create and destroy as he sees fit.

It is critical that Egaeus textually constructs Berenice at the same time that he first notices the parting of her lips, her smile, and those infamous teeth. This is when the story most transparently is not about Berenice, but about how Egaeus accounts for ignoring, deconstructing, and reconstituting her in a fashion that suits his monomania. There is in Egaeus' admission of his monomania an interest in gender absolutism as if the mere acknowledgment is excusatory. He believes that burying himself in his ideological ailment frees him to look at Berenice and see in full distortion what is "pupil-less" and toothy in this woman, while ignoring the nature of his own problematic constitution (Poe, "Berenice," 175). His obsession with Berenice's teeth is two-fold. First, her teeth are an allegorical proxy for female sexuality represented in the construct of "vagina dentate" (Markus 35; Ziolkowski 13–14). The image of a tooth-laden vagina is an accompaniment to male castration anxieties and the notion of being used sexually and then eaten for gestational nourishment like the female praying mantis (Markus 35). Second, due to the vagina-mouth comparison, teeth also symbolize female literary prowess as the physiological site of expression. Poetry, in fact, once was considered the natural domain of women due to their intuitive proclivities (Richards 258). So Egaeus, a threatened male intellectual not unlike Poe, determines to rid himself of the source of his sexual and literary anxieties through forced removal of Berenice's teeth. Interestingly, the details of the extraction are not shared. Egaeus claims ignorance of what has transpired and instead experiences the horror as a backward revelation prompted by an employee of the house. His contemptible actions are recalled, rather than experienced, to focus on the "tremor" in his hands (Poe, "Berenice," 177). He is not described in real time with spade in hand, just as Berenice is not depicted in her brutally maimed state. This is done to forestall accountability and detract from the horror of Egaeus' actions.

The final scene in "Berenice" showcases Egaeus' remorse while Berenice, unable to self-nourish or express, finally appears as "ivory looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor" (Poe, "Berenice," 177). She is silenced as metonymy that waits to be swept away by Egaeus' excitable, self-referential hysteria. Egaeus upstages any possibility for learning of her welfare or prognosis because he spotlights himself trembling alone. Through Egaeus, Poe creates a male figure whose grief is meant to distract from Berenice's absence, problematic rendering, and constitution as remembered, disposable body parts. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, each man is a "sovereign subject" who possesses a woman as an object to destroy in order to achieve the selfhood delineated by the extinguished woman's otherness (165). Berenice is the object that feeds Egaeus' sovereignty, hence her failure to appear in the story as corporeality beyond Egaeus' interposed mentality. "Berenice," as such, functions as an allegorical monologue wherein Egaeus suppresses and eventually effaces even the trace of woman and the protofeminist sentiments that she represents. She is the "angel in the house" who is denied access to the literal and figurative home that she shares with Egaeus (Archibald 9).³⁰ She is excluded from her residence, the narrative, and even intact, bodily existence before being replaced by her teeth, an anatomical feature that maliciously binds her to her inability to express. She is a writer and sexual being who cannot create or desire anything from her status as male memory and forensic artifact.

Poe's hostility for protofeminism was so strong that he needed more than a single story to express his sentiments. Six years after publication of "Berenice" (Hammond 21, 37), he published "A Descent into the Maelstrom," an allegory depicting an anxious male who confronts naturally generative female sexuality and power. On its surface, the story seems to be about a

fisherman telling his male companion about a maelstrom that he barely managed to escape alive. However, masculine and feminine are represented respectively by the prematurely aged fisherman and the whirlpool. Allegorical recognition is rich and progressive because once the maelstrom is conceived as a physicalized feminine entity, what is analogous in the text about male-female sexuality rushes forth like a fantastical adolescent dream. “A Descent into the Maelstrom” is barely perceptible allegory, as praiseworthy as *Undine*, because allegoresis is not necessary to enjoy the adventure tale on the story’s surface. Nonetheless, the story pays homage to Fouque’s *Undine* by including its own special version of a powerfully vexing female water spirit, complete with a confounded Huldbrand and message of suppressed sexual and gender anxiety. Poe’s work has layers which make it something of an eddying literary maelstrom, the kind of reworked allegory to which he would have been attracted for its cryptic layers and authorial control.³¹

In its opening sequence, “A Descent into the Maelstrom” reads like a sequel to “Berenice” because of shared imagery and language. In fact, the opening evokes gender relationships because it borrows a metaphor from “Berenice.” The men from “A Descent into the Maelstrom” begin by scaling to “the loftiest crag” (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 108), a device that “let[s] us know that we have entered an allegorical realm” (Adams 52) and the natural fortification to which Egaeus compares his ravaged selfhood. In “Berenice,” Egaeus likens himself to “that ocean-crag spoken of by Ptolemy Hephestion, which steadily resisting the attacks of human violence, and the fiercer fury of the waters and winds, trembled only to the touch of the flower called Asphodel” (Poe, “Berenice,” 173). After mentioning the asphodel flower, Egaeus describes Berenice’s countenance, transformation, and effect on him. Clearly, he links asphodel to Berenice, since she is proximal when he muses on the flower. Thus, the mention of the crag is, by extension, a tangential reference to the effeminate asphodel flower to hint at the presence of a Berenice-like figure in “A Descent into the Maelstrom” who has yet to appear. The asphodel flower was used in Hellenistic culture to decorate “porte del Mortuccio” or “doorways of the dead” because it ameliorated what was terrifying about death in spite of its pale color and unassuming nature (Slaughter 911). Berenice is such a dualistic flower in Egaeus’ mind. In fact, like moth to flame, Egaeus is drawn to Berenice’s “revolution,” the contrast between what she once was and now seems to be (Poe, “Berenice,” 174). As such, Asphodel, Berenice, and the female maelstrom are associated, at once, with the male crag and his adverse, specifically a version of femininity presented as a confusing mix of beauty, nature, physicality, transformation, and threat. All of these connotations of femininity and womanhood were in circulation when the status quo began to experience seismic gender shifts during Poe’s lifetime.³²

“A Descent into the Maelstrom” opens with a fraternal set of characters, and although the first narrator remains nameless, his gender can be inferred because the fisherman’s story is a masculine rite of passage. When the fisherman, who is decidedly macho, begins his account, he speaks to his companion as someone he could have “guided [sic] on this route as well as the youngest of [his] sons” (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 108). Hence, there is in the opening of the tale the connotation of masculine legacy, male solidarity, and confirmation of man’s myth-like ability to live through terror and conquer it again through embellished, personally favorable storytelling. The fisherman speaks of fear, yet his language is riddled with adolescent titillation: “Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?” (109). What follows is veiled acknowledgment of the danger in telling the story. The fisherman explains that he has brought his listener to his near-death experience, in essence, to give corporeality and delicious precariousness to his imaginative rendering. The fisherman’s account includes elements that

coincide with Simone de Beauvoir's description of how a man achieves selfhood: "For the sailor, the sea is a dangerous woman, perfidious and difficult to conquer but that he cherishes by dint of taming it" (de Beauvoir 181). In a sense, Poe's original tale, "Berenice"; its sequel, "A Descent into the Maelstrom"; the fisherman's tale; the second narrator's tale; and the "ordinary [prior] accounts of [the] vortex" (Poe, "Maelstrom," 111) interwoven into these recitals operate by the matryoshka principle (Temple 7). They are like makeshift crags stacked upon one another so as to intensify, circulate, and veil the danger in telling. Indeed, Poe layers the various accounts such that certainty and comprehension slip in and out of sight like the ultimate literary cryptogram of which he was so fond (Sloane and Pettengell 258).

As the fisherman's listener gathers his bearings, the image of something "craggy" (Poe, "Maelstrom," 109), a masculine symbol in Poe's "Berenice," reappears in "A Descent into the Maelstrom," to herald the revealing of the Berenice-like female in the second tale. The fisherman's listener scans the landscape, settles his perception on the "very unusual" water (110), and describes the ocean below, "[T]here was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise" (110). Poe eventually abandoned a naval career, but his stint as a sailor would have familiarized him with the nautical expression, "in the teeth of the wind," which describes the risky, exhilarating orientation of being in the direct eye of a wind's force (110). Since it is an idiom and refers to the wind, not water, it is the perfect means of attributing teeth in an encrypted fashion to the maelstrom who is soon to make her appearance in the narrative. However, the fisherman stalls the revealing of Berenice-as-maelstrom by focusing on the nomenclature of the various islands (110), a moment reminiscent of when Egaeus thrills to reflect on Berenice's name before she finally appears for the first and last time intact (Poe, "Berenice," 172). There is a marked degree of semantic self-consciousness related to the naming of the various craggy islands. The old fisherman reflects, "[W]hy it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand? Do you hear any thing [sic]?" (Poe, "Maelstrom," 110), an authorial decision that brings direct but subtle attention to the echo from six years earlier when Egaeus feigns invocation of Berenice through pronounced repetition of her name as he revels in the sound of his own voice.

The fisherman and his listener in "A Descent into the Maelstrom" reach a location in their climb where they finally acquire a full, prostrate view of the maelstrom below them. The language and extended metaphor in the description of the maelstrom is the vivid realization of what Egaeus describes in "Berenice." As the maelstrom enters the enraptured listener's perception, she is "the abstraction of such being" or "the Berenice of a dream" who is etherealized before physically appearing in the narrative (Poe, "Berenice," 174). The fisherman's rapt listener is hypnotized even before he takes in the tormented, physical nature of the water's movement and the "vast bed of waters" (Poe, "Maelstrom," 110). His awe and trepidation are apparent as he inserts himself into the fisherman's account to describe the water formation before him:

Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into phrensiad convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents. (Poe, "Maelstrom," 110)

His description has the texture of frenetic sexual energy superseded by the post-coital calm of “subsided vortices” and a “surface [that] grew somewhat more smooth” (110). Then, just as the multiple “crag” references allude to “Berenice,” the fisherman’s spectator describes being mesmerized by “the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water” (110), which conjures the famous moment in “Berenice” when Egaeus becomes fixated on Berenice’s teeth and states, using eerily similar lexicon, “For these [Berenice’s teeth] I longed with a phrenzied desire” (Poe, “Berenice,” 175).

Interestingly and worth mention, in 1846, five years after “A Descent into the Maelstrom” was published, Poe alternately praises and attacks famed protofeminist Margaret Fuller in an essay where he makes special reference to a fountain that she depicts in her creative work, *Summer on the Lakes*.³³ In that essay, Poe devotes an entire section to Fuller’s appearance and, in particular, her mouth. He writes:

[T]he mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for love – when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer” (Poe, “Fuller,” 1180)

Poe fixates on a relationship between femininity and orifice, be it in water form or on the face of a real or figurative woman. According to Keetley, the male fixation with the mouth devolves into fixation on the teeth because teeth are the only aspect of the upper orifice that do not have a genital “analog” in transposition and that conjure a desire to suppress female procreativity (7), arguably the sexual and literary kind. These two kinds of feminine creativity were driving forces in the nineteenth-century feminist push for more education and greater access to means of family planning (Rowland 37; Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 334). If ever there was a time for fixation on teeth-as-symbol, nineteenth-century America with its attendant calls for gender and sexual change was such an era, and Poe was attuned to the connection.

The fisherman’s description of his actual encounter with the maelstrom begins with reference to a fraternity of absent males, including the fisherman’s brothers and a nephew considered too young to imperil. The fisherman recalls his unease at hearing the she-maelstrom. He remembers “a kind of shrill shriek” (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 116) and shares the paradox of being less comfortable in approaching the maelstrom than in his consummation of her: “It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it” (116). He describes the terror as that which first “unmanned” him (116), and thus begins the scene in the story that most overtly compares the maelstrom to the female anatomy and woman as sexual being.³⁴ Since protofeminists from the nineteenth century sought greater autonomy at work, in marriage, and as regarded their reproductive health (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 334), G. J. Barker-Benfield shows that men reacted with the kind of escapism represented in the actions of Poe’s fisherman and companion. Men of the time frequently were “divided between the free, exploitable resources of the West and the seas” (Barker-Benfield 17) because America’s unexplored frontier and the vast, open waters were considered safe havens for the practice of traditional or unbending masculinity.

Poe’s “A Descent into the Maelstrom” is a scary story of potential sexual and economic castration and also an admonition against fully realized female social and sexual equality. The maelstrom, after all, destroys the fisherman’s livelihood by swallowing up his ship, equipment, and familial fishing partners. The fisherman and his listener, nestled in a lee in the crag,

represent two reactions to raging, free-reigning female sexuality: he who lives to tell other men about the *femme fatale* and he who is titillated by the sexual possibility but opts to remain cautiously distant and intact. As the fisherman describes being in the very “jaws of the gulf,” he is delightfully explicit (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 116). In him, Poe merges death, a Gothic and personal trope (Fisher 82–86; Pruette 371), with the idea of orgasmic fulfillment. De Beauvoir similarly connects death and woman, since mother is the site of man’s birth and consequently a reminder of his sexual origination and eventual demise (188). The link between death and orgasm is characterized as part and parcel of the “male sexual experience” for Susan R. Bowers who ties male orgasm to the “underlying paradigm of all literature: the escalating tension, climax, and resolution” (12). This kind of plot-driven paradigm is especially apparent in “A Descent into the Maelstrom” but is less present in a traditional sense in Poe’s other short stories, which lends further credence to the sexual suggestiveness of this particular story. “Berenice,” for example, is not plot-driven, given what little action occurs outside of Egaeus’ reflections, but the story has gripping, action-based violence in its climax, which is the template for the entirety of its sequel, “A Descent into the Maelstrom.” In fact, during the non-stop, plot-driven movement of the maelstrom, the fisherman’s orgasmic recollection reads as a strange merging of death, divinity (as in the *giddy* feeling of the story’s opening), physical fulfillment, reckless abandon, adolescent wonder, and lastly mental and visual dominion.

The fisherman shares his felt “*wish* to explore [the maelstrom’s] depths” but later backtracks from his recount, as if the mere telling causes him to re-experience the *giddy* feeling of his original encounter (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 116). The experience is not final, however, as he moves deeper into both the maelstrom and his tale, even recalling how he hung at a strange, suspended angle above the raging water. The physics of the female whirlpool are inexplicable, monstrous, disorienting, and internally driven. She is, ironically, what de Beauvoir describes as “all interiority . . . doomed to immanence” (240). She is seemingly all powerful but is mere idealization in a masculine self-construction, since she lacks the kind of mental agency to perpetuate and restrict like the fisherman and Egaeus. This is how, despite being presented as a hyperbolic destructive force, the fisherman enfeebles her. He uses his Egaeus-like attentiveness to extricate himself from her raging mouth by holding fast to a water cask that rises to the safety of the surface due to its levity and phallic shape. Unlike the “stocks of firs and pine trees” rendered mere splinter by the maelstrom, the old fisherman is the phallus that escapes castration (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 111). He is the antithesis to Poe’s Signora Psyche Zenobia from “A Predicament,” who has no such native intellectualism or deductive, Dupin-esque logic, as evidenced by her failure to recognize the obvious mortal danger posed by the “scimitar-like minute-hand” that beheads her (Poe, “Blackwood,” 332). The sage fisherman (head still attached) notes his “amusement” before his manly escape (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 118), but not before effacing the doubly objectified she-maelstrom and taking in what “of the Moskoe-strom had been” (120). Poe’s fisherman is triumphant on all accounts, because he derives both danger and pleasure from the she-malestrom as he effaces her very existence through his superior mental abilities.

The fisherman, similar to Egaeus in “Berenice,” defangs the maelstrom and renders himself a post-orgasmic hero who delights in the water’s viscosity and delights further in her failure “now that the danger was removed” (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 120). This is a powerful parenthetical as written but really a successful male erasure of the she-maelstrom. The irony is that she was unrecognizable symbol and sublimated force of nature from her start. Like Berenice, she is countered violently by a male persona as she struggles to make even a single, definitive

appearance in the tale that bears her namesake. In effect, Berenice's teeth are removed in "Berenice," along with bodily proof of her existence, so that she can be resurrected for the reigning male subjectivity of the fisherman in "A Descent into the Maelstrom." The only difference is that, as a second-time revenant, Berenice reappears in full mutilated form as the she-maelstrom. She loses human shape and subjectivity to serve as titillating, utilitarian opposition for the two male protagonists, Poe, and the allegorical mode itself. She anchors the tale's allegorical realism but is also the fantastical force that destabilizes the literal and representative reality of the narrative. What is breathtaking fictionally about Poe's creativity is that he leaves Berenice-as-dentate strewn on the figurative floor for six years before finally resurrecting her in "A Descent into the Maelstrom." Nonetheless, she still functions as the sliver of object against which his male personas achieve self-recognition and mastery.

In her pivotal work, "Poe's Women: A Feminist Poe?" Joan Dayan finds it simplistic to conclude that "Poe turns women into objects" and asks that the discussion turn instead to "the confounding of men and women" (1).³⁵ Indeed, why is it that Poe, who "clearly understood misogyny and the male psychology in which it was rooted" (Person 137), wrote in this fashion? There actually is more to Poe's fiction than his objectification of female characters, and it lies in the fact that he also objectifies his male characters in "Berenice" and "A Descent into the Maelstrom." Lina Papadaki recently synthesized the work of Immanuel Kant with that of contemporary feminist theorists, Catharine McKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and Martha Nussbaum, to arrive at a conceptually rigorous definition of objectification. She concludes that objectification is the treatment of another such that their humanity is denied either through harm or lack of acknowledgment (32). Papadaki and Nussbaum separately detail types of objectification, and both conclude that certain types of objectification are more problematic than others. So, while Poe objectifies his female and male characters, the latter are spared the kind of complete degradation and dehumanization of their female counterparts. In fact, the narratives that house Egaeus and the fisherman leave both men intact and ready to narrate another tale in relatively good health and vigor. In contrast, Berenice exists exclusively as a masculine keepsake, and the she-maelstrom is reduced to evaporated recollection.

Poe's depictions of Berenice and the she-maelstrom involve all seven means of objectification used in contemporary feminist theory (Nussbaum 257). Both female entities are used instrumentally to achieve Poe's anti-feminist ends. Both women lack self-determination and agency. Although Berenice makes disturbing sounds at one point and the maelstrom erupts with natural energy, both women are inert because their movements lack a direct, inherent quality; their momentum and activity always are related secondhand by a primary male persona. In terms of fungibility, Berenice is synonymous with her teeth, and the she-maelstrom's very existence is premised on her interchangeability with a dissimilar natural phenomenon. Both female characters are violable because they were fashioned to lack bodily and mental integrity. In fact, their violation propels their respective narratives forward so much so that the climax of each story coincides with their extinguishment or incapacitation. As concerns ownership, Poe owns these female characters insofar as he profits from their creation. Finally, the respective interiority or inner lives of Berenice and the she-maelstrom are not shared, experienced, or even considered in the respective narratives, which is the most problematic kind of objectification. Nussbaum stresses that not "all types of objectification are [sic] equally objectionable" (1995, 256). The worst kind is what Berenice and the she-maelstrom experience because, as stated by Papadaki, "[They are] reduced to the status of a thing, something with no autonomy or subjectivity that exists solely to be used, and possibly also violated and abused, by others" (21). This is readily

apparent in “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” because both female characters fail to possess or enact the dimensionality of their male counterparts. The women are, in many respects, more akin to props and setting than fellow characters in each of the tales.

Objectification also occurs for Poe’s male characters, but it is at the meta-level of the narrative, not in the literal progression of the stories. Egaeus and the fisherman objectify the women in their tales, but there is no such corresponding character that subordinates each of them. Their objectification instead comes from Poe himself at the level of authorial intent. It is only when the embedded layers of their allegories are discerned that they can be conceived as objects; otherwise, Poe grants each man basic autonomy and subjectivity. How he succeeds in objectifying them is by making them perpetrators of his intended female objectification. In so doing, he eliminates the need to implicate or sully himself. He employs this same technique in many of his other fictions by writing in a second, female-friendly male character against which to vilify his sexist male protagonist. For example, Roderick Usher’s scapegoat in Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” is his narrating college friend (178). The French sailor in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” despite knowing that his pet has bludgeoned and dismembered an innocent mother and daughter, fully blames his homicidal orangutan (25–26), and the listener on the crag does his best to demarcate his perceptions from those of the macho fisherman. And Poe, too, has his unknowing henchmen. In “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” Egaeus and the physics-savvy fisherman serve as personal scapegoats in maiming, killing, and revivifying women in a manner that suits Poe’s hostility for protofeminism. The sexism of each of these male protagonists is so profound and transparent that they camouflage the delicate, nearly imperceptible control of their mentally adroit, rhetorically capable creator and man-above-men, Poe the Author.

Poe uses “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” as a literary stage and gender as a trope to attack nineteenth-century feminism and what he perceives to be the enervated, future role of men. His male characters in “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” seem like male polarities, but their differences are superficial. Poe situates Egaeus in a library steeped in “monastic thought and erudition” (Poe, “Berenice,” 171); Egaeus sits and reflects fully riveted on his books, and in him Poe creates a well-read, mentally superior male figure. The fisherman in “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” in contrast, is resilient, commonsensical, and physically adept. He appears to be brutish manliness to Egaeus’ refined intellectualism. On closer inspection, however, Egaeus and the fisherman are practically identical male representations because they subordinate the women in their respective tales through physical dominion stemming from their superior mental abilities. Indeed, Poe equates being male with having an innate, superior level of intelligence. Thus, Egaeus feigns an unknowing, afflicted quality throughout his tale, but he ultimately understands the gendered logic behind the death of female prey and the corresponding animation of the male predatory ego: “Here died my mother. Herein was I born” (171). The relationship is inversely proportional and explains Egaeus’ decision to sustain his monomania through Berenice’s calculated dissolution and climactic maiming. The fisherman similarly describes how the “cessation of the wind” and its toothiness (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 117) restore his “self-possession” (119). Given his restored mental faculties and renewed autonomy, the fisherman is thus able to resist the whirlpool’s suction and adopt the identity of a hero predicated on the dead she-maelstrom.

The likeness between Egaeus and the fisherman lies in Poe’s *performance of the masculine*. In a recent analysis of Poe’s poetics, Richards finds that he “performs a ‘feminine’ poetry which simultaneously mirrors and upstages” female poets (259). In other words, Poe composes better

poetry than natural female poets through dogged mimicry and control. Richards further finds that Poe just as readily disbands his feminine poetry-writing in composing his critical reviews “to establish an affective tie with the ‘race of critics’ who ‘are masculine—men’” (274). Using gender as a trope and masculinity and femininity as roles, Poe crafts a hybrid position in “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” to subordinate his female characters but grant center stage to the contemptible, intelligence-based masculinity of Egaeus and the fisherman. The mental superiority and self-interest of these male characters is so extensive that their subjectivities overshadow Poe’s complicity in creating emblematic women who exist as mere objects for marauding masculinity. Poe, however, is an unmistakable allegorical layer in these texts. The women are stand-ins for burgeoning feminism, and the men represent an intellectualized masculine ideal; but Poe is the supra-embodiment of his own conception of literary masculinity. He is, like L. Frank Baum’s Wizard of Oz, as capable of being a wise fisherman, lay dental surgeon, or masculine and feminine ideal as he is of lording over such an imaginative landscape as the “Great and Terrible” Poe (Baum 127).

There are several contextual or historical bases for the argument that Poe, in writing “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Malestrom,” carves out an idiosyncratic literary space that bolsters his sense of himself as a breadwinner, sexual being, and cultural contributor in a way that is more misanthropic than exclusively misogynistic, although there is clearly a gender hierarchy in his literary staging.³⁶ In the 1800s, American men and women struggled to wade through a sea of contradictory gender expectations (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 333–34; Rosenberg 133–34).³⁷ Charles E. Rosenberg describes a tug-of-war between aggressive masculinity and unrealistic self-restraint (139–44), and, according to Michael Kimmel, the nineteenth-century ideal of the Self-Made Man asked that men develop stridently individual identities that merged economic, sexual, and social power (23).³⁸ These conflated expectations made living in nineteenth-century America a pressure cooker (Barker-Benfield xii; Rosenberg 140, 145) for an erudite, aspirational male like Poe, who found himself in a sexually charged, cutthroat environment.³⁹ The typical male reaction to this sea of change was “harshness,” (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 356), “repudiation of the feminine” (Kimmel 41), and the first male identity crisis that sought control from “somewhere” (Kimmel 31). Poe’s “somewhere” (Kimmel 31), it turns out, is a fictional landscape of homicidal men and barely recognizable female allegory set in a time that Poe preferred. In fact, the action in “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Malestrom” is written in “recollections” to show that Poe favors a time prior to the dawn of American feminism (Poe, “Berenice,” 176). Indeed, Egaeus and the fisherman are bolstered by stories steeped in nostalgic idealization, a “somewhere” (Kimmel 31) in time that preceded blue-stocking feminism.

That Poe erected himself as the ultimate Self-Made Man in his fictions, “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” by objectifying female and male characters alike is evident in his encrypted presence and unwavering authorial control.⁴⁰ The openings of “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom” are rife with philosophical contradiction and playful inversion that are code for Poe’s presence. In “Berenice,” Egaeus comments on what is similar between a rainbow, a stand-in for misery, and the horizon. In even nature’s splendor, Egaeus has the capacity to find ugliness, and he laments this ability. The moment also speaks in veiled form to the power of the intellect and imagination to transform intact, natural presences as diverse as rainbows, horizons, and even men and women. In this seemingly meandering self-reflection, Poe resides in Egaeus, and he lets it be known that the space of the story is subject to the inversions he sees fit to produce. He references the exceptionality of his dominion when he aligns himself,

again through Egaeus, with “a race of visionaries,” an exaltation of self that is carried out in perfect concealment (Poe, “Berenice,” 171). Furthermore, he explains that the material world is collapsed into visions and that his visionary world has taken the place of what is real (171–72). This reflection directly reveals how the fiction functions because Poe collapses the reality of his material existence into an imaginative space where he can embody his fully actualized selfhood and manliness.

“A Descent into the Maelstrom,” like “Berenice,” is written with Poe’s presence embedded just beneath the multiple layers of representation. A quotation by Joseph Glanvill about God’s singular, providential power precedes the narrative and seems to forecast the internal magic of the maelstrom, nature, and God. However, in the fictive space of the story, there is another dominion at work, namely the literary power and psychology of Poe as author. As such, the maelstrom encountered in the story is almost more wondrous and perplexing than nature’s version because it is a mixture of endless connotation: the feminine, natural, sexual, culturally loaded, immanent, externalized, and even male (as in the *male-strom*). All of these dualistic literary and cultural themes are ingredients in Poe’s construction of an ideal, unique male self. Poe plays with his virtual presence by using the pronoun, “We,” to introduce “A Descent into the Maelstrom” (108). “We” connotes unity of purpose and mind, but Poe follows the pronoun with distance and a layered dialectic. The fisherman cannot begin the tale; his listener observes that “the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak” (108). Since the listening companion’s knowledge of what happened to the fisherman is nil, who, then, is telling the story? Who is the real, creative maelstrom? Indeed, Poe is present as reflection and rhetoric woven just beneath the story’s adventurous veneer.

“A Descent into the Maelstrom” includes in its first few passages a self-conscious moment where god-like Poe appears puppeteering the faint outlines of Berenice and Egaeus. The fisherman describes how six hours in the throes of the maelstrom aged him beyond recognition. He is not the old man that he seems to be, in keeping with everything in this unstable fictive environment. The companion pays close attention as the fisherman describes himself by explaining that “it took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves” (Poe, “Maelstrom,” 109). The description is really of transmutation, the capacity to be rendered monstrous and unrecognizable to even the self. The fisherman’s transformation is reminiscent of Berenice’s revolution from woman with “once jetty hair” to someone unrecognizable (Poe, “Berenice,” 175), except that the fisherman strips away a layer of textuality by revealing his transformation *to* another rather than having it revealed *by* another, as is the case for Berenice. Poe uses the fisherman’s moment in the mirror to play with the slippery existence of reality, gender, and determinism in the land of his imagination. At once, the fisherman is that wretched rainbow and horizon. He is the inversion that Poe forces him to be and a strange intermix of masculinity, experience, innocence, and strains of Berenice. He also is the main storyteller, half of a larger tale that he narrates with an unnamed companion, and an inferior male object onto which Poe transmits his hyper-masculine literary intentions. He is limb and nerve tissue on Poe’s Self-Made Man.

In writing “Berenice” and “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” Poe engages in what Adrienne Rich refers to as “re-vision,” defined as “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (18). He uses his imaginative power to challenge what it means to be masculine and feminine by outdoing everyone else in Poe-land; but contrary to the camp of criticism that reads feminism in Poe’s fiction, what Poe does in these two stories is regressive, self-serving, gratuitously damaging, and even hierarchical.⁴¹ The

impetus behind Rich's construct of "re-vision" is a literary means by which women can survive and thrive materially and culturally, and for Jordan, Poe engages in feminist re-vision in his detective stories by killing off old notions of gender and replacing them with androgyny (5).⁴² The problem is that, while Poe looks back in each of these stories to critically examine and utilize gender, he returns to what Rich warns against: "the myth of the masculine artist and thinker," a conception of the artist as "a devouring ego" and selfish male who subordinates everything else to his artistic intents (23). He satirizes through Egaeus and the fisherman the emotive valence and depth that could accompany the real "price of masculine dominance" (25). Indeed, Egaeus feigns remorsefulness for Berenice's mutilation and the fisherman mimes terror and admiration for the maelstrom, but neither man offers authentic "fatalistic grief" (Rich 25) for the women who are distorted and extinguished to help them stage their masculine histrionics. Their grief is experienced instead as performance, rather than as authentic emotion and accountability.

The re-visioning in Poe's short fictions, "Berenice" and "A Descent into the Maelstrom" ultimately lacks a "woman's story" (Person 138) and fails to resurrect Poe as a feminist vanguard of his time, but the re-visionist element has surprising potential. This would not seem possible from two stories that renounce profeminism so staunchly that their concluding landscapes offer total female genocide. Nonetheless, Poe's skill at composition transcends the microcosm that he creates where women face torturous, certain extinction and men prevail alone and utterly virile. Poe uses each of these stories to express his disdain for equal, female expressiveness and sexuality, but ironically the potency of his pen reveals the Janus-faced nature of art. He inadvertently highlights the distinction between form and content by showing contemptible content executed through admirable, near-perfect form. He illuminates the destructive and generative halves of imaginative endeavor. In fact, Poe's work and aesthetic mode succeed, if spitefully, in paving the way for feminist survival. He, in a sense, presciently decodes the constructed nature of gender and uses it as a literary device in the most amenable and constructed space of all, literature, and the fertile ground of imagined, representative reality. His use of allegory and merging of the fictional and real through controlled, complex layering model for modern writers a more gender-fluid world that, in the right hands, could sustain feminism and transform reality. Indeed, Poe shows that it is possible to recast gender and create new spaces to which female revenants would actually desire to return . . . with their teeth, subjectivity, and power solidly intact.

Notes

²³ In defining allegory, Carolyn Van Dyke stresses that nuanced understanding of the construct can be contentious but allows for overlap in understanding it in a “cursory” fashion (17). Though entire books have attempted to attenuate the slippery nature of allegory, there is basic agreement in referring to it as a literary form whose actual meaning is different from its surface meaning. Angus Fletcher writes, “In the simplest terms, allegory says one thing and means another” (2). In a near-verbatim attempt to encapsulate what constitutes allegory, Jon Whitman offers, “In the traditional formula, it says one thing, and means another” (2).

²⁴ James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand share a collection of essays that reflect the connection between nineteenth-century publishing trends, greater female authorship, and the augmented public role of women in the United States.

²⁵ One critic reads this story of a female beheading, Poe’s “A Predicament,” as a cleverly veiled “tirade against Margaret Fuller,” who achieved full-fledged literary and feminist fame with the 1845 publication of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (McNeal 206).

²⁶ “A Descent into the Malestrom,” in particular, has been understudied in a feminist context in preference for analyses that treat it as a straightforward adventure tale (e.g., Gerard M. Sweeney), while “Berenice,” “Morella,” “Ligeia,” “The Black Cat,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and Poe’s detective stories have served as recurrent, primary texts in feminist readings.

²⁷ Sam S. Baskett similarly reads Poe’s “Eleonora” as an allegory meant to elucidate Poe’s poetics and evoke some of the power and beauty of “Kubla Khan.”

²⁸ In addition to his pronouncements concerning allegory, Poe had strong opinions about originality in composition; yet he seems to have found inspiration in Fouque’s *Undine*, which was published in 1811 when he was just a toddler. Brett Zimmerman (2005) demonstrates a direct connection between Poe’s “The Black Cat” and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s treatment of witchcraft and the punishment of women. The preferences expressed by Poe in his criticism of other authors were perhaps too hard to adhere to in his own creative endeavors.

²⁹ These two Poe stories are like the multi-layered “criss-crossing” allegory described by Maureen Quilligan (28) that tend “to flourish in periods in which the conditions, values, and assumptions of the everyday real world have been called into question” (Don Adams 49). Against this unstable, socio-historical backdrop, Poe fashioned two related but unique narratives.

³⁰ The “angel in the house” is a term for the ideal Victorian woman, selfless and submissive, and is based on Coventry Patmore’s popular 1854 poem of the same name that was written to describe the perfection of his wife and marriage.

³¹ For an extended discussion on cryptography in general and what is termed Poe’s “cryptographic imagination” or “secrecy in writing,” see Shawn James Rosenheim’s book, which deals with Poe’s later works, including his detective stories and “The Gold-Bug” (2).

³² Ellen C. DuBois situates protofeminism’s initial stirrings in the early nineteenth century because feminist activism came into being through the leadership of “antislavery women” (54). For an extended discussion on how abolitionism informed and contributed to American feminism, see DuBois’ work for an analysis of the suffrage movement and women’s rights in American history.

³³ Keeping Thomas H. McNeal’s analysis of “A Predicament” in mind, Margaret Fuller appears to have been a favorite target for Poe in his fictive and critical writings. Bell Gale Chevigny’s biography of Margaret Fuller includes an 1845 passage where Poe again describes Fuller’s

appearance in excruciating detail, including a description of the emotional expression in her eyes as “fine phrenzy” (503).

³⁴ Joseph J. Moldenhauer interprets the “going down” in Poe’s work as developmental stasis and as more psychosexual than straightforward sexual depiction (295). He views Poe’s artistic climaxes, where his dramatic murderers or misogynists confess their crimes and physically swoon, as mimicking a return to the womb (295). His analysis supports the notion that what is allegorical in Poe’s work is multi-layered and complex enough for variant allegoresis.

³⁵ Joan Dayan refers to objectification as a simplistic undertaking (1), but recent work by Martha Nussbaum and Lina Papadaki show that objectification is a complex, highly contextual construct. Nussbaum theorizes that objectification may be accomplished through any combination of seven means: (a) instrumentality, (b) denial of autonomy, (c) inertness, (d) fungibility, (e) violability, (f) ownership, and (g) denial of subjectivity (Nussbaum 257). For an extended discussion that draws on Immanuel Kant’s writings on sexual objectification, see Nussbaum’s essay. Papadaki, more recently, expands on the work of Kant and Nussbaum to arrive at a nuanced, more restrictive understanding of objectification.

³⁶ In his biography of Poe, J. Gerald Kennedy provides evidence for the extended argument that Poe’s misanthropy may have been informed by his problematic relationship to his wealthy, aristocratic foster father, his many failed romances, and his inability to merge his literary, economic, and masculine ideals through ownership of a literary journal (19–58). Lorine Pruette’s psychoanalytic investigation of Poe also traces the deprivation and tragedy that influenced his abbreviated life and work.

³⁷ Frances B. Cogan shows that multiple competing ideals of womanhood, such as the traditionalist Cult of True Womanhood and more progressive Real Womanhood ideal, were in circulation in America during the nineteenth century (16). In Kimmel’s historical analysis, three masculine ideals pervaded nineteenth-century American culture: the Christian Gentleman, Heroic Artisan, and Self-Made Man. The Self-Made Man ideal eventually eclipsed its two predecessors (9).

³⁸ Kimmel’s Self-Made Man represented a move away from the kind of manhood defined by something palpable (9). The Christian Gentleman was defined by land ownership, and the Heroic Artisan derived manhood from workplace autonomy and the quality of his craftsmanship. In contrast, the ideal of the Self-Made Man required men to constantly prove their manhood because it was conceived as a confluence of ambition, aggressiveness, mobility, and social and economic standing. It is no coincidence that the Self-Made Man emerged parallel to the emerging capitalist market in America (Kimmel 22). The Self-Made Man had to the freedom to self-define the details of his success, but such freedom occurred in a volatile marketplace and social environment. Thus, the Self-Made Man had both the opportunity and the responsibility of defining his tenuous manhood in an ever-shifting economy and culture.

³⁹ Similar to Dawn Keetley’s reading that Poe’s work reflects hostility for pregnant women and their procreativity, Joseph Church argues that Poe was a product of his temporality and explores the full extent of Poe’s misogyny, which contrasts with many contemporary attempts to derive feminism from Poe’s fictional writings.

⁴⁰ While James W. Gargano argues that Poe is utterly distinct from his problematic characters, he does, similar to this analysis, credit Poe with “deliberate craftsmanship” and the ability to leave his narrators “to flounder in torment[,]” which he “sees beyond” (181). In this analysis, Poe’s ability to “see beyond” the purview of his problematic male protagonists is carried out to

implicate them in his literary malice and misogyny without appearing himself to be the mastermind and accomplice.

⁴¹ There are two camps of criticism in the extant work on Poe and gender. In the first camp are those who cast Poe's treatment of women as misogyny and troubling, persistent objectification (Church; Elbert; Keetley; McNeal; Weekes), but there also is a growing body of criticism from those who hope to recast Poe's work through feminist re-readings (Dayan; Jordan; Kot).

⁴² Jordan argues that Poe's feminism developed over time and stresses that his character, Roderick Usher, is a prototype for the fully rendered androgyny and feminism of the later character, Detective Dupin (5). "The Fall of the House of Usher" was published in 1839, while "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the first of his detective stories, was published two years later in 1841. If Poe was intent on creating "a new caretaker of social and political order" in Dupin (Jordan 5), then the publication of "A Descent into the Maelstrom" is problematic for Jordan's thesis because it also was published in 1841. This means Dupin's first published appearance was concurrent with the macho fisherman's appearance in "A Descent into the Maelstrom."

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