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# The New Literati: Sarah Josepha Hale and Edgar Allan Poe in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture

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TRINITY COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

THE NEW LITERATI  
SARAH JOSEPHA HALE AND EDGAR ALLAN POE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
LITERARY CULTURE

submitted by

JULIA FALKOWSKI, 2013

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## Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe is a gothic icon. Even those who are not literary minded recognize his brooding image, often accompanied by an ominous raven. Poe's live-fast-die-young life story has ensured him a lasting public image. Many know that Poe married his fourteen year old cousin, that he was an alcoholic, that he died poor and friendless in the Baltimore streets, and that until quite recently, a mysterious stranger would leave cognac and a rose at the author's grave every year on his birthday. Poe's dark, psychologically thrilling stories are still read by schoolchildren and celebrated on film. His image has even spilled into professional athletics, with this year's Superbowl winners, the Baltimore Ravens, named as a tribute to the author the city claims as its own. One thing seems certain, people know Edgar Allan Poe.

There is also much about Poe's life that might shock modern fans. It may surprise some to learn that Poe was a prolific letter writer who signed off with conventional polite phrases such as "God Bless You" and "Most respectfully Your Obedient Servant." Some may not know that Poe tried for a long time to have a career as a conventionally successful writer or that, while serving as editor of literary magazines, Poe engaged in gimmicky literary pranks to gain subscribers. Contrary to modern conceptions of Poe as literary loner, he was very much a member of a nineteenth-century literary coterie. Perhaps most surprising, this coterie included a woman often cited as the height of domesticity, *Godey's Lady's Book* editor, Sarah Josepha Hale.

What could Poe and Hale have in common? Sarah Josepha Hale, born 21 years before Poe, is today known for two main accomplishments—penning "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and petitioning Abraham Lincoln to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. Her magazine, *Godey's*

*Lady's Book*, is considered the first widely popular American women's magazine and remains best known today for its elaborate color fashion plates. Hale edited *Godey's* for a stunning forty years, from 1837 to 1877. Advocating the moral superiority of women in numerous editorials, Hale subscribed to the rhetoric of separate spheres. In addition to editing, Hale also published fiction, non-fiction, novels, and short stories. Modern scholars often view her works as the sort of overly sentimental nineteenth-century "chick lit" that does not stand the test of time. Despite what may be her literary inadequacies, Hale was by all accounts a respectable nineteenth-century lady. Yet, Hale found herself in a literary community that included Edgar Allan Poe.

Something does not add up. Either Poe is far less, or Hale a great deal more, subversive than we have been led to believe. Poe's relationship with Hale has rarely been examined. In his article, "You, Who so Well Know the Nature of My Soul," Jeffrey A. Charis-Carlson touches on the subject. His study focuses mainly on Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," which was first published in *Godey's Lady's Book*. In the horrific "Cask," one character gets his enemy drunk and bricks him into his own wine cellar, leaving him to die. Charis-Carlson examines why such a story would appear in a domestic women's magazine and asks about Poe's prolific contributions to the publication: "Why did the *Lady's Book*, a magazine that featured an oversupply of sentimental domestic fiction and an editorial policy that reinforced the notion of separate spheres, become Poe's main source of income in 1845 and 1846?" (Charis-Carlson, 200). Charis-Carlson's analysis shows not only that Hale was less conventional than has been accepted, but also that her magazine subscribed less to traditional ideas of femininity. Charis-Carlson, however, goes no further in examining how or why Hale and Poe developed a professional relationship.

What Poe and Hale had in common, what drew them together, was the fact that they were both outsiders in contemporaneous literary culture. Hale's position as a woman and Poe's identity as an orphan, coming up from poverty and obscurity, placed them on the margins. Patricia Okker's biography of Hale, *Our Sister Editors*, explains literary conditions in the era, saying, "throughout the 1820s most writers, editors, and publishers accepted the eighteenth-century ideal of the scholarly gentleman, thus equating literary pursuits with leisure activities" (Okker, 85). In these terms, receiving credit or monetary compensation for one's writing was considered vulgar. Authorship was not a viable way to make a living. Publishing cost money. Neither Poe nor Hale had the means required to enter this anonymous and affluent echelon of gentleman writers.

Discontent, Hale and Poe worked to shape the American literary scene to be closer to their ideals. Though today, Poe's writing is widely anthologized and considered an example of the best the nineteenth century has to offer, it is only remembered this way because it differed so widely from the conventional fiction being turned out. With a writing style that Charis-Carlson argues could tend toward the androgynous, Poe subverted gender norms (Charis-Carlson, 202). Fighting against the mode of storytelling popular among men, that glorified bachelorhood and frivolous pleasures, Poe was more concerned with portraying the problematic and harsh, though real elements of life. Poe was not shy about his unforgiving opinions of other popular writers, whom he regarded as unoriginal; he broadcast his judgments in editorials throughout his career. Poe attempted to mold a literary culture that would appreciate and exemplify his commitment to bringing out truth, however unpleasant. Hale also aimed to change the literary industry, as I have argued in my study of her editorial role at *Godey's* (Falkowski). Like Poe, Hale found nothing special in the dominant literary culture. Concerned with creating a model for unique American

literature that could set the young nation up as a viable artistic and cultural competitor with Europe, Hale looked to promote quality and originality. As a woman, interested in expanding women's roles, Hale's encouragement of American authorship often took the form of publishing women authors. However, sometimes in pursuit of originality, Hale bet on a writer who went against her normal values, but was doing something excitingly unconventional. Poe was the embodiment of this type of writer.

The relationship between Poe and Hale represents what happens when outsiders join forces to break into and change the world around them. American literary culture was already transitioning; Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper had established careers as professional writers (Okker, 86). Magazine culture was on the rise due to a variety of factors, including technological advances in printing and the improvement of the postal system. In the budding periodical industry, Poe and Hale found what they believed to be their ticket into the American literary elite. Both invested time, effort, and faith in magazines. Each served as editor at different periodicals for substantial amounts of time, and each printed stories by and publicity for the other, helping one another's periodicals and careers.

This paper explores sentiments Poe and Hale shared, and examines the points of intersection between their lives and work, including the writing and reviews each published in the periodicals of the other, as well as six letters that survive from Poe to Hale. Poe's voice features prominently, because as the more widely known figure, more of his writing has been preserved and catalogued. Hale's feelings towards Poe and the literary world must be gleaned from her editorials, which are often written diplomatically given her position as a woman. Regardless, these pieces of evidence show that, in Hale, Poe found someone willing to take a chance on his unconventional writing style, and in Poe, Hale found a poster-boy for her project

of creating a unique and original American literature. The section “Two Outsiders” establishes Hale and Poe as not completely satisfied with the literary scene and their roles within. “Coming Together” shows the ways Hale and Poe interacted to carve out their own literary successes, which are explained in the concluding section, “Making an Impact.” Alienated from the literary culture they both wanted to be a part of, Poe and Hale developed an unlikely alliance that deeply affected their careers and, to a lesser though not insignificant extent, the broader literary world.



## Two Outsiders

Sarah Josepha Buell was born in 1788 in the small town of Newport, New Hampshire. At the time, education for women was not widely available, and the American literary scene had little room for women. Taught to read and write by her mother, Sarah's brother Horatio supplemented her education when he came home on breaks from Dartmouth. After teaching a few years at the local schoolhouse, Sarah married a lawyer, David Hale, in 1813. David continued his wife's education, and together the couple joined "The Coterie," Newport's literary society. The couple had five children together. However, when Sarah was thirty-four, her husband passed away, leaving her alone to support her young children.

Guided by her experiences in "The Coterie," Hale claimed she began a literary career to support her family. Her late husband's connections with the Freemasons helped Hale publish her first novel, *Northwood*, a story of a New England Thanksgiving before the holiday became national. The novel won Hale publicity and, in 1827, she was offered the position of editor at the Boston-based *Ladies' Magazine*. After ten years of editing the *Ladies' Magazine*, Philadelphia publisher Louis A. Godey invited her to become editor of his publication, *Godey's Lady's Book*. During her run as editor, Hale popularized the publication, creating more cohesive themes and demanding a high quality for content. Paving the way for American women editors, Hale shaped the magazine to promote her goals of encouraging an American national literature, and improving women's education. Despite the complexities of Hale's editorship, the most popular segment of the magazine, both then and now, was fashion. *Godey's* colored fashion plates, imported from Europe, were famous. Hale did not appreciate the magazine's fashion content, believing it to be frivolous (Falkowski, 9). Despite challenges in the literary industry, Hale's

willingness to compromise ensured that she achieved a substantial degree of success in her editorial aims.

With a tumultuous and unstable life, Poe was a hard sell to editors and publishers expecting consistency. In their chronological study, *The Poe Log*, Dwight R. Thomas and David K. Jackson give a detailed description of Poe's life. Born in 1809 in Boston, within the first year of Poe's life, his parents, both actors, sent him to live with his grandparents in Baltimore. Shifting between guardians, Poe spent parts of his childhood in the United Kingdom and Virginia. While briefly attending the University of Virginia, Poe composed poetry. Upon moving to Boston in 1826, he published his first volume of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Poe enlisted in the military, was sent to South Carolina and Virginia, obtained an honorable discharge, and by fall of 1830 had received an appointment at West Point. Expelled from West Point for neglecting his studies and duties, Poe traveled to New York, then Baltimore. Living in Baltimore with interspersed literary successes for a few years, Poe was eventually offered the position of editor at the *Southern Literary Messenger*, but this lasted only two years. In 1836, Poe would famously marry his much-younger cousin. Though he experienced periods of success, and his stories gained renown in the US and Europe, Poe's life was a constant struggle, awash with feuds, romantic entanglements, and other personal problems. Poe died poor in the Baltimore streets at the age of forty after a night of heavy drinking (Thomas & Jackson). Though he achieved much greater fame than Hale ever did, this is partly because of his celebrity image, which was the very antithesis of a polite nineteenth-century gentleman.

Hale's alienation from literary culture, though often hidden by her polite editorial persona, still emerged in various ways throughout her career. One of the biggest areas of Hale's discontent was the fashion focus of her magazine's image and content. In her book *Domesticity*

*with a Difference*, Nicole Tonkovich explains how in Hale's early editorial days, she "conceived of the *Ladies' Magazine* as an antidote to decadent European taste, refused to print fashion plates during the first three years of the magazine's run" (Tonkovich, 74). However, in an era when magazine income came entirely from subscriptions, Hale eventually had to give *Ladies' Magazine* readers what they wanted. At *Godey's*, Hale faced the same frustration with fashion-related content. In an 1865 editorial, Louis Godey reminded readers, "We really must beg of our subscribers not to address letters for the Fashion Editor to Mrs. Hale. She has nothing to do with that department" (Okker, 51). Evidently, Hale had no part in the fashion component of the magazine, and from Godey's exasperated tone in the phrase "really must" it would seem she had no desire to be. Readers assumed that Hale, a woman, must be the one dealing with the fashion-related aspects of the magazine. Defying gender stereotypes which still exist today, Hale viewed fashion and style as frivolities, with no place in her high-minded literary magazine.

Hale worked in periodical culture because the literary world provided her few other options. Poe on the other hand became involved in periodicals gradually, eventually coming to truly believe in the form. As William Charvat notes in his work on nineteenth-century American authorship, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*,

Through magazine writing and editing (perhaps especially through reviewing a wide variety of books), Poe discovered the versatility of his own mind, and came to think of the magazine, rather than the book, as the appropriate expression of American culture (Charvat, 85).

Poe began his career with a traditional outlook, thinking like many others that the printed, bound book was the ideal form to disseminate literary culture. However, the more involved he became in periodicals, the more stock Poe began to put in the form as a way to bring artistic pursuits to the public. Charvat explains how Poe's goals had developed towards the end of his career, saying, "In his last years Poe had two obsessions"—one was his epic poem *Eureka*, and—"The

other was a determination to establish what he envisioned as the ideal monthly magazine (which he entitled first, ‘The Penn Magazine,’ later, ‘The Stylus’)” (Charvat, 85). Working for many years to make these dream publications a reality, Poe was at least as invested as Hale in promoting and perpetuating periodical culture. It makes more and more sense that a partnership would develop between the two.

The content and structure of the magazines Poe edited show a great deal about both the literary culture of the era, and what Hale and Poe had in common as they edited periodicals. For example, the gentleman’s magazine *Burton’s* may seem familiar to those who know *Godey’s*, except that in the place of domestic tips, there is sporting advice in monthly columns with titles such as “Field Sports and Manly Pastimes.” Articles expound on the advantages and disadvantages of hunting dog breeds, complete with illustrations of dogs comparable to *Godey’s* images of the latest fashions from Europe. Instead of short stories outlining intense social dramas, *Burton’s* regaled its readers with tales of military campaigns. As editor of *Burton’s*, Poe was placed at the head of the masculine equivalent of Hale’s *Godey’s*. The magazine included content by both male and female authors, but Poe’s work tended to be the most feminine given the cultural context. Poe’s writing in *Burton’s* includes elegiac poems for lost love and stories like “The Fall of the House of Usher,” which evidence pathos and emotions generally connected with women. Like Hale, Poe stretches the limits of what would be considered normal for those of his gender.

Not an entirely new enterprise for either Poe or the publishers, *Graham’s Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine* was the result of merging *Burton’s* and a periodical called *The Casket* (“Annuals”). *Graham’s* was *Godey’s* biggest competitor and it is no wonder why; marketed to both men and women, the structure of *Graham’s* is remarkably similar to *Godey’s*, with colored

fashion plates decorating each issue, profiles of famous authors, and poetry and literature about a wide range of subjects written by both men and women. Poe was ascending in the literary world, as editor of the magazine second only to *Godey's* on the American landscape in terms of circulation (Okker, 31). Thus, Poe and Hale each sat at the head of the most popular periodicals in the nation.

As a magazine editor, Poe faced some of the same challenges Hale did in the determination of content. In *The Poe Log*, Thomas and Jackson describe how, when Poe was editing *Graham's* in 1841 and 42, he became fed up with the magazine's content: "Around 1 April he resigns from *Graham's*, disgusted with its emphasis on fashion plates and sentimental literature" (Thomas & Jackson). Poe shared many of the same frustrations as Hale, right down to the fashion plates. Coming up against a subscribing public who wanted certain things, Hale and Poe found themselves bound to the desires of the masses. Both literary-minded individuals making a living by editing magazines geared towards traditional conceptions of women, Poe and Hale had to fight stereotypically feminine modes of entertainment, sentimental literature, and fashion, to make careers and periodicals in ways they felt fulfilled their literary goals.

Hale's editorials also occasionally evidence a muted irritation with the expectations of literary culture. For example, in her May 1837 discussion, "Woman the Poet of Nature," Hale rejects the idea of a "true feminine style," saying,

We are aware that there are critics who always speak of the "true feminine style—as though there was only one manner in which ladies could properly write poetry... The truth is, woman has not such unlimited range of subjects as man has, but in manner of treating those within her province, she has a freedom as perfect as his; and the delicate shades of genius are as varied and as distinctly marked in one sex as its bold outlines are in the other (Hale, *Godey's*, May 1837).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that because of the frequent use of articles from different issues of many of the same periodicals, in-text citation references to these sources will be formatted as follows: (Author, Publication, Issue Date).

Hale subtly voices her disapproval of the expectations of women. Stating outright that women's talents can be as varied as men's, Hale argues against members of her readership who might assume otherwise. Hale asserts that, since there is no masculine style of writing, there is no feminine style, showing distaste for gender-biased literary expectations.

Ironically, Hale dealt with the challenges of female exclusion from dominant literary culture by attempting to distinguish women's writing as superior and, therefore, inherently different. An example of how Hale accepts such separate spheres rhetoric comes in the "Conversazione," her manifesto upon becoming editor of *Godey's* in January 1837. Hale explains, "It is our aim to prepare a work which, for our own sex, should be superior to every other periodical. To effect this ours must differ in some important respects from the general mass of monthly literature" (Hale, *Godey's*, Jan. 1837). Though Hale does not overtly say she feels left out, exclusion is implied by her goals of making a successful magazine for women as separate from men. She takes a subtle shot at other periodicals, suggesting that none is good enough. Hale saw men's periodicals as exclusionary for women who wanted to write and express themselves. In response, she worked to create a new forum, where women would feel welcome both as readers and contributors and, which surpassed even those same periodicals that excluded women.

Upon establishing herself as a successful editor, Hale gained a degree of power in shaping the broader literary world through the book reviews she chose to include. Hale's reviews in her "Editor's Book Table" show how she felt about different works of the era, and the publishing industry as a whole. In one editorial entitled, "A Concise Review of the Newspaper Press, and Incidentally of Periodicals," Hale chastises her fellow editors asking:

...why will ye, Oh! Editors, allowing this to be undoubtedly true—why will ye smother the talent of your countrymen by exhibiting your devotedness to every wandering Trollope who many honor (!) [sic] our shores with a visit, to castigate your submissive attitude with a prostituted pen? Why is the itinerant’s production more welcome to your columns than the composition of a native writer. [sic] (Hale, *Godey’s*, Oct. 1837).

Hale praises American authors, but vents her anger with the literary world generally for its reluctance to support the same nationalist ideals that she held. Her passion for the subject comes across in the strong language she uses, with words such as “castigate,” “submissive,” and “prostituted” that sexualize the relationship between editors and foreign writers. That Hale would feel the need to use this uncharacteristic, attention-grabbing language shows how intensely she hated the literary scene that ignored American writers in favor of foreign ones.

Because of Hale’s nationalist ideals, she did not often criticize American authors directly, and when she did, she used a different set of criteria than many contemporaneous reviewers. Her book reviews claim most things are worth reading, putting positive spins on flaws. Okker explains that Hale was much more likely to criticize works for morality than for literary value alone, saying, “Although she sometimes praised books by men without considering the books’ morality—including Poe’s *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, and Thoreau’s *Cape Cod*—she rarely gave the same treatment to books by women” (Okker, 107). The women authors who Hale supported would have difficulty succeeding if they were judged by the same criteria as male authors. Hale invented a new set of rules to judge authors by, one more friendly to conceptions of femininity. She then assessed the majority of authors, regardless of gender, by these parameters. However, Hale was willing to make exceptions in cases of truly great and unique American writers, including, as Okker points out, Poe.

One of the places where Poe’s frustration with the literary scene comes across most strongly is in his series of literary criticism, *The Literati of New York City. Some Honest*

*Opinions at Random Respecting Their Autorial [sic] Merits, With Occasional Words of Personality.* This six part series appeared in *Godey's* from June to October of 1846 and displays the resentment Poe held for the mainstream literary scene. Poe begins the series making a distinction between the opinions of the reading public and of real literary judges, saying of the public mindset, "In general, this opinion is adopted by the journals of the day, and I have endeavored to show that the cases are rare indeed in which these journals express any other sentiment than such as may be attributed directly or indirectly to the authors of the books" (Poe, *Godey's*, June 1846). Within the first few sentences, Poe has already offended a great many segments of the population. Poe portrays the public as easily susceptible to outside influence, and the literary industry as a commercial mouthpiece, a puppet to reinforce the popularity of certain authors.

Poe does not just believe the system is flawed; he blatantly shows hatred for a world in which he was not allowed a place. If Poe had not offended enough, he goes on to say that the most popular authors

...are ninety-nine times out of a hundred, persons of mere address, perseverance, effrontery—in a word, busy-bodies, toadies, quacks. These people easily succeed in *boring* editors (whose attention is too often entirely engrossed by politics or other "business" matter) into the admission of favorable notices... (Poe, *Godey's*, June 1846).

Poe puts little effort into disguising the amount he detests authors who have achieved success and fame. He speaks with knowledge gained during his time as a periodical editor, criticizing what he sees as the rabid self-promotion of popular authors who "bore" editors until they accept submissions. Poe goes on to single out authors and write paragraph-long, brutally honest opinions of what he perceives as the strengths and weaknesses of each. Surprisingly, many of the literary figures Poe criticizes are reverends and professors, who despite their professional positions still take important places in shaping literary culture. Poe also includes profiles of



people we remember today, including Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Child, and Thomas Dunn English, for whom this was part of an ongoing feud with Poe. Even N.P. Willis, an American editor, author, and poet, who at various points worked closely with Poe, does not escape his harsh examination.

Though Poe's introduction makes it seem as if all he will be doing is condemning, he does compliment a number of writers. In a discussion that Charis-Carlson describes as full of "back-handed compliments," Poe does not pan everything about every author but presents the good along with the bad. Surprisingly, one-third of the writers Poe examines are female, indicating that he felt excluded from a world that had already welcomed women. Poe's criticism is not entirely even across gender lines. Charis-Carlson explains his belief that "Poe pays the most literary respect to two women, Anna Mowatt and Margaret Fuller, who best illustrate his own goal in writing *The Literati*: an act of transforming writing into conversation" (Charis-Carlson, 203). Poe, in wanting the literary scene to be more of a reasoned discussion than a marketplace, supports traditionally feminine modes over masculine ones. As such, he praises women authors, who are perhaps more able to embody his model for literature. The value Hale and Poe see in one another becomes increasingly clear.

Why does Poe choose New York to center his discussion of literary culture? What literary scene does he see there that is particularly offensive? Poe elaborates on this point, explaining,

New York literature may be taken at [sic] a fair representation of that of the country at large. The city itself is the focus of American letters. Its authors include, perhaps, one-fourth of all in America and the influence they exert on their brethren, if seemingly silent, is not the less extensive and decisive (Poe, *Godey's*, May 1846).

Whether Poe's claims on the importance of New York in the literary landscape are true or not is debatable. He never specifies whether he is referring to New York as a state or city. The fact that

he had a home just outside the city seems to speak to the fact that Poe attempted entry into this scene. His singling out of the New York literary elite suggests his resentment at being kept an outsider. At the same time, as the largest and most developed city in the nation, it makes sense for Poe to center his discussion here and use the city as representative of the nation as a whole.

In the introduction to *The Literati*, the ways in which Poe began as and remained an outsider from dominant literary culture throughout his life become apparent. Poe explains the superiority of those who do not buy into the New York literary scene and mindset, saying, “Now men of genius will never resort to those maneuvers, because genius involves in its very essence a scorn of chicanery” (Poe, *Godey’s*, May 1846). Poe claims that men of actual talent often do not succeed since they do not engage in the sort of trickery adopted by less gifted authors. When Poe speaks of geniuses that do not make it, he hopes readers will include him in this category. Poe’s work with *The Literati* is not intended to win him friends and shows his superiority complex. Poe speaks like a true outsider, glorifying the position not within the bounds of the dominant culture, and claiming it is really better that way. With Poe’s attitude in *The Literati*, at the same time spiteful and boastful, it is little wonder he remained distant from the literary elite for much of his life.

As stated above, neither Hale nor Poe fit dominant gender expectations in terms of career path. Neither do their writings fit gender stereotypes. Hale wrote stories that might be considered decidedly masculine. An example of this comes in the June 1837 issue of *Godey’s*, in Hale’s story, “An Adventure at the West.”<sup>2</sup> A parable meant to teach American readers about the good fortune they have of setting up a democracy where tyranny has never before existed, the climax

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<sup>2</sup> For a full analysis of the patriotic themes in this story, see Falkowski, Julia. “To Do Something for the Reputation...”

comes in a scene where an American hero, Captain Austin, protects his mixed-gender company, out for a walk in frontier territory, from a panther:

...the panther, which had fallen, struggling and shrieking, lay wallowing in his gore on the ground. Captain Austin, to make sure of his work, placed the muzzle of the loaded barrel (it was double-barreled) close to the head of the animal, and discharged it; the creature was dead in a moment (Hale, *Godey's*, June 1837).

This is not the type of moment one might expect from the domestic, motherly author of “Mary Had A Little Lamb.” This is a scene of gore and violence that might come from someone like Poe. The very fact that Hale wrote these lines shows she was open to the expansion of women’s roles, especially when it came to writing and authorship.

At the same time Hale was writing with a not so feminine flair, Poe often took masculine modes of writing and turned them on their heads. Poe’s “Cask of Amontillado” is a good example of this. “The Cask of Amontillado” stands in contrast to the stories written by male authors published in *The Lady’s Book* before Hale became editor. In those days, *The Lady’s Book* was full of the stereotypically masculine writing that Poe stood apart from. One such story, “The Young Family” by Englishman Henry Neele, appeared in the January 1836 *Lady’s Book*. Neele’s tale is one of masculine friendship and jolly bachelorhood, with the main character visiting an old schoolmate in his marriage, which is portrayed as a nightmare, with a poor, uneducated wife and a pack of dirty, noisy children. The main character reflects on the visit, saying, “For my own part, I make it a rule to cut all my friends as soon as they get married: I do not like the transformation of a merry, frank, sociable companion, into an important family man” (Neele, *Godey’s*, Jan. 1836). Poe’s “Cask of Amontillado” is the tale of two schoolmates gone awry, as the narrator more than once refers to the man he bricks into the vault as “friend.” This is the male friendship with animosity, competition, disdain—raw human emotions that exist in real life but which stories like “The Young Family” skim over. Poe was writing in a mode more

honest about the human condition, more focused on larger issues of morality and, therefore, some might argue, more feminine.

Poe's complaints against dominant literary modes come across more loudly and persistently than Hale's—perhaps because Poe, as a white man, much more conceivably could, and indeed eventually would, gain a place in mainstream literary culture. Though Hale and Poe were more or less at the same level of success and popularity in 1846, Hale, as a woman, was lucky to get even that far. Poe believed correctly that he had the potential to go further, and hence was outraged rather than thankful to find himself at that level of success. Hale tiptoes around the issue of her exclusion from dominant culture, implying it rather than aggressively confronting it as Poe does. Hale also colors her exclusion in a more positive way, portraying it as an opportunity to carve out a new space for women, rather than as the result of a deeply flawed literary system. Regardless of the way they show it, the life stories and writings of both Hale and Poe place them outside the center of nineteenth-century literary culture.

## Coming Together

The first indication that Hale was aware of Poe came in a review of Poe's second published work, *Al Aaraaf, Timberlane, and Minor Poems*. The collection came out in 1829, a year in which Hale was editing *The Ladies' Magazine*. In January of 1830, Hale published another critic's review of Poe's collection. The generally favorable review included the following statement:

It is very difficult to speak of these poems as they deserve. A part are exceedingly boyish, feeble, and altogether deficient in the common characteristics of poetry; but then we have parts, and parts too of considerable length, which remind us of no less a poet than Shelley. The author who appears to be very young, is evidently a fine genius, but he wants judgment, experience, tact (Thomas & Jackson).

The reviewer recognized the potential for greatness in Poe but believed it was still unrefined. It can be assumed that Hale, by allowing this review in her magazine, agreed to some degree, or was at least indifferent to what others might say about Poe. At this point, Hale had a higher position in literary society. Along with her fellow editors, publishers, and critics, Hale had the ability to accept or reject Poe's work. This was a choice of whether or not to allot Poe a space in literary culture.

When it comes to literary success, as the saying goes, it is not what you know, but who you know. Poe gained access to Hale and her editorial power when he met her son David. Poe was closer in age to David, who was born in 1815, six years after Poe. The young men's time at West Point overlapped, but not long into his time there, Poe was facing disciplinary action. In 1831, around the time Poe's trial was going on, David wrote to his mother saying,

I have communicated what you wrote to Mr. Poe, of whom perhaps you would like to know something. He ran away from his adopted father in Virginia who was very rich, has been in S. America, England and has graduated at one of the Colleges there. He returned to America again and enlisted as a private soldier but feeling, perhaps a soldier's pride,

he obtained a cadet's appointment and entered this Academy last June. He is thought a fellow of talent here but is too mad a poet to like mathematics (Thomas & Jackson).

With her son serving as a literary scout, Hale was interested in learning more about potential writers and contributors. At the same time, David was petitioning his mother on his classmate's behalf, telling her that Poe might be one to watch. After Poe left West Point, David would continue in a more traditional track, graduating in 1833, becoming a Lieutenant in the US army, and serving in the First Regiment of the Artillery during the Cherokee War. David died in April 1839 at the age of twenty-four (Wells, 366). David's fate shows a path Poe himself could have gone down had he continued with the conventional West Point route.

The David Hale connection seemed to yield little fruit for either Hale or Poe, at least for the first few years after the letter. Poe published nothing in the *Ladies' Magazine* during Hale's editorship. However, Poe was published in *Godey's* before Hale became editor there. Poe's first story in *Godey's* appeared in January of 1834 and was an unattributed piece called "The Visionary." Soon, Poe became an editor himself, acquiring a job at *The Southern Literary Magazine*. His works in this magazine first began to garner him national attention (Thomas & Jackson). The relationship between Hale and Poe during this time, however, remained dormant.

In 1836, Hale and Poe began corresponding. The first surviving letter between the two is from October 10, 1836, before Hale had officially gone to the *Lady's Book* and while Poe was still editing the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Poe says to Hale, in apparent response to a call of hers for a submission, "...if however, it was your wish that *I* should furnish it, I am grieved to say that it will be impossible for me to make a definite promise just now, as I am unfortunately overwhelmed by business, having been sadly thrown back by late illness" (Poe, *Letters*, 106). The illness alluded to may have been related to Poe's alcoholism. Regardless, he continues politely saying,

I regret this the more sincerely as I would be proud to find my name in any publication you edit, and as you have been so kind as to aid the messenger in a similar manner yourself. To send you a crude or hastily written article would be injurious to me and an insult to yourself (Poe, *Letters*, 106).

Though a master of grotesque gothic literature, Poe displays respectful nineteenth-century professionalism. He writes to Hale in a familiar manner, complimenting her and her publication. He addresses her as one editor to another, not treating her any differently as a woman. Poe also alludes to a symbiotic relationship between the two, where each provides material to supplement the publication of the other. At this point, they have gone from Hale having greater power over Poe's career, to a place where they are equals.

Later in the letter, Poe mentions the David Hale connection, and hints at a professional friendship that goes much deeper than the rest of the letter would indicate. Poe explains,

I am surprised and grieved to learn that your son (with whom I had a slight acquaintance at W. Point) should have been vexed about the autographs. So mere nonsense it was hardly worth while to find fault with. Most assuredly, as regards yourself, Madam, I had no intention of giving offence—in respect to the 'Mirror' I am somewhat less scrupulous (Poe, *Letters*, 106).

This seems an obscure reference, but the note in the collection of letters explains it describes a segment Poe included in the *Southern Literary Messenger* called "The Autography." "The Autography" showcased the signatures of those Poe proclaimed as "literati," obtained through the nineteenth-century equivalent of a celebrity prank show. An absurd question is posed to the famous person; the person then replies in a humorously confused manner. Their flustered letter, a facsimile of their signature, and a handwriting analysis written by Poe, were then printed in the magazine. Among the other victims of the prank were Lydia Sigourney, Washington Irving, and even ex-president John Quincy Adams. The fact that Poe would consider Hale a worthy candidate for the prank shows that he respected her and counted her among literary greats.

Hale's response to the joke letter, as printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger* runs as follows:

*Dear Sir,*—I beg leave to assure you that I have *never* received, for my Magazine, *any* copy of verses with so ludicrous a title as “The nine and twenty Magpies.” Moreover, if I had, I should certainly have thrown it into the fire. I wish you would not worry me any farther about this matter. The verses, I dare say, are somewhere among your papers. You had better look them up—they may do for the Mirror (Poe, *SLM*, Aug. 1836).

It can be assumed that David Hale was upset about the prank that elicited this response from his mother and expressed that in some way to his former classmate. Here, Hale refers to *The Mirror*, a publication Poe also mentions in his letter of apology. *The New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette* was a publication began in 1823. Poe's reference to being “less scrupulous” for *The Mirror* combined with Hale's comment that the “ludicrous” verses “may do for the Mirror” proves that neither respected the magazine. Their subtle jabs show a small literary joke the two shared. Indeed, *The Mirror* floundered in the late 1830s and early 1840s, until N.P. Willis took over editorship in 1843 (Mott, 327). When this happened, Poe contributed more often to *The Mirror*, with the magazine publishing the first printing of one of Poe's most famous works, “The Raven.” Poe would even eventually edit *The Mirror* once Willis took over, however, at this time the magazine was not highly regarded by the literary set (“Annuals”). The choice of Hale and Poe to poke fun at a more popular, though less respected, magazine shows the feeling of being outsiders the two shared and the culture they developed to combat their exclusion.

In “The Autography,” the analysis Poe produces of Hale's handwriting provides insight into the ways Poe and Hale interacted. In the paragraph, Poe explains, “Mrs. Hale writes a larger and bolder hand than her sex generally... The whole MS. [sic] is indicative of a masculine understanding” (*SLM*, Aug. 1836). Though to modern readers, this sounds patronizing or just odd, in the nineteenth-century world of rigidly defined gender spheres, Poe is complimenting



Hale. He speaks admiringly of the confidence displayed by her handwriting. His use of the term “masculine understanding” implies that he thinks Hale’s mental abilities are beyond those believed to be possible for her sex. The way Poe analyzes Hale’s handwriting shows he held a measure of respect for her.

For the next few years, Poe flitted from magazine to magazine, editing *Burton’s Gentlemen’s Magazine* and *Graham’s Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine* for no more than two years apiece. Throughout these years when both Hale and Poe were functioning primarily as editors, they published one another’s material a surprisingly small amount. Only one article by Hale, “A Profession for Ladies,” appears in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. The article outlines Hale’s typical views towards women and education, suggesting that a woman’s work should be teaching her family to be ideal republican citizens (SLM, Aug. 1836). Another piece published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1836, a poem entitled “The Fairy’s Home” by “S.H. of Philadelphia,” may be her work, given that she moved to Philadelphia in that very year. Though the subject matter is more fanciful than her typical material, it is not impossible for it to be hers, given some of her other poetry collections, such as her first published book of poems, *The Genius of Oblivion*, which includes the language of courtly love and pastoral themes (Hale, *Genius*). Poe’s first letter to Hale implies that, when working as an editor, writing for the magazines of others was a chore. While getting paid sufficiently, the primary concern of an editor was filling his or her own magazine, not contributing to the magazines of others, no matter how much that might expand his or her image.

The year 1837 brought changes in the lives and careers of both literary figures. In January, Hale took over as editor of *Godey’s*, and Poe “retired” from the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Though Poe claimed he left by choice, his departure likely resulted from others’

frustration with his alcoholism and unreliability. The next two years were difficult for Poe. With no steady work, he was forced to borrow money and live on the kindness of others (Thomas & Jackson). Hale, on the other hand, was at the height of her career. She had landed the job that would last forty years, make her famous, and put her in charge of the periodical with the largest circulation in the nation (Okker, 13). With this shift in occupations came a shift in the power balance between the two friends; Hale was once again the more powerful of the two, the more integrated into mainstream literary culture.

What benefited Hale and Poe the most as literary figures, with a minimum amount of effort, were reviews and mentions in each other's periodicals. These occur with relative frequency during the time each was serving as editor, and "The Autography" is a good example. In *Burton's*, Poe included a review of Hale's domestic advice book, *The Good Housekeeper*. Poe assesses the work saying, "This is a very neat, and certainly a very useful little work, and will command a ready sale" (Poe, *Burton's*, Dec. 1839). Though this sounds like a compliment and would read to many as praise, for Poe, who disliked the commercial aims of much of the publishing industry, this is an indictment. This sense is heightened when Poe ends the review by saying, "In stooping, a moment from severer pursuits to one of this humble yet highly important character, Mrs. Hale is only following good example... We shall like her all the better when she returns to her customary themes" (Poe, *Burton's*, Dec. 1839). In Poe's eyes, high literature was the ultimate goal. He believed Hale an ally in this fight. When Hale wrote a domestic book, which would succeed commercially, but had little literary worth in the way Poe defined it, he viewed it as a betrayal.

Poe seemed to like Hale best when she defied gender stereotypes. For example, in the November 1841 edition of *Graham's*, Poe included Hale in yet another "Autography," where he

again celebrated her masculine style. In the introduction, Poe explains his three goals in this “Autography,” which includes the signatures of over 100 literary figures:

In the first place, seriously to illustrate our position that the mental features are indicated (with certain exceptions) by the handwriting; secondly, to indulge in a little literary gossip; and, thirdly, to furnish our readers with a more accurate and at the same time more general collection of the autographs of our literati than is to be found elsewhere (Poe, *SLM*, Nov. 1841).

Again, Poe includes Hale as one of the literary elite. Given the stereotypical image of Poe, one might not think he would be the type to “indulge in a little literary gossip,” a highly feminized endeavor. Poe, both wanting to be a part of and rejecting mainstream literary culture, is interested in how it works, who gets in, and why. Poe’s praise of Hale and her gender-defying style comes through when he analyzes her handwriting and says, “Mrs. Hale is well known for her masculine style of thought. This is clearly expressed in her chirography which is far larger, heavier, and altogether bolder than that of her sex generally” (Poe, *SLM*, Nov. 1841). Poe praises the masculine aspects of Hale’s personality, implying that her manly ways of thinking are what allow her to be a successful literary figure. By accepting Hale as a member of his high-minded literati, Poe was defying the gender stereotypes that pervaded his era. Yet, by couching his admiration of Hale in the language of masculinity, Poe buys into the accepted wisdom, which said that women are generally silly and frivolous.

In the same span of time that Poe was providing positive mentions and reviews of Hale in his publications, Hale was doing the same for Poe in *Godey’s*. In the January 1841 edition of the *Lady’s Book*, Hale writes a review of Poe’s *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. The review is enthusiastically favorable, beginning, “Mr. Poe is a writer of rare and various abilities. He possesses a fine perception of the ludicrous, and his humorous stories are instinct with the principle of mirth” (Hale, *Godey’s*, Jan. 1840). Though mirth may not be the first thing modern

readers associate with Poe, the review praises Poe's talent. The review ends, saying, "The volumes now published contain favourable specimens of Mr. Poe's powers, and cannot fail to impress all who read them, with a conviction of his genius" (Hale, *Godey's*, Jan. 1840). Unlike Poe's review of Hale's domestic advice book, Hale's review of Poe is resoundingly approving. This is the second time a review Hale has printed about Poe has used the word "genius," indicating an enduring respect and admiration.

Flattering reviews of Poe and his work continue appearing in the *Lady's Book* as the years go on. The November 1842 *Lady's Book* contains a praise-filled review of "The Pit and the Pendulum" that appeared in a holiday gift book that year. Though dark, gruesome, and disturbing, Hale explains her support for the story, calling it, "one of his [Poe's] sombre and thrilling narratives exhibiting the intense nature of his graver musings" (Hale, *Godey's*, Nov. 1842). In the September 1843 *Godey's*, Hale includes a favorable line about a new anthology, *Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe*, in which she says, "The reputation of this author is deservedly high for originality, Independence, a perfect command of the English language, and a certain easy and assured mastery of every subject which he handles" (Hale, *Godey's*, Sep. 1843). Again, Hale gives Poe unconditional praise, showing a real appreciation for his work and willingness to promote it to the public at large.

The next preserved letter between Hale and Poe comes May 29, 1844, and kicks off the period of Poe's career most closely associated with *Godey's*. As Charis-Carlton explains of Poe, "his stories and literary criticism appeared in thirteen consecutive issues of the magazine starting in November 1845, meaning that the well-paying magazine provided the bulk of his income for the period" (Charis-Carlton, 201-2). Failing as editor at a number of magazines, and at getting a government post he was after, Poe was in desperate need of income (Thomas & Jackson). As

such, this is largely a business letter. Poe writes, “Mr. W was pleased to express himself in very warm terms of the article, which he considers the best I have written and urges me to submit it to Mr. Riker, for the next *Opal*” (Poe, *Letters*, 254). The note after the letter explains that “Mr. W” is N.P. Willis, who again appears in the literary circle with Poe and Hale. The note also tells that “The *Opal*: a pure gift for the holy days,” was an annual gift book that Hale was editing. Poe continues the letter, in a way that is open about his dire financial straights, again evidencing a high level of comfort and familiarity with Hale:

...if you could accept an article—whether you would wish to see the article in question—or whether you could be so kind to take it, unseen, upon Mr. Willis’s testimony in its favor. It cannot be improper to state that I make the latter request to save time, because I am, as usual, exceedingly in need of a little money (Poe, *Letters*, 254).

Poe uses the opinion of N.P. Willis as a sort of literary capital. Poe needs money fast, and has no time to go through the conventional process of vetting for a periodical. He wants Hale to trust the combined reputation of he and Willis and agree to publish the article sight-unseen. In a letter dated two days later, hinting at the urgency of the situation, Poe thanks Hale for her “satisfactory letter,” agrees to the price she offered, and mentions, “I am exceedingly anxious to be ranked in your list of contributors” (Poe, *Letters*, 255). Poe shows his gentlemanly politeness and respect for Hale. Assuming that Hale kept the conditions mentioned here, it shows the ways in which members of this literary coterie were willing to rely upon and assist one another.

In the first letter Poe sent to Hale, he addressed her as “Dear Madam.” By the letters in 1844, Poe writes to her more familiarly, adding a word to make it “My Dear Madam,” indicating a level of growing friendship between the two. In addition, Poe signs off differently to Hale between the years. In the 1837 letter, Poe signs off saying, “With the highest regard / I am Yr Ob St, / Edgar A Poe.” The May 29<sup>th</sup> 1844 letter is missing the sign-off, but in the May 31<sup>st</sup> letter, he signs off saying, “With Sincere Respect / Edgar A Poe” (Poe, *Letters*, 254-5) Again the pattern is

getting more familiar, but in all letters, Poe defers to Hale with a sense of respect and admiration. There remains a level of formality that does not come across in some of Poe's letters to others, where he signs off with "EAP" or simply "Poe." He does not write off convention with a pithy signoff such as "Yours &c." as he does in letters to closer acquaintances. Poe still respects Hale as someone with the power to provide him entry into the literary world, but has developed a more familiar relationship with her. They seem to be connecting on a personal level.

In the years that follow, the height of Poe's involvement with *Godey's*, numerous selections of Poe's work appear in the magazine. Throughout 1844, three Poe short stories—"A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," "The Oblong Box," and "Thou Art the Man!"—are published in the *Lady's Book* alongside more praise of Poe in a column reviewing yet another holiday gift book. A year of even greater fortune for Poe, 1845 brought him a position editing at *The Mirror*, which had been taken over by N.P. Willis, and later that year at *The Broadway Journal*. In January of that year, Poe's "The Raven" was published in *The Mirror*, an event that, according to Thomas and Jackson, "makes his presence felt in literary New York" (Thomas & Jackson). Poe gained literary celebrity in these years, and yet still published prolifically in the *Lady's Book*, with two short stories, "The Ten Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade" and "Big Abel and the Little Manhattan," and two series of "Marginal Notes," a hodge-podge of thoughts and opinions written by Poe.

In addition to Hale supporting Poe in her periodicals, Poe was still supporting her in his. Also published in *Godey's* around this time is an extract from Poe's editorial remarks in *The Broadway Journal* supporting Hale's initiatives related to copyright law. Poe explains his support for the measures, saying of *Godey's*, "In 'The Editor's Book Table,' there are some very just remarks on the subject of taking out copyright for Magazines. It is really very difficult to see

how any one can, in conscience, object to such a course on the part of Messrs. Godey and Graham” (Poe, *Godey’s*, June 1845). Ironically, the work to get the magazine material copyrighted and the push for exclusively original content for the *Lady’s Book* was primarily Hale’s project. When Godey edited the *Lady’s Book*, the material was largely reprinted from other magazines, following the common practice of the day (Okker, 87). Praising an act of Hale’s, Poe gives Godey the credit. Whether this is because the magazine made it appear that way and Poe genuinely did not know this was Hale’s work, or whether Poe wanted to preserve the illusion of male control over periodicals, is difficult to say. Regardless, Poe had the same values as Hale when it came to protecting the rights of authors and publishers, and worked to promote her goals through his publications.

During this time of heightened interaction between Poe and *Godey’s* comes the most intimate and friendly surviving letter from Poe to Hale. In the letter, from October of 1845, Poe again addresses Hale as “Dear Madam.” He asks her to “pardon my seeming discourtesy in not sooner thanking you for your sweet poem, and for the high honor you confer on me in the matter of your proposed volume” (Poe, *Letters* 298). Editor’s notes explain that the poem is likely “Alice Ray,” a piece Hale sent to Poe that he would later review in his magazine. Again, Poe’s respect for Hale comes out in this letter, as he compliments her poetry. The nature of the proposed volume will come to light in Poe’s next letter to Hale, but in the meantime, Poe concludes saying, “I *have* some acquaintance with Mess. Clark and Austin, and believe that you will find them, as publishers, everything you could wish” (Poe, *Letters* 299). Poe and Hale, both outsiders in the literary world, share their connections with one another. Each lets the other know of potential advantages and disadvantages of different choices within the literary landscape. Poe signs off this letter somewhat more fondly than he had previously, saying, “Command me, my

Dear / Madam, in all things, and believe me / Very Respectfully & Truly Yours / Edgar A Poe” (Poe, *Letters* 299). The language used here shows the two becoming closer, professionally as well as personally.

Poe’s longest streak of pieces in the *Lady’s Book* continues into 1846 with columns entitled “Literary Criticism.” Appearing every month, from December 1845 through April 1846, the column reviews works of prominent writers of the era, and eventually morphs into *The Literati*. The five writers Poe reviews in this column include four poets—Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Mary B. Hewitt, Frances Sargent Osgood, and William Cullen Bryant—and one fiction writer—William Gilmore Simms. Three of the five writers Poe reviews are female. Partly this is due to the forum, a women’s magazine, and it is not unlikely that Hale, who believed in promoting women’s authorship, influenced Poe’s choices. Regardless, it shows that Poe was willing to view female poets and authors as equally capable as male poets and authors.

The last surviving letter from Poe to Hale comes January 16, 1846, and shows more of how Hale and Poe became close and worked to help one another achieve their literary ambitions. In the letter, Poe apologizes for not writing sooner, but goes on to give his advice to Hale concerning publishers Wiley and Putnam saying of a work of hers, “I think Clark & Austin or Paine & Burgess would be more willing to publish it, and afford you more liberal terms than Wiley & Putnam—although in point of caste, the latter are to be preferred and their issues are sure of *some* notice in England” (Poe, *Letters*, 311). This letter shows how Hale and Poe shared the insider information they gained from different experiences interacting with the publishing industry. Poe goes over the advantages and disadvantages of these different agencies, from payment to publicity. The mention of the publisher getting attention in England proves that both Poe and Hale wanted careers that reached across the Atlantic. With Hale’s objective of spreading



the reputation of the American literary scene and Poe's goals of attaining literary stardom, this is unsurprising.

Also in this letter, Poe provides feedback on a play Hale wrote, showing the way each turns to the other for literary advice. In the letter, Poe comments on a play, *Ormond Grosvenor*, that also appeared serially in the *Lady's Book*, saying, "...I deduce from some passages of it—especially towards its *dénouement*—that, with earnest endeavor in this walk of Literature, you would succeed far better than any American in the composition of that rare work of art, an effective *acting* play" (Poe, *Letters*, 311). Hale, with her mission to create an American literature equal to or surpassing that of Europe, would have found this high praise indeed. Either Poe admires Hale nearly as much as she does him, or he is exceptionally gifted in flattering one who controls the purse strings for his main source of income. Either way, this type of interaction represents the encouragement that each provided the other in their quests for literary success.

The letter wraps up with additional praise of Hale from Poe—"In our literary circles here your 'Alice Ray' is universally appreciated and admired" (Poe, *Letters*, 311)—and a thanks for a poem sent to him, "I believe that, as yet, I have not even had the courtesy to thank you for your sweet lines from 'The Sabbath and its Rest.' Upon the principle of 'better late than never' will you permit me to thank you, *very* sincerely, now?" (Poe, *Letters*, 311). These lines, and the letter as whole, imply an ongoing correspondence between the two, in which each sends their literary work to the other in hopes of advice, feedback, and publication. Poe also includes a post-script where he references his project of the ideal periodical, always on the horizon, but never happening. Poe says, "I am now busy making arrangements for the establishment of a Magazine which offers a wide field of literary ambition" (Poe, *Letters*, 311). As pillars of nineteenth-century periodical culture, the correspondence between Hale and Poe provides insight into what

was going on in their minds and the ways they were collaborating to break into and even change the literary landscape.

Another editorial piece published in the *Lady's Book* from 1846 shows how Hale and Poe worked together, supporting one another's opinions and right to express them. In an editorial note from June 1846 entitled "The Authors and Mr. Poe," Hale explains, "We have received several letters from New York, anonymous and from personal friends, requesting us to be careful what we allow Mr. Poe to say of the New York authors, many of whom are our personal friends" (Hale, *Godey's*, June 1846). *The Literati* created controversy, with calls for censorship prompting this editorial statement. However, the *Godey's* staff stood behind Poe, further elaborating in the editorial, "We are not to be intimidated by loss of friends, or turned from our purpose by honeyed words. Our course is onward" (Hale, *Godey's*, June 1846). A publication with integrity, *Godey's* refused to censor Poe, and instead chose freedom of speech as its guiding principle.

Intellectual honor was not the only thing on the minds of those in charge of *Godey's*, however, as even the rest of "The Authors and Mr. Poe" shows. Hale describes the circulation woes caused by the clamor for copies of the first *Godey's* issue with *The Literati*, saying, "The May edition was exhausted before the first of May, and we have had orders for hundreds from Boston and New York which we could not supply" (Hale, *Godey's*, June 1846). Clearly the controversy Poe stirred up drew attention, both to Poe and to *Godey's*. In fact, *Godey's* anticipated the excitement the series would produce, stating in the May issue, along with the first installment of *The Literati*, "We are much mistaken if the papers of Mr. P do not raise some commotion in the literary emporium" (Hale, *Godey's*, May 1846). *The Literati* was a mutually beneficial endeavor. Poe got to vent his frustrations at the dominant literary scene, a goal that

*Godey's* editors supported as well, and *Godey's* got more publicity out of the series than almost anything else the magazine published.

In the years to come, Poe would publish a few more pieces in *The Lady's Book*, including the final installments of *The Literati* and the famous “The Cask of Amontillado” in 1846. In 1847, the year Poe's young wife died, his name appears mostly in third-party letters to the editor challenging his *Literati* opinions. In November of 1847, Poe supplied the *Lady's Book* with a review of Nathaniel Hawthorne, revising his formerly harsh *Literati* indictment to be somewhat kinder. Neither Poe's writing, nor even his name appeared throughout 1848, a year in which Poe attempted to promote his own ideal magazine, *The Stylus*, but found himself sidetracked by a number of romantic scandals (Thomas & Jackson). Poe published his last short story in *Godey's*, “Mellonta Tauta” in the February 1849 issue. At that point, Poe did not have much time left. Spiraling deeper into his alcoholism, Poe died on October 7<sup>th</sup> of that year.

Fittingly, Poe's last appearance in the *Lady's Book* from the time around his life—Poe's name appears in 109 articles as author or subject throughout the run of the *Lady's Book*, with roughly 70 of these from the time after Poe's death—was in an autography. Published in December of 1849, and using the same sort of contrived set-up as appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* “Autography,” the following letter begins the segment: “Sir I am a foreigner, who has been traveling in this country for a year past. Anxious to take away with me some memento of American literature, I addressed notes to various authors, requesting them to furnish me, free of cost, the means of complying with my desire” (Hale, *Godey's*, Dec. 1849). Each literary figure is then given space for a letter in which they explain the purpose of poetry and provide one of their own poems. Under Poe's name are a letter and a poem, “The Lady Hubbard.” It can be assumed that Hale was inspired to include this segment because of Poe's

own successful use of the form, indicating one way in which Hale's editorial style and content was influenced by Poe. Other writers appearing alongside Poe in the column include N.P. Willis, George P. Morris, and John G. Whittier (*Godey's*, Dec. 1849). This is the perfect place for Poe to last appear in the *Lady's Book*. He sits alongside his literary contemporaries in a style of article he himself made famous. This segment in the *Lady's Book* provides evidence for Poe's success making an impression on the world of literary art and culture, Hale's victory as a female editor, and both of their triumphs in promoting magazine culture in the US.

Keeping with the mystery that surrounds Poe's image, his last appearance in *The Lady's Book* is a matter of scholarly debate. Though some have not questioned the autography, and accepted that the writings are Poe's, others argue that neither the letter nor the poem are his, and are instead part of a "lighthearted hoax" on the part of *Godey's* editors ("Poe's Writings"). Scholars who believe that the letter and poem are not Poe's cite Thomas Ollive Mabbott's observation: "I once saw a manuscript of these verses in the hand of Thomas Dunn English, who is the probable author" (Mabbott). Mabbott's conclusion cannot be taken at face value. He provides no evidence for the pieces not being Poe's other than the manuscript in English's handwriting. English could have copied the poem at any point. Other questions, the answers to which would help prove the accuracy of the claim, go unanswered: do the styles of the poem and letter match that of Poe's other writings? Would a hoax fit within Hale's editorial mission and style? Could she have known the letter and poem was from English and printed it anyway? Though Mabbott seems convinced English is the author, his analysis brings up more questions than it answers.

Other evidence from the *Lady's Book* does suggest that the provenance of the pieces is questionable. The autography includes a disclaimer that reads as follows: Supporting this view,

in the next issue of *Godey's* the editors reassure readers of their respect for Poe's memory with the following disclaimer: "We have examined the MSS. [sic] sent, and are willing to publish a few of them; but express no opinion in regard to their authenticity. The signatures which accompany some of the letters look very like originals & the poems, we should say, were *very* original" (Hale, *Godey's*, Dec. 1849). These lines indicate that authenticity is not the main concern of the autography. Also supporting the idea that the material published is fake is an apology in the very next issue: "Lest some of our readers should suppose that we had been trifling with the memory of a gifted but unfortunate son of genius, we deem it proper to state that the article had been sent to the press before the lamented death of the poet occurred..." (Hale, *Godey's*, Jan. 1850). This could be taken as an apology for a prank, either conscious or unconscious, or simply as a tribute to Poe's memory in a periodical not in the habit of printing obituaries.

The letter and poem themselves continue to complicate matters. The poem, "Old Lady Hubbard," a somewhat bizarre poetic retelling of the children's nursery rhyme, does not seem to fit Poe's style, but does not differ quite so much as to completely rule out the possibility of his authorship. In the letter explaining good poetry, a number of lines could either be read as Poe speaking earnestly about style or as a close, though satirical imitation of Poe's writing. The questionable author writes, "The true purpose of poetry appears to have been misunderstood by poets in all ages. It has been reserved for the moderns, or one of them at least, to discover its proper uses" (*Godey's*, Dec. 1849). This sounds like a valid explanation, but the phrase "or one of them" might be a pointed imitation of Poe's egotistical worldview. Another line could be read in two similarly divergent ways. The author explains of poetry, "Its true office is the beautiful only. It may verge on the grotesque, but must not enter it. It must never deal with the terrible, the

vividly fearful—the horrid, or the profound” (*Godey’s*, Dec. 1849). This is perhaps a nice way to view Poe’s unique style—verging on the grotesque, but concerned more with beauty in the end. However, is it how Poe himself would have thought of his poetry? Additionally, by saying poetry must “never deal with...the profound,” the letter again seems to verge on satire. Did Poe really believe poetry should be unconcerned with meaning?

Whether or not Poe composed the letter and poem in the December 1849 issue of *Godey’s* is a research endeavor all its own and, unfortunately, outside the scope of this project. Regardless of whether Poe wrote the material, it still provides evidence of the ways print culture, and the coterie of which Poe and Hale were members, functioned. That Thomas Dunn English, Poe’s literary rival, may be the forger in question serves as another example of how small and insular different circles of literary culture were. If Hale knew and willingly published false letters, it indicates more of the cheerful literary pranks and jokes that come across in things like Poe’s “Autography” and jokes about *The Mirror*. Despite questionable origins of the material, the letter and poem represent more of the mutually supportive relationship, where Hale and Poe provided publicity, advice, and humor for the other as they tried to navigate the small though complex world of nineteenth-century American literary culture.

## **Conclusion: Making an Impact**

By coming together, Hale and Poe carved out a space for alternative literati. At first their goals seem unrelated. Poe strove for creative integrity, honesty in art, and personal superstardom. Hale was interested in creating a new and wonderful American literature and expanding the literary scene to include women. If Hale hoped to achieve fame alongside that, she hid it well. Poe as a unique and unconventional individual, and Hale as a woman, ran into significant challenges when they tried to make these goals a reality. Chance, mutual interests, and (though neither would mention it directly), mutual frustrations and exclusion brought them together. As editors, each believed in the transformative power of periodicals. As friends, each was willing to give the other publicity, advice, and support to get past the common pitfalls of the literary world.

Though Hale and Poe came together for their mutual benefit, it was Poe who, as a man, benefited most. Hale served as an advocate for Poe in the days when she had achieved literary fame and he was still an obscure young man who had not yet hit his stride. As often happens, the mentee ended up overshadowing the mentor. However, in this case, it was not so much a matter of talent as of gender. Hale remained nearly as popular and well known as Poe during the lifetimes of the two. It was only after their deaths that Poe's legacy began to outstrip Hale's. However, Poe and Hale also began with different goals. Poe had a more self-centered mission; though he did care about the project of magazine publication, his primary aim was to promote his own writing career. Hale, on the other hand, had more collective objectives when she set out, hoping to benefit women and the American nation as a whole. In a way, their remaining legacies are fitting given the goals with which each set out. Promoting Poe's image as an international

superstar helped Hale's nationalist goals. As odd as it may seem to set up Poe as the embodiment of American literary culture, that is exactly what Hale did.

Poe's relationship with Hale makes apparent a side of him that is often forgotten by modern critics and fans. In a way, this side of Poe is both much less and much more subversive than the image typically presented. Poe is often seen as a complete outsider, celebrated for his dark and unconventional image. The gentlemanly language he adopts in his polite correspondence with the motherly Hale shows a man well versed in the modes of conventional nineteenth-century society. His willingness to form an alliance, and indeed a personal friendship, with one of the biggest celebrities of the domestic women's movement and to rely on her popular women's publication shows he was not averse to the norms of the time, at least on the surface. Poe bent gender lines, and encouraged those around him to do the same, in a way that would expand literary culture, but keep the benders in the realm of respectable society. Poe was not a complete outsider in society, but he was one in literature. Rather than accepting this or changing himself, Poe formed unlikely alliances to create a space where his style was recognized for its originality.

Though the picture that comes out of examining Poe's friendship with Hale turns common conceptions of the gothic writer upside down, the public rarely thinks of Sarah Josepha Hale. If they do, it is in relation to Thanksgiving or "Mary Had A Little Lamb," two things that seemingly have nothing to do with Edgar Allan Poe. When Hale *is* remembered, it is as a woman so very patriotic and invested in conventional women's roles that there could be absolutely nothing unconventional or subversive about her. Her friendship with Poe casts her in a different light. Interested in a project of truly great literature and expanding women's roles, Hale was willing to employ methods outside the span of what was considered acceptable for women of her



status. Hale was willing to work with a much younger, stranger, and darker writer because he was doing things that were new, different and exciting. Hale's project of expanding roles available to women was also subversive in a way that fit well with Poe's style of reasonable gender bending. Hale is certainly a more complex figure than the one-dimensional image that remains of her today.

The relationship between Hale and Poe that can be reconstructed through correspondence and publications represents a part of American literary history that is often forgotten. The anthologized icons of nineteenth-century American literary culture did not fit the common modes of the day, but were standouts in an era when mainstream literature was often mundane and unoriginal. Those remembered today are those who broke the rules and strove to make their own unique voices heard. However, this often could not be achieved without assistance. Those who succeed in the literary world rarely do it alone, but their support systems, which are often as fascinating as the authors themselves, are frequently forgotten. The relationship between Poe and Hale represents the way that often, those who do things differently, those with the ability to work alongside those unlike themselves, those who embrace the unexpected and unconventional, are the ones who make a lasting impression on literary culture.

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