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Research Question: To what extent may the unfavorable viewpoints of critics on E. A. Poe's use of horror and social satire in his stories be refuted by examples from and analysis of the author's eight short stories?

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ABSTRACT

With numerous short stories and poems, Edgar Allan Poe is considered to be the piquant and astounding milestone of the American Literature. Yet, his style and achievements have always been interpreted antagonistically by large numbers of critics. This study analyzes the features unique to Edgar Allan Poe in his short stories “Murders In The Rue Morgue”, “The Fall of The House of Usher”, “A Tale of Jerusalem”, “The Pit and The Pendulum”, “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”, “A Cask Of Amonillado”, “The Masque of Red Death” and “The Man That Was Used Up” while refuting to chosen examples of negative reviews about Edgar Allan Poe.

Due to the fact that Edgar Allan Poe is well-known for his usage horror, satire, humor and fiction in his short stories, these qualities have been criticized mostly by many writers and philosophers as well. In this sense, the scope of the study will be sharpened on how these techniques are used in his short stories to make them nonpareil and what was Edgar Allan Poe’s authorial intention while utilizing these attributes in his works. At this point the analysis of the characters, themes and plot will be prioritized compared to the language and style that Edgar Allan Poe uses in his texts.

Since the criticism against Poe focus on the usefulness of such features in his short stories and how they intimidate the reader from the text, the study proves that the gap between Poe and the reader is a simple issue of reciprocal misunderstanding which is proven to be artificial and bogus with examples and facts from his short stories.

(271 Words)

I. Introduction

“The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?”

– Edgar Allan Poe

Achieving approbation regards to him to be the inventor of detective fiction merely after his early death, Edgar Allan Poe created a universe of hysterical mysteries harmonized with melancholy and demise, whose gates are rarely susceptible to a handful of people that abided the so called horror and desolation in his masterpieces and examined these compositions to the very core of their substratum. Yet, these masterpieces, mostly “*The Raven*” and “*Murders in the Rue Morgue*” to be humbly specific, had been sometimes considered an altered imagination of a mad-man with genius-level intellect due to the complexity of architecture he mainly built in his short stories. In this sense, a lynchpin to understand the depth of Poe’s literacy would often be trying to perceive the world upside down in order to achieve his self-destructive comedy.

The early works of Edgar Allan Poe, while primitive and amateur to some, contained traces not only of his style and language but also of the themes and purpose that he chose to hide within a world of imagination perplexed with his interest in cryptography and non-humorous laughter. Unlike the rest of the writers of his time, Poe transcended Romanticism to an ultimate extent that he utterly reached the movement that he himself pioneered: Dark Romanticism, Horror and Detective Fiction. Despite the fact that Poe’s works may seem isolated from textbook essential qualities of perfect literature such as social criticism and so, they are far beyond social criticism whilst demonstrating a more pragmatic perspective. Similarly, though, Poe and other social critics may not only tend to influence but also awaken the crowd while covering themselves and provoking thinking via the utilization of a well-

composed language in every aspect, Edgar Allan Poe will always be the “Non-Conformist boy of social criticism”, him sharpening focus on rather minor humanitarian occasions which also correspond with the conditions and obstacles he came across in his poor life.

Praised along with H.P Lovecraft’s “*The Call of Cthulhu*” and R.L.B. Stevenson’s “*Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*”, most of Edgar Allan Poe’s works such as “*A Cask of Amontillado*” and “*The Masque of the Red Death*” a de-facto in use of Macabre¹, the quality of having a grim or ghastly atmosphere. The Macabre in Poe’s short stories² are commonly used in depth, to describe the corruption of social institutions and systems, deceit of relationships, the putrefaction of traditions and the phoniness and unjustness in discriminations in the society.

Nevertheless, Poe was always criticized both positively and negatively, and continues to be criticized even in today’s world of 21st century as his stories are unique and original in their respective field of study. Thus the focus of this study will be the analysis of various short stories written by Edgar Allan Poe and discussion the extent to which the negative approaches to his writings are justifiable.

II. Litigation Of The Enigma

In contemporary popular culture, Edgar Allan Poe is always known for his short stories like “*The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*” and “*The Man That Was used Up*” with only two exceptions from his poetry like “*The Raven*” and “*Annabel Lee*”.

Undoubtedly, it is only natural for Poe to receive so many negative criticisms regarding the essence of his short stories. The main issue that mostly gathered unfavorable reviews in his works is the use of horror and dark romantic aspects in his short stories while reflecting human nature. Yet, the detailed analysis proves that the use of horror provided the essential

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macabre>

² <http://www.online-literature.com/poe/>

quality in Poe's literature which claims his uniqueness. In this sense, many of the negative criticisms can be refuted by giving an extensive number of examples from Poe's stories.

Most of the criticisms focus on the fact that Poe was over influenced by his own soul which is described as "before puberty"³. Yet, in many of his short stories the concepts of maturity and human nature are indirectly given, masqueraded by the aspect of horror. First of all, in "*The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*"⁴ the protagonist of the story is able to spot there was something wrong with all the people around him, even with Monsieur Maillard. Not only does his appalling silence during the talks of "insane aristocrats" proves that the protagonist is indirectly putting forward a solemn seriousness despite all the laughter about the insane but also shows that he is mature enough to perceive and respect the minorities and disabled in a crowd where he symbolizes the minority. Thus, the very protagonist that Poe creates expresses an ultimate degree of maturity and a reciprocal empathy with those around him to clarify the misconception in that condition with relative ease as he had sensed that Monsieur Maillard is at the peak of insanity for using such methods like:

*"Giving corns to ones who act like chicken"*⁵

Secondly, the actualization of Prince Prospero in "*The Masque of Red Death*"⁶ authenticates post pubescence⁷ that is considered to be lacking in most of Poe's short stories. As Prince Prospero is sagaciously feasting while neglecting the presence of such pestilence as "*Red Death*", one of the dauntless demeanors of the maturity could be seen, and are also sarcastically criticized by Poe himself, as Prince Prospero puts himself in the shoes of a godlike figure as he is mesmerized by the illusion that the thing he craves for is the "truth" since he is the major authority in his kingdom of dissolution. Yet, the dominions under

³ See Appendix 3 , Appendix 11

⁴ Poe, 613-628

⁵ Poe, 615

⁶ Poe, 443-458

⁷ See Appendix 8

Prospero's court are another indication of existing maturity in the story as the phony masquerades of the adult world are teased as:

“When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys.”⁸

Not only does seclusion and self reeducation of Prospero expose the subterfuge of the adult world but also symbolically represent the fear of death in human nature especially in older age when maturity becomes indispensable to individual. As Prospero spies the devastation of “Red Death” even in the people closest to him, his actualization of his past mistakes occur to re-educate him to an extent that Prospero starts to feel fear of death and thus, isolates himself to eternally escape from the only event in human nature, death, which is ironically inevitable. In the depth of Prospero, the real seed of destruction that was dormant until then was rather the revenge of life against injustice than a mere fear of death since a godlike figure like Prospero would also find a way to cheat death as well. Since Prospero is dismayed by the coup de grâce of the very life he spent with injustice and gluttony, his self-isolation is a delusion to protect himself from this, which eventually proved to be his weakness as it is metaphorically said that he died at the very moment he sees the “Red Death”.⁹ In this sense, “The Masque of Red Death” is also a philosophic short story that reflects the voluptuous human nature, unlike Poe was criticized and was seen as neither a profound philosopher nor a greater genius but rather seen as the greater charlatan of the two.¹⁰

Finally, the perception of reckoning and accounting for mistakes apply for the aspect of maturity¹¹ with its negative postures in “The Cask of Amontillado”¹² in the events between

⁸ Poe, 438

⁹ Poe, 442

¹⁰ See Appendix 3

¹¹ See Appendix 7, Appendix 8

Montressor and the unfortunate victim, Fortunato. Fortunato's abortive burial is materialization of the Montressor's wrath as a mature individual since he had absolutely shown no tolerance to Fortunato's behavior since Fortunato chooses to have fun even in the slightest moment and is reluctant to pay his debts. The well-planned act of divine revenge proves the presence of maturity in the story since Montressor had shown an impressive proficiency in deceiving Fortunato and managing to easily manipulate and take advantage of his weakness to boast about himself. Only when Montressor chains Fortunato to the very walls of the catacombs, Fortunato had to face the bitter truth of the mature world that each and every mistake is a bringer of doom. His late epiphany tells him he is able to think and thus must be able to see the consequences of his actions before taking them. Therefore, Fortunato acts too slowly to follow the life to account for his mistakes in the serious world of maturity, only to be mercilessly exterminated for insulting Montressor. Yet, maturity can again be seen since the impunity of punishment is considered to be necessary by Montressor to have a perfect revenge so that he could restore his own self-esteem which was impaired and crushed by Fortunato. That's why the actions of Montressor could only be seen natural and unique to the world of maturity for they are explained as very right and just like the justice and retaliation of God by Montressor as:

– *“For the love of God, Montressor!” said Fortunato.*¹³

– *“Yes,” I said. “For the love of God!”*¹⁴

As Montressor makes sure that Fortunato is trapped to suffer for his ignoble ignorance for a whole eternity, he hastily makes his way out of the catacombs with a dignified daunt

¹² Poe, 733-739

¹³ Poe, 738

¹⁴ Poe, 738

only to prove that he is mature enough to grasp the fact that what he has done was, although evil and abominable, is ultimately necessary.

On the other hand, Poe is usually criticized because of the fact that the social criticism in his stories is either not existing or too superficial and shallow to be even considered “*social criticism*”¹⁵. In fact, many of Poe’s short stories are great examples of social criticism that even reflect our world today, only to be misunderstood perfunctory in his stories, since Poe demonstrates an allegoric illustration of the demise in the multifarious branches the system in all societies.

First and foremost, the crystal clear examples of social criticism can be seen in¹⁶ “*A Tale of Jerusalem*”¹⁷ in the conversation between Abel-Phittim, Buzi-Ben-Levi, Simeon and Pharisee. In this conversation, Poe creates an allegory over Abel-Phittim that criticizes conventional and conformist ignorance in the society and urges the reader to think about it by his iconic sentence as:

“Let us not question the motives of the Philistine”.¹⁸

As Abel-Phittim continues his speech, further depth of Poe’s social criticism is put on sharper focus as the society being corrupted and filled with deception and sordid individuals since Abel-Phittim, although he is a supporter of the current order, ironically says :

“For to-day we profit for the first time by his avarice or by his generosity...”¹⁹

Thus, Abel-Phittim is a typical figure of the society rather than an actual character that acts to represent the abused gizmos in the society’s mechanism that is observed from Edgar

¹⁵ See Appendix 6, Appendix 9, Appendix 4

¹⁶ See Appendix 1

¹⁷ Poe, 123-126

¹⁸ Poe, 124

¹⁹ Poe, 124

Allan Poe's perspective which provenly is a non-conformist approach so that the flaws of the system can be fixed.

Poe does not only criticize matters of individual's perspective but also scopes on the general order and social differences, mainly class distinction in societies. In "*A Tale of Jerusalem*", Poe expresses his disregard in this matter with Buzi-Ben-Levi's dialogue with a Roman which is described as "*noble on purpose*"²⁰ so that Poe tries to emphasize the fact that people of higher class can shout and even order to the ones in lower classes. Alongside, they could also question them and act as if the lower class people always acted improperly to the conduct of the society as the Roman directs Buzi-Ben-Levi this question in an accusing manner with utter anger:

"Is it thus you evince your gratitude to our master Pompeius, who, in his condescension, has thought fit to listen to your idolatrous importunities?"²¹

By saying this, Poe makes a social criticism both on class distinction and freedom of choice, specifically the freedom of belief and religion that is mostly abused in the society, and described by Karl Marx as "*the opiate of masses*"²² to manipulate them for greater mischief. The questioning of God, religion and Satan is further flaunted with Pharisee's speech to Buzi-Ben-Levi after the inquisition of the Roman with some pinpoint accurate questions such as

"(...) who is the God Phoebus? - whom doth the blasphemmer invoke?"²³

This questioning carries on as Pharisee lists divergent names for evil, like in "*Dagon*" written by H.P.²⁴ Lovecraft, so that to describe and delineate the chaotic environment of the society in religion where people cannot be sure what to believe in. In the end, the illumination

²⁰ Poe, 124

²¹ Poe, 124

²² <http://atheism.about.com/od/weeklyquotes/a/marx01.htm>

²³ Poe, 124

²⁴ <http://www.dagonbytes.com/thelibrary/lovecraft/dagon.htm>

of the ignorant in the society is provoked by Poe by Abel-Phittim's prolonged enlightenment about the Temple and them doing as he portrays his feelings saying:

*“No more shall we feast upon the fat of the land – no longer shall our beards be odorous with frankincense - our loins girded up with fine linen from the Temple”*²⁵

where he calls “*fine linen from the Temple*” to create a paradox, thus clarify the despair hidden within this event.

Secondly, Poe rallies more direct criticisms on social structure including rights of insane people, the crime committed under insanity and circumstances in asylums in his short story “*The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*”.²⁶ To begin with, Poe strictly focuses on methods that are used to cure insane patients as a means of social criticism of the asylum conditions, as methods in the story are equally inhumane as the asylums in Poe's day. Poe uses the very title of the short story to convey this message to the reader and he makes fun of the titles of “doctor” and “professor” coming up with the treatment of “*Covering a person with Tar, and then chicken feathers*”²⁷. With this title, Poe not only beleaguers the spurious titles elevated by the self-discriminative society but also parodies the inhumane atmosphere in his society with a sense of humor and sarcasm rather than harsh criticisms and depictions. Furthermore, the methods are delineated as sanguinary and tyrannical when the protagonist marvels Monsieur Maillard's “*Therapy of Soothing*”²⁸ since it disrupts the serenity of a human rather than restoring it when a person acting like a chicken is fed with corns and how does it become so popular over all the asylums “*Maison De Santé*”²⁹ in France. While not telling the wardens and the lunatic had changed places from the very start of the story, Poe even enacts the class system of societies and their behavior so to prove that

²⁵ Poe, 125

²⁶ See Appendix 2

²⁷ Poe, 626/627

²⁸ Poe, 614

²⁹ Poe, 613

they are in fact idiotic when even a proficient psychologist, the protagonist, have not been able to figure out whether the crowd he is in are aristocrats of upper classes or not. In this sense, Poe criticizes this class' erratic behavior while the humiliating people as identically insane as the one of the lunatics acting as if he were a teapot. A slight criticism against punishing of insane is foreshadowed at the end of the story, where the protagonist, learns that Monsieur Maillard was the original creator of the "*Soothing system*"³⁰ and turned out to be a lunatic in a rebellion of patients, and says that he has much to learn about "*The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*".³¹

Finally, while transcending between social criticism and horror, which has always been bombarded as being too vulgar in his stories,³² Poe demonstrates horror while presenting the social criticism in "*The Pit and The Pendulum*"³³ which in fact is much closer to real life than it is thought. As the protagonist endures the torrents of torture mechanism administered by the Spanish Inquisition, the horror used in the descriptions of torture scenes and the pendulum is mostly utilized since Poe should maintain the features of Macabre to cause a greater impact with his criticisms. In this sense, the agony suffered by the protagonist is a realization of the minor problems of time in the society as the issue of criminal rights under human rights was at turmoil at those present conditions in Poe's society. In addition to that, these torments are considered to criticize the public health care issue in those times since it was very atrocious and had a great impact on Poe since he lost his wife because of the poor health conditions and he also himself suffered from tuberculosis as well.³⁴ At this point, this provides a real example to the fray how Poe has criticized the social flaws that affect his career as a writer and his life. In this sense, Poe's social criticism is not necessarily free from

³⁰ Poe, 624

³¹ Poe, 626-627

³² See Appendix 4, Appendix 5, Appendix 12

³³ Poe, 443-455

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Allan_Poe

the boundaries of his lingering soul, meanwhile focused on minority rights. Consequently, “*The Pit and The Pendulum*” is vitally critical among Poe’s short stories since it is one of the rare works where Poe makes a social criticism not only depending on the contemporary state but which also alludes to today’s conditions. Despite the fact that Poe did not make any formal attempt to describe the instruments that are accurately used in the operations of Spanish Inquisition, he demonstrated a critical acclaim towards the treatment of war prisoners and the process of their interrogations, which was highly worsened in 17th century³⁵ by giving detailed descriptions of the pain from protagonist and how hard it is to bare with it as follows:

“I saw clearly the doom which had been prepared for me, and congratulated myself upon the timely accident by which I had escaped”³⁶

The element of horror combined with humor reception in Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories has also received critical reception since it is considered to create an over-depressive and a gloomy atmosphere in the texts and causes a misconception between the reader and the plot. In fact, the use of combination of horror with humor has enabled Poe to attract most of the readers to the plot with a more relative ease since the use of horror makes the stories mysterious by providing an ominous atmosphere and the use of humor extends the story to the world of imagination and thus, fiction.

First and foremost, the horror used in the short story “*The Fall of The House of Usher*”³⁷ does not create a depressive and gloomy atmosphere like it is pointed out in many of the criticisms. Visa versa, the horror that is created with the burial of Madeline before her death seems to result in creation of an atmosphere of innocence and sympathy throughout the

³⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inquisition>

³⁶ Poe, 447

³⁷ Poe, 299-314

story as we can understand from the protagonist's thoughts that show both empathy and sympathy towards Roderick as the protagonist observes and cares for him :

“And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend”³⁸

With this caring attitude of protagonist, Poe may have aimed to evoke a feeling of empathy through the community to the people with mental impairments, since even he considered himself to be insane compared to most, in many occasions. The melancholic humor in the tale *“Ethelred”*³⁹ while the narrator reads it to calm down Roderick, is very symbolic in this sense, since the tale is entitled within a novel called *“The Mad Thirst”*, the only thing that enabled Rodrick to calm down was nothing but his insanity. Therefore, this fact creates an understanding of innocence and purity towards Rodrick burying his own sister alive because it is thought a merely natural solution from a madman's point of view as the only salvation for Rodrick in order to save both himself and his sister from their disorders. As Madeline is shown to be alive towards the end of the book, the element of horror seemed to represent the obstacles that are faced by insane people, which indeed deserves negative criticism since the story reflects Poe's personal matters of interest while seeming to delineate a glimpse of social criticism.

Following this, *“The Man That Was Used Up”*⁴⁰ propagates from an excellent use of horror wholeheartedly combined with humor, this time to such an extent that it provokes thoughts in the reader about paradigms as perception filters in our lives which are described by Maillard in *“The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether”* as :

³⁸ Poe, 309

³⁹ Poe, 310-313

⁴⁰ Poe, 291-299

"Believe nothing you hear, and only one half that you see."⁴¹

This connection between the two short stories altogether changes the use of horror as the General being “*a man that was used up*”⁴² since the narrator had suspected that there must be something concealed, when people did not want to talk about the General, even if the narrator was always mesmerized by General’s speeches. In this sense, the horror in this story is used as an element that urges the reader to suspect almost everything that we perceive in today’s world, but only natural considering the fact that Poe is a follower of philosophy of skepticism. In this sense, Poe always tries to enlarge the borders of reality by using horror in this story, and thus attracts the reader into fiction that he has transcended against the Romantic Movement in American linguistics history.

Laying basis on this movement of fiction, Poe further harmonized all the features unique to him as a part of his social criticism, horror, sarcasm and humor in his very masterpiece that he started the detective fiction genre with “*The Murders in The Rue Morgue*”⁴³ In this story, the character Dupin, is actually a figure of ratiocination defined by Poe himself as to focus on the power of the spoken and written word itself. In this sense, Dupin is an allegoric criticism of the abreast police institution in Poe’s era as he services for the prefect of police under his motto as “*too cunning to be profound*”.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the horror that is created via using an ourang-outang as a murderer through the plot strengthens the very basis for Poe’s detective fiction as despite the fact that the actions of mankind reflect their nature. However, the fiction while using an ourang-outang as a villain in the storyline enabled Poe to benefit from humor while sarcastically criticizing the grotesque habits newly developing in human nature as keeping even an ourang-outang as a pet (!), and thus

⁴¹ Poe, 614-618

⁴² Poe, 298

⁴³ Poe, 369-396

⁴⁴ Poe, 371/372

demonstrating a primitive actualization of the genre of absurd comedy. In this sense, the use of horror in “*The Murders In The Rue Morgue*” not only expresses the bizarre, crotchety and evil sides of human nature, to even putting a corpse into a chimney, but also makes evaluations of social conditions which even leads to a further turmoil in a chaotic environment where nobody cares for what happens to the other as is observed in the testimonies of the sailor and neighbors about the murder of Madame L'Esplanaye.⁴⁵

III. Conclusion

*“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood
there, wondering, fearing, doubting, and dreaming
dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.”*

- Edgar Allan Poe

In spite of his surpassing most of the contemporary figures of fiction and even elevating it to a higher panorama, like his poetry, not all the readers will find all of Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories spellbinding, captivating and mirthful.⁴⁶ Yet, every reader will be able to find something that strikes a chord within them among their multifarious strings as fears, concerns or conflicts. In this sense, despite the fact that they are vulgar and horrific, Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories contain a sense of morbidity that appeals to us in our darkest times.

“All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.”

-Edgar Allan Poe

⁴⁵ Poe, 375/376

⁴⁶ See Appendix 13

All in all, despite the fact that his use of horror is criticized as a “vulgar act of barbarism”⁴⁷, his humor as a bittersweet melody and his social criticism sly and hypocritical, Edgar Allan Poe’s works which include these elements in pleonastic occasions, reflect both reality and fiction⁴⁸, making intensive use of horror and humor to make social criticisms that mainly concern the minorities who are eternally neglected by large masses of people.

⁴⁷ See Appendix 12

⁴⁸ See Appendix 13

IV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

“Edgar A. Poe, one of the Editors of the Broadway Journal. He never rests. There is a small steam-engine in his brain, which not only sets the cerebral mass in motion, but keeps the owner in hot water. His face is a fine one, and well gifted with intellectual beauty. Ideality, with the power of analysis, is shown in his very broad, high and massive forehead — a forehead which would have delighted Gall beyond measure. He would have have [[sic]] made a capital lawyer — not a very good advocate, perhaps, but a famous unraveller of all subtleties. He can thread his way through a labyrinth of absurdities, and pick out the sound thread of sense from the tangled skein with which it is connected. He means to be candid, and labours under the strange hallucination that he is so; but he has strong prejudices, and, without the least intention of irreverence, would wage war with the Deity, if the divine canons militated against his notions. His sarcasm is subtle and searching. He can do nothing in the common way; and buttons his coat after a fashion peculiarly his own. If we ever caught him doing a thing like any body else, or found him reading a book any other way than upside down, we should implore his friends to send for a straitjacket, and a Bedlam doctor. He were mad, then, to a certainty.” — (Thomas Dunn English, “Notes About Men of Note,” *The Aristidean*, April 1845, p. 153. At this time, Poe and English were still friends, and the tone of this item is happy and jocular. In reviewing this issue of the *Aristidean* in his own *Broadway Journal*, for May 3, 1845, Poe comments “. . . the ‘Notes about Men of Note’ are amusing” (BJ, 1845, p. 285, col. 1).)

APPENDIX 2

“. . . the reader [should not] be surprised if a criticism upon Poe is mostly negative, and rather suggests new doubts than resolves those already existing; for it is Poe’s merit to carry people away, and it is his besetting sin that he wants altogether such scrupulous honesty as guides and restrains the finished artist. He was, let us say it with all sorrow, not conscientious. Hunger was ever at his door, and he had too imperious a desire for what we call nowadays the sensational in literature.” — (Robert Louis Stevenson, “[Review of] *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*,” *Academy*, VII, January, 2, 1875. Reprinted in C. C. Bigelow and Temple Scott, eds., *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 10 vols, New York: Greenock Press, 1906, IX, pp. 255-262.)

APPENDIX 3

“With all due respect to the very original genius of the author of the *Tales of Mystery*, it seems to us that to take him with more than a certain degree of seriousness is to lack seriousness one’s self. An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection. Baudelaire thought him a profound philosopher, the neglect of whose golden utterances stamped his native land with infamy. Nevertheless, Poe was vastly the greater charlatan of the two, as well as the greater genius.” — (Henry James, “Charles Baudelaire,” *The Nation*, XXII, 1876 p. 280.)

APPENDIX 4

Poe's judgements [in his criticisms] are pretentious, spiteful, vulgar; but they contain a great deal of sense and discrimination as well, and here and there, sometimes at frequent intervals, we find a phrase of happy insight imbedded in a patch of fatuous pedantry." — (Henry James, Hawthorne, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879, pp. 62-63.)

APPENDIX 5

"The first principle in writing about Poe is never to discuss how badly he performed in both prose and verse." (Harold Bloom, "Introduction" to *How to Write about Edgar Allan Poe* by Susan Amper, New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2008, p. vii. This statement appears in Bloom's strangely negative and curiously self-referential introduction to this volume in a series which touts itself as "designed to inspire students to write fine essays on great writers and their works." Presumably, Bloom did not actually approve of the fact that Poe was to be included in this series, and perhaps Poe — whose reputation is in no need of Bloom's good opinion — would have preferred to be omitted from the series as well.)

APPENDIX 6

"My dear Horton . . . I do not know why you or indeed anybody should want to illustrate Poe . . . I admire a few lyrics of his extremely and a few pages of his prose, chiefly in his critical essays, which are sometimes profound. The rest of him seems to me vulgar and commonplace . . ." — (William Butler Yeats, "[Letter to W. T. Horton]," September 3, 1899. Yeats was commenting on the 1884 edition of "The Raven" with illustrations by Gustave Dore.)

APPENDIX 7

"[Poe] died . . . and was duly explained away as a drunkard and a failure, though it remains an open question whether he really drank as much in his whole lifetime as a modern successful American drinks, without comment, in six months. . . . Poe constantly and inevitably produced magic where his greatest contemporaries produced only beauty. . . . Poe's supremacy in this respect has cost him his reputation. . . . Above all, Poe is great because he is independent of cheap attractions, independent of sex, of patriotism, of fighting, of sentimentality, snobbery, gluttony, and all the rest of the vulgar stock-in-trade of his profession." — (George Bernard Shaw, "Edgar Allan Poe," *the Nation* (London), January 16, 1909.)

APPENDIX 8

"Poe wrote like a drunkard and a man who is not accustomed to pay his debts." — (Arthur Twining Hadley, President of Yale University (1899-1921) explaining, in 1909, his refusal to support Poe's election to the Hall of Fame. Without regard to Hadley's unjust opinions, Poe's name was admitted in 1910.)

APPENDIX 9

“Poe is a man writhing in the mystery of his own undoing. He is a great dead soul, progressing terribly down the long process of post-mortem activity in disintegration. . . . Yet Poe is hardly an artist. He is rather a supreme scientist.” — (D. H. Lawrence, “Edgar Allan Poe,” *English Review*, April 1919.)

APPENDIX 10

“Poe’s fame has been subject to curious undulations, and it is now a fashion amongst the ‘advanced intelligentsia’ to minimize his importance both as an artist and as an influence; but it would be hard for any mature and reflective critic to deny the tremendous value of his work and the persuasive potency of his mind as an opener of artistic vistas. . . . Certain of Poe’s tales possess an almost absolute perfection of artistic form which makes them veritable beaconlights in the province of the short story. . . . Poe’s weird tales are alive in a manner that few others can ever hope to be.” — (H[oward]. P. Lovecraft, “The Master of the Modern Horror Story,” *The Recluse*, 1927. Reprinted in Peter Haining, ed, *The Edgar Allan Poe Scrapbook*, New York: Schocken Books, 1978, pp. 126-128, which also reprints Lovecraft’s poem “Where Once Poe Walked,” from *Weird Tales*, May 1938.)

APPENDIX 11

“That Poe had a powerful intellect is undeniable: but it seems to me the intellect of a highly gifted person before puberty.” — (T. S. Eliot, “From Poe to Valery,” *Library of Congress Lecture*, November 19, 1948.)

APPENDIX 12

“A vast literature has grown up around Poe, much of it earnest and important, much of it superficial, wrong-headed, even absurd.” — (Thomas Ollive Mabbott, “Bibliography,” *Selected Poetry & Prose of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: The Modern Library, 1951, pp. xv-xvi.)

APPENDIX 13

“The reason for Poe’s relative failure is the discrepancy between the irrational nature of what he wanted to convey and the imperturbably intellectual character of his means of expression. . . . And yet it all works. The charm operates. We cannot read or reread his best tales and poems without a thrill. Though his heroes behave in a Grand Guignol manner in rather inauthentic settings and speak an unreal language, we feel a secret kinship with them. The same nightmarish monsters which haunt them roam the deeper layers of our minds. Their fears and obsessions are ours too — at least potentially. They echo in our souls and make us aware of unplumbed depths in our inmost hearts.” — (Roger Asselineau, “Edgar Allan Poe,” *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974, vol. III, p. 430.)

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