

1982

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#### Recommended Citation

Ning, Shen and Stauffer, Donald B. (1982) "Poe's Influence on Modern Chinese Literature," *Studies in English, New Series*: Vol. 3 , Article 20.

Available at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies\\_eng\\_new/vol3/iss1/20](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies_eng_new/vol3/iss1/20)

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THE INFLUENCE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE  
ON MODERN CHINESE LITERATURE\*

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Of all American writers Edgar Allan Poe is perhaps the least understood by readers in China today. Unlike Mark Twain, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, and Ernest Hemingway, whose works have been translated and published in great numbers, Poe belongs to another category and his name is virtually unknown to the younger generation. Translations have never been reprinted since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and his works are kept in the least frequented areas of libraries, read occasionally by specialists in American literature. It is difficult to remember that Poe was one of the first American writers to have been introduced into China, and that his tales, poems, and poetic theories influenced China's most important writers of the 1920's.

Zheng Zhen-duo, a leading member of the "New Culture Movement," wrote in his *An Outline of Literature* in 1926: "Washington Irving made American literature first recognized in Europe, while it is Edgar Allan Poe who first made American literature greatly influence European literature. In 1909, the year of Poe's centennial, the whole of Europe, from London to Moscow, and from Christiania to Rome, claimed its indebtedness to Poe and praised his great success."<sup>1</sup>

Zheng's description of Poe's European reputation could also be applied to the situation in China in the 1920's, when Poe was constantly mentioned in the leading periodicals whenever there was an article about American literature. He was praised as "the greatest 19th-century American writer," "the founder of the short story," "an extraordinary genius." At the same time his works were being continuously translated into Chinese. It is no exaggeration to say that

\*This article is adapted from an M.A. thesis by Mr. Sheng for the Department of Western Languages and Literature of Peking University in 1981. Professor Stauffer was his advisor.

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almost all the leading writers of the time, in one way or another, showed some interest in Poe.

In fact, China's most famous and most respected modern writer, Lu Xun, and his brother, Zhou Zuo-ren, were the first to introduce Poe's works into the country. Since his childhood, Lu Xun had had a great interest in what he called *zasue* (miscellaneous training): romance, grotesque tales, science fiction, travel notes, and so on, and in detective stories. In 1903 he went to Japan to study medicine. There he found a copy of "The Gold-Bug" annotated in Japanese, which he sent home to his brother. Zhou Zuo-ren, as he later recalled, also found the tale exquisitely beautiful, and he decided to translate it into Chinese. Fragments from Zhou Zuo-ren's diary dating from that time contain references to the translation and some thoughts about Poe:

The diary of the Yisi lunar year [1905] records something of my translation of tales, which include "The Tale of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "The Gold-Bug" by Allan Poe...The general heading is "The Study of English Literature." There are four or five books altogether, one of which is a long poem by Longfellow, as I now remember. All of these books were sent by Lu Xun. ....Yisi Lunar year, the first month, the fourteenth day, "Finished the translation of American Poe's tale *The Kidd Drawing* ("The Gold-Bug"), about eighteen thousand words." I sent it to Ding Chu-wo, and received Chu-wo's return letter on the fourth day, the second month, in which he promised me a remuneration of fifty copies after it was published. ....The twenty-ninth day, "Received Chu-wo's letter of the twenty-sixth, saying that *The Kidd Drawing* had been sent to the printers, and its name had been changed to *Yuchong Yuan* ("The Story of a Jade-Bug").<sup>2</sup>

Lu Xun's knowledge of Poe is by no means limited to "The Gold-Bug," however. In one of his early essays, he remarked that "the black cat in Edgar Allan Poe's tale is really horrible."<sup>3</sup> Later, in an introduction to Mark Twain's *Eve's Diary*, he made a judicious comparison between Twain and other nineteenth-century American writers: Poe, Hawthorne, and Whitman. He pointed out that Twain was outwardly a humorist; but inwardly a misanthrope, although Poe, Hawthorne and Whitman did not, like Twain, "think in one way, but behave in another." He also noticed that American writers before the Civil War could easily keep their individualist features, but after the Civil War they had to adapt themselves to the social requirements of a highly developed capitalist system. These remarks show that Lu Xun had

read and understood Poe; in later years in one of his talks with an American friend he admitted that in his early years he had been influenced by Poe.

The Zhou brothers' interest in Poe continued for quite some time. Not long after the publication of "The Story of a Jade-Bug" Zhou Zou-ren translated "Silence—A Fable," which was published in a student magazine, *Honan*.<sup>4</sup> In 1909 the two brothers published *Yuwai Xiaoshuo ji (A Collection of Foreign Fiction)* in Tokyo, in which "Silence" is included. Lu Xun wrote a preface for the book, in which he emphasized that the collected tales "are all chosen with discretion." This two-volume collection did not sell well; only forty sets were sold in Tokyo and Shanghai, and remaining copies were accidentally burnt in a fire. However, the collection was reprinted by the Shanghai Qunyi Publishing Co. in 1920 and again in 1924. In the introduction to Poe in this edition he is described as "a genius of Hell," but the editors note that "his poems and prose tales are extremely beautiful," and that he is "good at depicting the particulars of human emotions such as horror or regret."

We do not know who next translated Poe, but according to Zhang Jing-lu, the compiler of *Historical Data Concerning Publication in China*, Zhou Shou-juan had translated and edited a three-volume *Short Stories by Famous European and American Writers*. This collection included "The Tell-Tale Heart" as well as a brief introduction about the author. Before its publication in March 1917 the publishing house sent the series to the Ministry of Education for approval and registration. Lu Xun, who was working in the ministry at that time, expressed warm praise for the anthology.<sup>5</sup> A few years later (1920) "The Tell-Tale Heart" was re-translated by Shen Yan-bing, then editor of the *Short Story Monthly* and later to become one of modern China's most famous writers as Mao Dun. The tale first appeared in a popular magazine, *Eastern Miscellany (Dongfang zhazhi)* and then was reprinted in the *Collection of Modern English and American Short Stories (Dongfang Library)*, published by Shangwu Publishing House.<sup>6</sup>

In his introduction Shen Yan-bing declares that Poe is famous for his mysticism. This assessment is apparently developed from comments made by Lu Xun and his brother in their *Collection of Foreign Fiction*. "Poe distinguished himself," Shen Yan-bing writes, "by his idiosyncratic style among his contemporaries. He was entirely different from the general public in taste. His works—short stories in

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particular—are mostly visionary and unearthly things, which, however, are also those things that will impinge upon our souls from time to time.”<sup>7</sup> Shen Yan-bing was not alone in classifying Poe as a mystical writer. Some time later, when Zheng Zhen-duo succeeded Shen as editor of *Short Story Monthly*, he wrote an introductory note to a translation of Poe's “The Angel of the Odd,” combining the views of Lu Xun and Shen Yan-bing.<sup>8</sup>

We might ask why a mystical writer like Poe should be of interest to Chinese readers in the 1920's. There was a period of gigantic and complex social changes, with old beliefs being abandoned and changes in man's sense of values. In the western literature of this period, as Emile Legouis has pointed out, “cynicism was an accepted doctrine; for some time, under colour of aestheticism, a certain decadence was the fashion. Concern with morality was held by some people to be incompatible with the liberty of the mind and the truth of representation.”<sup>9</sup> This trend was soon noticed and described by Chinese critics as “neoromanticism.” As early as 1920 the *Eastern Miscellany* started to publish articles commenting on this literary trend. In their analysis of neoromanticism they all emphasized the presence of mystical elements which they regarded as a revival of the tendencies of romanticism. They shared the belief that “the artists are now longing to explore the unknowable, which seems to be more profound and lasting than real life...to step into the realm of the instinct, and to extract meanings from the mystical unknown.”<sup>10</sup> The *Short Story Monthly*, the *Literature Ten Daily* and some other publications all published articles written by such prominent critics and authors as Xie Lu-yi and Yan Ji-cheng dealing with this new literary trend. The literary atmosphere, in which the drama of Maeterlinck and the fiction of Andreyev were fashionable, was also favorable to Poe.

But on the other hand we should be aware that aestheticism also had an influence on a number of Chinese authors in the 1920's, in two different literary coteries: the Creation Society and the Crescent Society. The former, which was very influential, was founded by the poet Guo Mo-ro, Yu Da-fu, Chen Fang-wu, and others. It adopted the principle of “art for art's sake” in opposition to “art for life's sake,” advocated by the Literary Association, still another coterie found by

Shen Yan-bing and others. The Crescent Society, headed by Xu Zhi-mo and joined by Wen Yi-do, attempted a similar kind of romanticism in order to establish the independence of art from politics. For these literary societies, many writers and poets with aesthetic tendencies became their idols. This is how Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the French Symbolists were introduced into China, along with Poe whom they regarded as "one of the three great aesthetic poets of the modern world" (the other two were Wilde and D'Annunzio).<sup>11</sup>

Another reason, incidentally, why Poe may have been introduced into China at this time is that more and more radicals found the need to repudiate the traditional conception of literature as didactic and utilitarian, and as a vehicle for Confucianism and other ideas they considered reactionary.

In 1924, when the Chinese New Poetry was still in its early stages, the *Short Story Monthly* published Poe's "The Poetic Principle," an event which had its influence on the development of the Chinese New Poetry. Poe's poems were not translated as extensively as his tales. His most famous poem, "The Raven," first appeared in 1923.<sup>12</sup> It was followed by "Annabel Lee" and "The Bells."<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that "The Raven" was repeatedly translated into different versions and by different literary coteries. The first translation, published in the *Literature Weekly*, was a pell-mell piece of work, which was, in the opinion of Guo Mo-ro, "extremely absurd." The *Creation Weekly*, a publication of the Creation Society, then published another version by Zhan Bai-fu, which was revised by Guo Mo-ro himself. In reply to one reader asking his opinion of the poem, Guo Mo-ro wrote that he thought the poem "too ostentatious,...although it was generally praised." He suggested that the structure of the poem "could be compared to both Ouyang Xiu's 'The Voice of Autumn' and Jai Yi's 'The Owl' taken together."<sup>14</sup> It is neither as natural as the former, however, nor as unadorned as the latter. Besides, because of the excessive repetition of 'nevermore,' the effect of the poem seems somehow to be diffused."<sup>15</sup>

At about the same time "The Raven" caught the eye of another literary group which took its name from its own publication, the *Critical Review (Xue-heng)*. This group, consisting mainly of Nanjing college professors, stood in opposition to the New Culture Movement. To counter-balance the influence of the Creation Society, the *Critical Review* also published a translation of "The Raven," entirely different

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in style and diction. A Chinese verse form was purposely adopted; the rules for classical versification were strictly observed, reflecting the neo-classical tastes of this group. The title was also changed to "The Song of the Owl," because, as the editor Wu Mi explained, the owl is also a bird of omen, and the change was intended to remind Chinese readers of the classical poem bearing the same title. A year later, in 1925, Yang Hui, a member of the Sunken Bell Society, did still another translation.<sup>16</sup>

The Editor of the *Critical Review*, Wu Mi, was a professor at Qinghua University in Beijing. He had studied at the University of Virginia, where he visited Poe's old room. As early as 1920, in his "Notes on English Poetry" printed in the autumn issue of the *Quarterly* run by Chinese students in America, he showed his admiration for the "poetic genius." As a poet, he wrote, "Poe may well be compared to Li He [a famous poet of the late Tang dynasty], and his "Poetic Principle" and "Philosophy of Composition" may also serve as examples to be followed by authors of later generations."<sup>17</sup>

With the appearance of more and more translations of Poe's works came critical comments on them. As early as 1920 Hu Xian-su, one of the Nanjing professors of the *Critical Review* group, pointed out that "Poe is a famous short story writer....It is Poe who made the short story a literary form. His writing techniques have been followed by the later short story writers. And his influence is particularly felt in the French short stories."<sup>18</sup> In his long critical review, "Evolution of Western Fiction," Xie Lu-yi wrote: "Allan Poe is a very important writer in the early period of American literary history....The style of his fiction has its influence in western Europe. It can well be said that he originated the short story."<sup>19</sup> In 1926 Zheng Zhen-duo emphasized once more that "Poe is the founder of the short story, a new powerful literary genre."<sup>20</sup> In the same year, the *Short Story Monthly* published "The Angel of the Odd," translated by Fu Dong-hua, together with a picture of Poe and his autograph.<sup>21</sup> In February 1927 "The Gold-Bug" appeared in the *Morning Daily Supplement* in installments retranslated by Tong Ye (pseudonym).

In the same year Zheng Zhen-duo finished his complete history of world literature from pre-classical times to the present, the first of its kind published in Chinese, entitled *An Outline of Literature*. Chapter 40 was devoted to five American writers of the nineteenth century: Cooper, Irving, Hawthorne, Stowe, and Poe. His praise of Poe may

seem somewhat excessive; nevertheless he made a number of good judgments about the tales of ratiocination and about "Ligeia" and "Shadow."<sup>22</sup>

Another important piece of criticism appeared in the Beijing *Morning Daily Supplement* about the same time. This was "The Art of Short Fiction" by Ren Qiu (pseudonym). It gives a detailed account of the growth of short fiction beginning with Poe, in the course of which various aspects of Poe's theories on short fiction are closely examined in relation to his own best-known tales. The author suggests that Poe's tales are intended to achieve three kinds of "narrative effects": "the effect of action, the effect of character, and the effect of environment."<sup>23</sup>

In 1925 the Sunken Bell Society was established, with a special interest in Poe. In July 1927 the society published a special issue of its magazine devoted to Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann. It included three of Poe's tales, "Ligeia," "Eleonora," and "The Black Cat," translated by Chen Wei-mo, and two poems, "The Bells, and "The Raven," translated by Yang Hui. Chen Wei-mo also wrote a critical review, "Edgar Allan Poe's Fiction," for this issue. This review differs from early criticism in its conscientious study of all Poe's tales. It is divided into four parts: the development of critical opinion about Poe; Poe's mysticism and terror; Poe's aesthetic principles; and Poe's influence abroad. According to Chen, Poe's art is "conscious art," and "his works are also a record of his own experience," which is nothing like the experience of ordinary people, but "the extraordinary experience of horror and mystery." Chen believes that Poe builds up "a world of his own," in which his imagination was always lingering on death and tombs and the supernatural. On Poe's aesthetic views Chen Wei-mo writes that "Poe is in pursuit of beauty," and his beauty is inseparable from strangeness or proportion. As a result, Chen believes one can hardly find anything resembling real life, except in "X-ing a Paragrab" and a few others, in which there is a faint satire of reality. Likewise, "most of the characters in Poe's tales are illusory."<sup>24</sup> About the same time, Poe's tale, "The Assigination," was translated by Zhu Wei-ji and later collected into *The Daffodils*, an anthology of foreign poetry and prose published by the Guanghua Publishing House in 1929.<sup>25</sup>

Up to this point Poe's tales and poems were published only in magazines. The first collection of Poe's short stories in book form appeared in 1934. Wu Guang-jian, one of the earliest professional



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translators in China, translated three of Poe's tales: "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Pit and the Pendulum," and "The Purloined Letter." In his preface, Wu calls Poe "the greatest literary genius in America" and "the inventor of the short story."<sup>26</sup> Not long afterward, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Tell-Tale Heart" were translated into Chinese by Jian Xian-ai and Chen Jia-ling for the World Library Series, edited by Zheng Zhen-duo.<sup>27</sup> And the *Literature Quarterly* published another version of "The Pit and the Pendulum," translated by Bai He (pseudonym).<sup>28</sup>

The general interest in Poe went into a decline in the 1930's, for several reasons. First, the New Literature Movement was from the start a socially-oriented cultural movement in China, aiming at eradicating feudalist ideology and bringing about radical social changes. As a result, realistic and naturalistic authors had a better chance of being popularized at that time. Second, most of the Chinese intellectuals, in the face of the social reality, had gone through a period of disillusionment and despair in the 1920's. They had lost faith in the old values, but had not yet acquired new beliefs. This momentary vacuum made it impossible for Poe's highly subjective, imaginary world to evoke a response in these readers. By the 1930's, however, this period of ideological wavering had, in the main, come to an end. The Communist Party of China, which was founded in 1921, had by this time become more mature, and had become the leading force of the New Culture Movement; meanwhile the split among the Chinese intellectuals became more and more apparent. In 1931, the Japanese invaded northeast China and a long period of national crisis began. Chinese literature was deeply involved in these events; therefore the poets and writers had to take a more direct and utilitarian approach. Under such circumstances, Poe's works, which were detached from social reality, could be enjoyed only by a very small circle of readers who treated literature as a mere pastime. For the general reading public Poe was no longer of interest, and after the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan in 1937, translation and publication of Poe's works virtually stopped.

Poe's star shone once more, however, before its thirty-year black-out in China. In the autumn of 1949 two books by Poe were published: one was *Selected Tales*, containing "The Black Cat," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Gold-Bug," and "Lionizing"; the other was *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*; all of which were translated by the late Jiao Ju-yin. By this time, all the major works of Poe had been translated into Chinese. These two titles belong to the twenty-volume Amer-

ican Literature Series, a project sponsored by the famous historian John K. Fairbank, in which many well-known Chinese literary figures took part; it is now recognized as a big event in post-war Sino-American cultural relations. Unfortunately the timing was bad; immediately after its publication Sino-American relations reached their lowest ebb and the whole series was soon forgotten. As we recall this series today, though, it becomes apparent that up until 1949 Poe was still regarded in China as one of the major nineteenth-century American writers and worthy to be introduced into China, for as the editor-in-chief, Zhao Jia-bi, recalls in his memoir, all the writers to be introduced in this series were discussed and decided upon by the two boards of editors organized for the project.<sup>29</sup> The boards included such prominent literary figures as Zheng Zhen-duo, Xia Yan, Ma Yan Xiang, Qian Zhong-shu, Jiao Ju-yin, Feng Yi-dai, Huang Zuo-ling, Li Jian-wu, Wang Xing-di, Xu Chi and Zhu Bao-guang.

## II

In the 1920's, after the "May Fourth Incident" of 1919, China's New Literature Movement flourished, particularly in the short story. In this decade there were more writers of short fiction than ever before in the history of Chinese literature. These works were influenced by the large amount of Western literature that had been translated, and as a result Chinese fiction was changing in both form and content. In content, literature was no longer a vehicle for feudalist didacticism. Writers such as Lu Xun began using stories as weapons to awaken the consciousness of the people to their suffering and oppression. The stories were no longer mere adventure stories: they began to examine the inner world of man in relation to the outward oppressions of society. As to form, they no longer consisted of a series of loosely related incidents; instead, they began to pay more attention to psychological analysis, to the emotional effect upon the reader, and to structural unity. In short, these new writers of fiction looked to the West for both new ideas and new forms, while still using native materials.

Poe's influence on modern Chinese short fiction was almost exclusively upon form, in three different ways. First of all, some of his well-known tales were used as models and their technical devices or structure were widely imitated. Second, there were elements of aestheticism, symbolism and mysticism in his work which later influenced European writers of the late nineteenth century, such as the

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French Symbolists and the writers whom the Chinese considered "neo-romantics." This neo-romanticism was popular among Chinese writers in the 1920's. The third and most common kind of influence was his use of language, his use of certain kinds of emotional effects, and his psychological probing into men's minds.

Let us look at three writers who were influenced by Poe in these different ways. The first is Chen Xiang-he, who in the early twenties left Fudan University in Shanghai to join his friends in Beijing, including Feng Zhi, Yang Hui and Chen Wei-mo. This group later founded the Sunken Bell Society, which worked for more than eight years to promote the new Chinese literature. Chen Xiang-he and the Sunken Bell Society had a special interest in Poe, and he was temperamentally susceptible to the dream and Gothic elements in Poe's fiction. He once recorded one of his own dreams, in which he saw "a girl in a long white robe, standing in front of the book stack. Her figure was thin and slender, her face ghastly pale, not very pretty; and her hair was fluffy and dishevelled. She had a pair of large, black and innocent eyes, surrounded by two dark circles that made her look old and emaciated." As he was startled out of his reverie, he found that "the oil lamp on the desk was almost completely burnt out and the room gloomy and sombre," and this reminded him "of the setting out of which stemmed the horror tales of Allan Poe."<sup>30</sup>

Two of his short stories bear traits of Poe's style. "The Mourning" (1926) concerns the repentance of a man, who, caught in a sudden fit of temper because of a deteriorating neurosis, kills his wife. Mr. B., the narrator, a worshipper of Poe, is full of sorrow and regret over his wife's death and he decides to sell all of his books to redeem his crime. But the only books he has left are "a thick volume of tales by E. A. Poe and three or four plays by Strindberg." He regards these two writers as "the most beloved and most admirable sages."<sup>31</sup> Poe inspires other elements in the tale; like the narrator of "The Black Cat" Mr. B. is a victim of the imp of the perverse. His confession reveals a gradual enfeebling of his moral nature as a result of his mental deterioration. The relations between Mr. B. and his wife also have resemblances to "The Black Cat." In Poe's tale, as James Gargano remarks, the narrator's "sentimental excesses, his extreme happiness in feeding and caressing his pets characterize him as deriving his sharpest pleasures from a sensationalism which suggests an unhealthy overdevelopment of the voluptuary side of his nature."<sup>32</sup> In Chen Xiang-he's story, the relations between Mr. B. and his wife are built not on love but a

"purely sexual love or animal desire." He is enchanted and overwhelmed by her physical beauty, but as the marital novelty wears off he soon becomes disappointed and increasingly annoyed by her inability to understand what she is asked. He seems to be in love with "a soulless, unconscious marble statue." And his wife has been reduced to "no more than a domestic pet, a cat or a dog, attracting no attention."<sup>33</sup> Like the master of the black cat, Mr. B. also daily grows "more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others."<sup>34</sup> He shows more and more "estrangement, intentional neglect, silent scolding, and an apathetic attitude," which his wife has to endure in silence. One stormy evening he loses his temper over some trifle and shuts his wife out of doors for the whole night and she freezes to death. This is then followed by Mr. B.'s efforts at moral redemption. We can see here some similarities in theme and character to Poe's tales, including the fact that the appearance of Mr. B.'s wife is similar to that of Poe's Ligeia.

"The Eyes," by the same author, is a first-person narration of the incoherent thoughts of a monomaniac, a tale that Joseph Wood Krutch would assign to the "neurotic genre."<sup>35</sup> Obsessed with the beautiful eyes of a nurse, Mr. N., the narrator, becomes insane and is hospitalized. He feels himself "sinking into a fathomless abyss, surrounded by a gloomy vacuum and an inexplicable darkness." Every time he is on the verge of regaining consciousness the only thing that looms large in his mind's eye is that pair of beautiful eyes. In a dream within his dream he and the girl travel to a remote part of the world and sit huddled on a rock together by the side of the murmuring sea. He tries to convince himself of her existence, but he awakes to find that it was only a dream, and he is still surrounded by "the gloomy vacuum and the inexplicable darkness." He cannot tell anyone, not even his best friend, that only the girl with the "pair of lively and charming eyes" can save him.

The tale is probably intended to represent Man's agony in the pursuit of beauty. As far as the form is concerned, "The Eyes" is a typical Poesque tale, highly imaginary and highly symbolic. The plot resembles that of "The Pit and the Pendulum," if we see it as the visionary account of a man in a state of half consciousness, half swoon. Mr. N.'s obsession with the girl's eyes reminds us of "The Tell-Tale Heart," in which the narrator is obsessed with the old man's pale blue eye, and of Poe's "Berenice," wherein the monomaniac narrator is obsessed with "a set of excessively white teeth." Moreover,

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according to Poe's theory of art a tale should emphasize the unity of effect through "a repetition of purpose," like the "dropping of the water upon the rock." Chen Xian-he uses the device of repetition in this tale, where the description of the "pair of lively and charming eyes" is repeated almost twenty times.

Another prominent author under Poe's influence was Li Jian-wu, who is best known as a leading playwright in the 1930's and 1940's, but who began his career writing short stories in the 1920's. These early tales suggest that he was consciously imitating Poe. "The Last Generation of the Guan Family" (1926)<sup>37</sup> is in fact an imitation of "The Fall of the House of Usher." The protagonist of the tale, a young man about twenty-five years old, is, like Roderick Usher, the last of an ancient clan, who lives in a cluster of tumbledown houses situated in a secluded resort in the suburbs of Beijing. Imitating the classic beginning of "Usher," Li Jian-wu also begins his tale with a fairly long description of the deserted houses and their sombre surroundings, creating a mood of solitude, gloom, and melancholy. The young man is of an ominously melancholy disposition, reserved and bashful in demeanor, like a girl suffering from consumption. He likes to sit by himself for long hours, totally lost in a sort of reverie, dreaming either about the past glories of his forefathers or about that day in the future when his bankrupt family will be revived. And, as in Poe's tale, the narrator pays a visit to the house of the Guan family, where, to his surprise he finds his friend lying on his death bed, shrieking spasmodically in a sort of delirium. The tale ends in a way similar to "The Fall of the House of Usher," with the narrator rushing out of the house, "hearing, amid the howling north wind, a high-pitched, long yell of despair."

Other grotesque tales by Li Jian-wu that show Poe's influence are "The Shadow" (1927), "The Last Dream" (1929), and "Before the Second Lover" (1930).<sup>38</sup> "The Shadow" reminds us of Poe's "Shadow," but Li Jian-wu does not borrow so extensively, using the shadow only as a symbol of death and constructing a plot of his own. In Li's tale the main theme is that real love does not exist in this world, but in another world, a world overwhelmed by darkness, where there is no light and hence no shadow. The tale, like many of Poe's, is tinged with mysticism. Toward the end a smoky shadow suddenly appears on the drapery behind the back of his lover, and the angel-like girl drops dead. Having heard the shriek of the shadow, the narrator flees from the brightly lit room into the pitch-dark night. The street lamps have

all been extinguished by the storm, and not a single shadow can be seen there, not even his own. In "The Last Dream" there are again resemblances to "Usher" and "Before the Second Lover" shows influences of both "Ligeia" and "Morella."

Another writer influenced by Poe was Yu Da-fu, one of the founders of the famous literary coterie called the Creation Society. Having spent his early years in Japan, he was well acquainted with foreign literature. He developed a theory of literature that moved away from moral considerations toward purely literary ones. He also believed that literature should be an "expression of self," that "the pursuit of beauty is the core of art," and that "the importance of art to us lies chiefly in the fact that we can be elevated for the time being out of our own 'earthly pains' and can enter into a temporary state of nirvana."<sup>39</sup>

What we see in Yu Da-fu's opinions on art and literature are some striking affinities with those of Poe. He follows Poe's tendency toward aestheticism and art-for-art's sake; he sees literature as attempting to enter a state of nirvana, just as Poe seeks to elevate the Soul; and both have a predilection for melancholy. Yu Da-fu considers death and sexual desire basic topics for literature, an idea akin to Poe's notion of the death of a beautiful woman as the best subject for poetry; and Yu Da-fu is interested in "the abnormal, the eccentric and the irrational."

Yu Da-fu also had a special admiration for the work of Ernest Dowson. In a 1923 essay entitled "The Yellow Book and Others" he observed that "not a single piece of poetry written by Dowson is not derived from his aesthetic nature. His poems are so earnest in feeling and so harmonious in versification, that they are really beyond comparison. His poetic world is unique and cannot be imitated. Melodious beauty, symbolic and technical beauty are perfectly in harmony in his poems, which he creates with great ease. Poe's line 'The viol, the violet, and the vine' is worshipped by him as the ideal line because, he maintains, the letter 'v' is the most beautiful letter, and the more v's that are used in the poem the more beautiful a poem is....His world is a world of dusk, a world of silence and a world of melancholy."<sup>40</sup>

But in spite of these evident affinities with Poe there are also striking dissimilarities between the two. Yu Da-fu is, after all, an early twentieth-century Chinese writer, whose reading public was not prepared to accept a Poe-like visionary writer. He therefore had to adapt his writing to the tastes of his readers—straight-forward narrative with emphasis on facts rather than on psychological effects. He wrote

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about fifty short stories, mostly first-person narratives; almost without exception they were about social outcasts—petty bourgeois intellectuals disillusioned with the game to achieve fame, fortune, and the love of women. In literary style perhaps Yu Da-fu is closer to Joseph Conrad than to Poe, except that in a few tales one might attribute some of his technical devices to Poe.

"The Silver-Grey Death" is generally regarded as a masterpiece<sup>41</sup> and deserves our particular attention. The narrator is young, melancholy, dissipated; he finally dies from a cerebral hemorrhage caused by alcohol poisoning. Those familiar with the popular version of Poe's biography will readily recognize the image of Poe lurking between the lines. The narrator's wife is a young morbid beauty reminiscent of Poe's child-bride, Virginia, who dies of consumption, vomiting blood from time to time. Yu Da-fu writes about silver-grey death rather than Poe's red death perhaps because Poe's red death is too intense and horrifying. If there is a moral to the story this is not the author's immediate concern. In a note he writes: "Back home at that time a group of people were promoting the literary revolution. Their goal, however, seemed to be only in the field of ideology and there seemed to be very little talk about pure literature."<sup>42</sup> He declares that he was taking a different route from the others; he was experimenting with something closer to "pure literature." The object of his pursuit was, as he himself admitted, "beauty" rather than "ideology,"—not beauty in its ordinary sense, but "exquisite beauty with some strangeness in its proportions," beauty in the morbid, in evil, and in death.

Another story by Yu Da-fu, "The Thirteenth Night" (Shisan Ye), is like Li Jian-wu's "The Last Dream" in its resemblance to Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" both in structure and in the effect. However, it may also be traced to traditional Chinese influences, such as *Liao Zhai*. Like "Usher," "The Thirteenth Night" depicts the doom of a monomaniac or paranoid painter, narrated by an observer, but the story seems more human, and the effect less weird. In Poe's tale, Roderick Usher is obsessed with the idea that he has buried his sister alive, while in Yu Da-fu's tale, Mr. Chen, the painter, is obsessed with the beautiful phantom girl he thinks he has met in the wild mountains. Driven by their obsessions, both retreat more and more into themselves, until, in the end, they have identified themselves with the obsessing phantom object. The plots of both tales develop on two levels: the weird and phantasmagoric experience fixed in the framework of a neurotic mind, and a plausible account of observation

through the eyes of the sane narrator. Interestingly enough, the appearance of Mr. Chen seems to be a self-portrait of the author himself, just as the features of Roderick Usher resemble those of Poe. What is more, both tales are similar in their descriptions of the appearance and movements of the monomaniac protagonists. It would be difficult to prove that Yu Da-fu was directly influenced by Poe in this tale; however, there are strong similarities.

In addition to those writers who consciously imitated Poe's style and those who resembled him in temperament or aesthetic aims, there is another category of writers who were merely interested in his writing techniques. China's most famous modern writer, Lu Xun, is a case in point. During the years he lived in Japan Lu Xun thought hard about such questions as "the ideal nature of man," "the Chinese national character," and "the root of China's illness."<sup>43</sup> The short stories and prose poems he wrote at that time may be regarded as his preliminary answer to these questions and also a revelation of the turmoil which was going on in his mind. As a result of feudalist oppression and exploitation, the poverty-stricken Chinese people became so ignorant and benighted that the image of an ordinary Chinese, whether a peasant or an intellectual, became a lopsided or even deformed one. What made the situation even worse was that this had not been realized by the Chinese themselves. To awaken these people, whom Lu Xun compared to those "fast asleep inside an iron house without windows who would soon die of suffocation,"<sup>44</sup> he thought it not enough just to give a realistic or naturalistic representation of reality. He decided to resort to symbolic methods, which were more nerve-shattering, more heart-gripping and more suited to his purpose. He would project an image of the Chinese people not in their normal proportions, but with some exaggerations that would startle his readers. But Lu Xun did not place much hope in his own endeavor; he was actually rather pessimistic if not despairing, about the future. Being aware of this, we can easily understand why Lu Xun chose a madman to be the protagonist of his first creative work, "A Madman's Diary," a title taken from Gogol. We can also understand why he was so fond of describing the strained atmosphere of utter silence in such tales as "Medicine," "Tomorrow," "Regret for the Past," and "The Misanthrope," to mention a few. In his comment on Lu Xun's *Call to Arms*, one of his collections of short stories, the eminent writer Mao Dun once recalled his own impression of "A Madman's Diary" as



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"being intensely excited as if a man floundering in the dark has suddenly seen sunlight ahead," and "the ironic sentences and the forceful tone in this strange composition, as against its implicit meaning and a touch of symbolism, have constituted its idiosyncratic style."<sup>45</sup>

In addition to "A Madman's Diary," "The White Light" also deserves our attention, as it is also a tale about a monomaniac. It resembles Poe's "Berenice" in many ways, although it can also be compared to the traditional Chinese fiction, "The Scholars."<sup>46</sup> Chen Shi-cheng, the central character in "The White Light," fails the county examination, destroying at one blow his dream of climbing up in the social hierarchy.<sup>47</sup> Delirious, he suddenly remembers a legend saying that his ancestors had buried a large number of silver dollars somewhere under the courtyard. A full moon was hanging high above like a mirror, shedding its cold white light, which had mysteriously pierced his body. Guided by the white light he gropes his way, digging here and there, first in his own yard, then outside, then in the mountains. Early the next morning a floating corpse is found in a tarn fifteen *li* from the town. Lu Xun's story is a strong denunciation of the feudalist examination system, but it uses many Western techniques. He had studied medicine and was acquainted with Freudian theories which enabled him to accurately describe the symptoms of monomania and megalomania. Another touch makes the story resemble Poe: Chen Shi-cheng, unaware of what he is doing, digs out the remains of a rotten coffin buried nearby:

Chen Shi-cheng felt a void at heart. Sweating all over, he went on raking in the spongy earth with his ten fingers. Suddenly he touched something strange, which seemed to be horseshoe-shaped and felt flaky. His heart gave a leap, and he was intent on digging further. Then he scooped it up gingerly and held it to the lamplight to have a careful look. That thing with stains and spots seemed to be a rotten skull with some teeth still attached to it. He realized that it must be a piece of jawbone, which immediately started trembling in his hand, and moreover it showed a faint smile.<sup>48</sup>

This episode is very similar to the one in Poe's "Berenice," in which the monomaniac protagonist Egaeus, also obsessed, sneaks into the tomb of his cousin at night and extracts the teeth from the still living body.

Another recurring Poe theme is premature burial and suspended animation. Lu Xun uses these devices in a prose poem called "After Death," in which the narrator finds that after the paralysis of his

motor nerves his sensations still remain. Lying by the roadside he hears the cries of magpies, then of crows. The air is fresh, though it carries a tang of the soil. Some come to carry him off and throw him into a coffin and the lid of the coffin is nailed down. He finds the air is stuffy and it is uncomfortable to lie on his creased shirt.<sup>49</sup> The story goes on in this vein; however, it is not an exploration of the fear of death as Poe's tale is. Lu Xun borrows the theme of premature burial to ridicule and denounce his enemies. The dead man in this story does not fear death; rather he looks squarely at it, rejoicing over the fact that he died "like a flitting shadow," without the knowledge of his enemies, who, as a result, are unable to derive any pleasure from his death.

The late Mao Dun has always been regarded as the chief representative of the realistic school of modern Chinese literature, and, generally, there is little in common between his writing and Poe's. There is a story of his, though, actually a prose poem, remarkably similar to "The Tell-Tale Heart" which he once translated. "Koumen," or "Knocking at the Door," describes the working of a very sensitive mind, from its hypnagogic state to reverie, and from reverie to wakefulness. Starting with the title, this "essay," as Mao Dun calls it, is full of symbolic meanings. Who is knocking at the door? And what does the door stand for? The theme is rather simple but yet profound: when "Man" is completely cut off from the outside world his imagination will invariably drift away to the beyond, and, in the particular case of the author this process enables him to get hold of a substantial "vacuum." The dog would "bark at the shadow"; while the man sometimes would also make a fuss about nothing because of the play of his imagination. Such a mental process is similar to that of the old man in "Tell-Tale Heart." When the murderous narrator awakens the old man, his victim lies there in terror trying to explain the noises he hears by saying to himself, "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," etc. The narrator in Mao Dun's "essay," in his hypnagogic state of mind, is startled awake by a mysterious noise. He hearkens, but everything is in a perfect stillness. He opens his eyes, lost in thought. As soon as he closes his eyes, ready to fall asleep again, he hears the strange noise. "Who's there?" he cries out, but receives no answer. Then he assumes that it may be the sound of the wind, or the droning of mosquitoes, or, simply the ringing of his own ears. In the end, he gets up and opens the door, only to find a dog lying under the eaves. Mao Dun once admitted that those "visionary,

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unearthly things" in Poe's works would very often "impinge upon our souls." The "essay," "Koumen," illustrates the way Poe's works impinged upon his own.

Other writers possibly influenced by Poe include Fang Guang-tao, whose tale, "The Death of Melan," is also about the death of a black cat as well as its effect on man's psyche. Most probably the name of the cat, Melan, comes from the word *melancholy*, which reminds one of Pluto, the name of the black cat in Poe's tale. In the tales and short plays of Deng Gu written in the 1920's there are also Gothic elements and descriptions of abnormal mental states that remind the reader of both Poe and Maurice Maeterlinck.

## III

Poe's influence on modern Chinese poetry is less direct, and many of the theories and techniques reflecting his influence were filtered through the French Symbolists, with whose poetry some of the Chinese poets came into contact in France and Japan.

Toward the end of the Qing dynasty in the late nineteenth century many young poets were calling for reform and were rebelling against the restraints of classical Chinese poetry. They objected to the too rigid rules of versification and to the convention of writing in classical Chinese rather than in the vernacular. Around the time of the "May Fourth Incident" in 1919 some young poets, including Hu Shi, Liu Fu and Shen Yin-mo, began publishing poems that cast off the shackles of the classical poetic conventions for the first time. Soon the New Poetry was sweeping the country, as others began writing in new forms, particularly in "free verse." The writers of this poetry tried to lay down some rules for the New Poetry, but it all came out in the end as no rules at all. The only criterion came to be "natural" and "free." As to content, the poems were heavily didactic, reflecting the current interest in ideology.<sup>50</sup>

As a reaction to this didacticism Zhou Zuo-ren promoted a shorter poem, following the models of the Japanese haiku and tanka. He claimed that the short form was most suitable for depicting "a scene," or "a transient emotion," and that the result could be "true and simple."<sup>51</sup> These poets attempted to support their rationale for short poems by referring to Poe's criticism. In an essay called "On Short Poems," Teng Gu quoted Poe's assertion that a long poem does not exist, and added: "I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem,' is simply a

flat contradiction in terms."<sup>52</sup> He also told his readers that owing to Poe's influence, the French symbolists, such as Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Verlaine, all favored the short poem. We should note that he quoted Poe's argument only as a justification for his and others' short poems, since he had not even read through all of Poe's "The Poetic Principle." Ironically, Teng Gu criticizes Poe's over-emphasis of brevity at the expense of emotion, apparently unaware of Poe's remarks on this subject: "On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A very short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring, effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax."<sup>53</sup> The trend of writing short poems continued for about three years. There had appeared some good short poems, such as Bing Xing's "The Stars" and "The Spring Waters," which are apparently under the influence of Tagore; and also Zong Bai-hua's "Floating Clouds," which is philosophical verse. Poe did not influence any particular poet at this time; rather he gave general support to the notion of short poems as one of the forms of the Chinese New Poetry.

One of the principal influences on the Chinese New Poetry was Walt Whitman, particularly on Guo Mo-ro, who is not only the greatest of the modern poets but because of his use of free verse deserves the title of father of the Chinese New Poetry. In spite of the preeminence of Whitman among these new poets, though, the theories of Poe became influential upon the return of Wen Yi-do from the United States in 1925 after three years of study. Those years brought about a change in his taste, with a special interest in romantic literature. In the words of Zang Ke-jia, he was changed "from a reserved scholar into an aesthetic poet."<sup>54</sup> We cannot be certain whether Wen Yi-do studied Poe's poetics, but it would seem that Poe is one of the sources of his own poetic principles that he formulated for the Chinese New Poetry.

When Wen Yi-do returned to China he joined the Crescent Society. He and other poets, Xu Zhi-mo, Zhu-Xiang, Rao Men-ken, Liu Meng-wei, and Yu Geng-yu, opened up a new column in the Beijing *Morning Daily* called "Shi Juan" (Poems Engraved), declaring that its sole purpose was "to bring out something new" and "to discover new forms and new syllables and meters."<sup>55</sup> Wen Yi-do maintains that "the natural forms are more often than not imperfect, and they have to be amended by art." Therefore, "form is as essential to a poem as rules to chess games." His favorite saying is that "no real poet would admit

that he is being hindered by poetic forms; on the contrary, he would rather dance in shackles." Starting from this point he put forth his most famous thesis: "the real value of poetry consists of not only musical beauty and semantic beauty, but also architectural beauty." Poetic beauty is of two kinds: beauty to excite the sense of sight and beauty to excite the sense of hearing. The former consists of "metrical and syntactic symmetry," while the latter means "the rules of versification, meter, accent (or tonal patterns), rhythm, and rhyme."<sup>56</sup>

At almost the same time, Xu Zhi-mo, the best known poet of the time, also was putting forth similar views of "word music,"<sup>57</sup> and Rao Meng-kan published articles on "The Rhythm and Rhyme of the New Poetry." The emphasis of these poets on the musical effects of poetry derives mainly from the 19th-century English Romantics, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats, but it may also come partly from Poe's "The Poetic Principle."

Wen Yi-do made some serious attempts to put his theory into practice. To enhance the musical efforts of his narrative poem, "The Yuyang Strains" (Yuyang qu), he imitated the onomatopoeia of Poe's "The Bells." His close friend Zhu Xiang thought the imitation a failure, however, noting that both poems were "but an interesting syllabic experiment which has nothing in common with musical rhythm."<sup>58</sup> Wen Yi-do's "The Goddess of Love" also seems indebted to Poe, since there are parallels in structure and theme with "The Haunted Palace."

Xu Zhi-mo was an even better-known poet than Wen Xi-do at that time, although his theories were not so influential. He also studied in the United States and England, where he was attracted to the English Romantic poets. Xu Zhi-mo was most active in importing and experimenting with new poetic forms<sup>59</sup> and paid more and more attention to the musical effects of his own poetry. Poetic diction in classical Chinese poetry is mostly composed of monosyllabic, polysemous characters. But the New Poetry was written in the vernacular, which consists mostly of clearly-defined and polysyllabic phrases. This change was noted by Xu Zhi-mo as a "complete liberation of poetic diction." As a result, the immediate task for writers of the New Poetry, he held, was to "discover new rhythms and new rhymes" for a new kind of "pure word music."<sup>60</sup> For this he turned to Baudelaire, translating "Une Charogne," which he described as "the most vicious and the most grotesque flower in *Les Fleurs du Mal*." In a long introduction to this translation he elaborates on the musical effects of poetry in general in a passage which echoes not only Baudelaire but Poe's "The

Poetic Principle." Xu Zhi-mo writes: "The real music calls for listening only: the insect chirping at the waterside, the swallow twittering under the eaves, the ringing brook in the mountains, and the murmuring sound of the pine forest—all call for your listening with ears. The very action of listening is understanding...Their meaning is in your own imagination."<sup>61</sup> We can compare this with Poe:

We shall reach, however, more immediately a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the Poet himself the true poetical effect...He perceives it in the song of birds—in the repining voice of the forest—in the surf that complains to the shore—in the fresh breath of the woods—in the scent of the violet—in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth—in the suggestive odor that comes to him at eventide, from far-distant, undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored.

We must point out, however, that Poe's influence on the Crescent Society school is limited to his ideas on formal structure and musical effects. These poets attempted to promote a kind of romanticism without the revolutionary or Marxist accompaniment. They tried to draw on the latest artistic techniques of the West as well as on classical Chinese poetry. Poe's ideas on poetic form and on beauty had satisfied their aesthetic taste somewhat, but as a poet Poe was never regarded as a model for imitation, except by a very few decadent, symbolist poets.

As the Chinese New Poetry was developing in the 1920's another school of poets emerged who had studied in either France or Japan, where they studied French literature. These poets might be described as symbolists, who were appalled by the roughness and formlessness of much of the early New Poetry and wrote poems resembling those of the French Symbolists. One such writer was Li Jing-fa, who wrote poems that were free verse in form but classical Chinese in diction, which made them even more difficult to understand than the old forms of classical Chinese poetry. Zhu Zi-qing suggests that his poems "can only be understood in parts. Once they are pieced together, they become unintelligible," because "they only express an impression or an emotion rather than a concrete meaning."<sup>62</sup> After the novelty wore off, these poems soon sank into oblivion because of their weaknesses.

Among the symbolists poets of the 1920's Yu Geng-yu is of the most interest to us because he stands nearer to Poe than all the rest of his contemporaries. He was once a member of the Crescent Society

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and he took part in the *Shi Juan* activities in the *Beijing Morning Daily* for some time. In content and style his poems are diametrically opposite of Guo Mo-ro. Guo's world consists of heaven, earth, daylight and nature, while Yu's is a world of Hell, the darkness of night and sorrow over Death, a world so "damp" and "gloomy" that "one would naturally doubt that he had ever lived under the sun."<sup>63</sup> Even the titles of his collections of poems reveal his idiosyncratic characteristics: *Before the Dusk*, *Roses Above the Skeletons*, *Demons' Dance*, *The Lonely Soul*, etc. His lines echo many of Poe's qualities in imagery and style:

Look, seared leaves are falling down in the bright moonlight,  
To meet you by chance on this barren land in an autumn night...  
—“Shadow” (*Before the Dusk*)

or

Woe is me! I am all alone, flourishing the dark on a mountain trail,  
My youth gone forever like a corpse in a dark tomb lying still;  
From now on, I'll walk on in regret and sorrow, either in Heaven or  
Hell,  
Leaving everything to the ruins of the world, dwelling upon the  
graves of skulls.  
—“Meditation on a Hilltop”  
(*Roses Above the Skeletons*)

In poetics, Poe remains one of Yu Geng-yu's idols. In “The Art of Poetry,” one of his twelve essays on poetics, he declares himself to be on the side of Coleridge, Poe, and W. B. Yeats, and Poe's definition of poetry as the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty lies at the heart of his argument.<sup>64</sup> He argues that poetry should be “an independent art” and that the poet should write his poems “solely for the poem's sake.”<sup>65</sup> In “Poetic Sentiment,” he quotes a long passage from Poe to support his argument that “Poetry is definitely not the expression of Thought.” He conceives of Poe's own view of Poetry and Truth as just the same as his own Poetry and Thought.<sup>66</sup> He maintains that “the modern world is a world of lyric poems,” for which he turns again to Poe for support. In his essays he cites “The Raven” again and again as a model for lyric poetry. In “The Power of Poetic Creation” he compares the raven in Poe's poem to the west wind of Shelley, the nightingale of Keats, the *Fleurs du Mal* of Baudelaire, all of which he regards as the best examples of the poetic soul. “By ‘The Raven,’” he writes, “mankind has been shocked all over again, a new shock indeed! It

marks a new awakening of the dead soul in a world where life drags along in a dreary, outmoded way."<sup>67</sup>

To achieve an ideal effect, it is said that he would ruminate for days to seek the most appropriate words, and sometimes when he could not find the right word he would tear the whole thing to pieces. In his close attention to style he seems to be a faithful disciple of Poe. Even though he inherited much from Poe, however, the poetic forms he used do not resemble Poe's at all. Most of his poems are too uniform in structure, either in fifteen-syllable quatrains, or in seventeen- or nineteen-syllable lines. Rhythmical as they are, the keynote is invariably set low, which tends to become a sort of monotonous droning. To sum up his own poetic creation, he himself made the most appropriate assessment: "I have realized that almost all the poems I wrote in the past are dominated by a single emotion, different only in expressions." Precisely because of this his poems have all been buried, together with the times which produced them.

We must keep in mind, however, that Poe's influence on these Chinese symbolists was indirect: it was only through the French symbolists that Poe's poetic principles were passed down to them. Two poets of the so-called later-stage Creation Society, Mu Mu-tian, and Wang Du-qing, published some articles in the *Creation Monthly* in exchange of views on symbolist poetics. According to Mu, a poem must preserve its "unity," and "the lack of unity is a fatal blunder to poetry in general." "A poem," he maintains, "should be kept to one idea; and the content of a poem must be the content of one idea....Poe's 'The Raven' is a perfect example."<sup>68</sup> These ideas of unity are probably derived from Poe's ideas on unity of effect in "The Poetic Principle." The idea was totally accepted by the Chinese symbolists as "a vital requisite" for a poem.

Mu Mu-tian, Wang Du-qing, and a third symbolist, Feng Nai-chao, shared these ideas, and they decided to advocate *la poésie pure* as an ideal remedy for prosaism in the New Poetry Movement. Unfortunately, their poetical ability seems to have fallen short of their ambition. Moreover, with the development of the revolutionary situation, a political split became inevitable between them, and the pure poetry was out of the question.

#### IV

As we have seen, conventional Chinese literary form and aesthet-



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ics had become outworn at the turn of the century. Writers and poets of the 1920's could have turned back to classical tradition for inspiration, but instead they turned to the West, and to Poe among others. Poe was admired for several reasons, among them his being the father of the short story and the precursor of aestheticism. His "neurotic genre" was accepted by modern Chinese short-story writers, who moved away from old conventions merely presenting a series of events to new experiments using psychological themes. Writers using abnormal psychological states were able to use veiled hints and indirection instead of the plain truth, and readers could respond to these using their own imagination.

Poe's theories on the musical qualities of poetry, on the suggestiveness and undercurrents in a poem, and on the unity of effect were also of interest in the development of the New Chinese poetry.

Although the type of poetry that was influenced by Poe disappeared for almost forty years, it is interesting to note that in the late 1970's a new group of poets have appeared who are called "the poets of ambiguity." Deprived of formal education in the ten-year "Cultural Revolution," they have acquired a cultural background entirely different from that of the older generation. Their poems are therefore quite different, not only in subject matter but also in symbolism and imagery. One of the young poets writes:

Who is walking there in the distance?  
The Pendulum.  
He is hired by Death  
to measure Life.

And, depicting the scenery along the Lia-ling River, he writes:

The collapse has stopped.  
On the riverbank, are piling high  
the skulls of the giants.  
The mourning sailing boats  
slowly, slowly pass by,  
Unfolding their dark yellow shrouds.<sup>69</sup>

To those familiar with Poe, these lines are sure to strike a chord. Perhaps the influence of Poe is not entirely a thing of the past.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Zheng Zhen-duo, "An Outline of Literature," *Short Story Monthly*, 17(1926), Chapter 40.

<sup>2</sup> Zhou Zuo-ren *Zhitang Huixiang lu* [*Memoirs of Zhou Zuo-ren*], 2nd ed. (Hong Kong, 1971), p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> Lu Xun, "Dog, Cat, and Mouse," *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* (Peking, 1973), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Trans Du Ying (pseudonym for Zhou Zuo-ren), *Honan*, 8(1908).

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Jing-lu, *Historical Data Concerning Publication in Modern China* (Shanghai, 1954), pp. 321-322; see also Zhou Xia-shou, *Lu Xunde gujia* [*Lu Xun's Old Home*] (Hong Kong, 1962).

<sup>6</sup> Zhang Jing-lu, *Historical Data*, p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> Shen Yan-bing, "An Introduction to Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart,'" *Dongfang zhazhi* [*Eastern Miscellany*], 17(1920).

<sup>8</sup> Zheng Zhen-duo, "Note" to Poe's "Angel of the Odd," *Xiaoshuo yuebao* [*Short Story Monthly*], 7(1926).

<sup>9</sup> *A Short History of English Literature* (Oxford, 1956), p. 357.

<sup>10</sup> Xi Chen, "Neo-Romanticism in Modern Literature," *Eastern Miscellany*, 17(1920).

<sup>11</sup> Hu Yu-zhi, "An Introduction to the Translation of Oscar Wilde's 'The Nightingale and Rose,'" *Eastern Miscellany*, 17(1920).

<sup>12</sup> *Literature Weekly*, 100(1923).

<sup>13</sup> *Literature Weekly*, 17(1925).

<sup>14</sup> Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) was a well-known prose writer in the Northern Sung dynasty. His poetic style is similar to that of his prose works: fluent and natural. Jia Yi (200 B.X.-168 B.X.) was a famous political writer in the West Han dynasty. He wrote seven prose poems (*fu*), among which "The Owl" is the best-known.

<sup>15</sup> *Creation Weekly* 45(1924).

<sup>16</sup> Trans. Yang Hui, Special Issue of *Sunken Bell* [*Chengzhong*] (1927).

<sup>17</sup> Trans. Gu Qian-ji, *Critical Review*, 45(1925).

<sup>18</sup> Hu Xian-su, "The Latest Tendency in European-American Modern Literature," *Eastern Miscellany*, 17(1920).

<sup>19</sup> Xie Lu-yi, "The Evolution of Western Fiction," *Short Story Monthly*,

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13(1922).

<sup>20</sup> Zheng Zhen-duo, "An Outline of Literature," *Short Story Monthly* 17(1926).

<sup>21</sup> *Short Story Monthly* 17(1926).

<sup>22</sup> Zheng Zhen-duo, "Outline."

<sup>23</sup> Ren Qiu, "The Art of Short Fiction," *Morning Daily Supplement*, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171(1928).

<sup>24</sup> Chen Wei-mo, "Edgar Allan Poe's Fiction" [special issue of *Sunken Bell*.]

<sup>25</sup> Zhang Jing-lu, *Historical Data*, pp. 316-317.

<sup>26</sup> Wu Guang-jian, *Tales by Edgar Allan Poe* (Shanghai, 1934).

<sup>27</sup> *Shije wenku* [*The World Library Series*] (Shanghai, 1936), vol. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Trans. Bai He, *Literature Quarterly*, 3(1935).

<sup>29</sup> Zhao Jia-bi, "Around the Publication of the *American Literature Series Books*," *Book Review* [*Dushu*], 10(1980), 90.

<sup>30</sup> Cheng Xiang-he, "West Wind at My Pillow—A Record of My Dreams, written to Yang Hui," *Sunken Bell* [one-volume edition] (1926), 239.

<sup>31</sup> Cheng Xiang-he, "The Mourning," *Sunken Bell* [one-volume edition] (1926).

<sup>32</sup> James W. Gargano, "The Black Cat: Perverseness Reconsidered," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Poe's Tales*, ed. W. L. Howarth (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1971), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> "The Mourning."

<sup>34</sup> "The Black Cat."

<sup>35</sup> *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius* (New York, 1926), pp. 206-207.

<sup>36</sup> *H*, 11:107.

<sup>37</sup> Li Jian-wu, "The Last Generation of the Guan Family," *Morning Daily Supplement*, 1459, 1460, 1461 (18, 20, 21 Oct.) (1926).

<sup>38</sup> The three tales are included in La-Jian wu's collection of short stories entitled *Tanzi* [*The Vase*] (Shanghai, 1931).

<sup>39</sup> Li He-Ling, *China's Literary Trends in the Past Twenty Years* (Shanghai, 1947), p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> Yu Da-fu, "The Yellow Book and Others," *Creation Weekly*, 20(1923).

<sup>41</sup> Dong Yi, "A Preliminary Study of Yu Da-fu's Fiction," *Literary Review*, 5(1980).

<sup>42</sup> "Note" to the *Collection of Jile Chicken's Rib, Complete Works of Yu Da-fu* (1926).

<sup>43</sup> Xu Shou-shang, *The Lu Xun I Knew* (Peking, 1952), p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Selected Works of Lu Xun* (Peking, 1956), 114.

<sup>45</sup> Yan-bing, "Reading 'Call to Arms,'" *Literature* [supplement to *Shishi Xinhao Current Affairs New Newspaper*], 91(1923), quoted in Li He-ling and *On Lu Xun*.

<sup>46</sup> *The Scholars*, a famous Chinese novel by Wu Jing-zi (1701-1754) is a satirical presentation of various types of gentlemen and scholars in Chinese feudal society.

<sup>47</sup> The so-called *keju* examination system was practiced in Chinese feudal society: officials had to be recommended through examinations at different administrative levels. Students first had to acquire the title of *xiucai* at the county examination before applying for examinations at higher levels.

<sup>48</sup> Lu Xun, *Nahan [Call to Arms]* (Peking, 1973) p. 136.

<sup>49</sup> Lu Xun, "After Death" *Wild Grass* (Peking, 1974).

<sup>50</sup> Zhu Zi-qing, "Preface" to the *Collection of Poems, Series Books of Chinese New Literature [Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi]* (Shanghai, 1933), p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Zhu Zi-qing, "Preface," p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Deng Gu, "On Short Poems," *Literature Ten Daily*, 45(1922).

<sup>53</sup> "The Poetic Principle."

<sup>54</sup> Zang Ke-jia, "A Brief Biography of Wen Yi-do," *A Collection of Wen Yi-do's Poems and Essays* (Peking, 1954), p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Zhu Zi-qing, "Preface," p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> We Yi-do, "The Form of Poetry," *Peking Morning Daily Supplement* 13 May 1926, quoted in *Complete Works of Wen Yi-do* (Shanghai, 1948), 4: 245-249.

<sup>57</sup> Xu Zhi-mo, "A Letter to Ouyang Lan," quoted from Ouyang Lan, "Semantic Symmetry," *Literature Ten Daily*, 53(1924).

<sup>58</sup> Zhu Xiang, "Comment on Wen Yi-do's Poems," *Short Story Monthly*, 17(1926).

<sup>59</sup> Zhu Zi-qing, "Preface," p. 6.

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<sup>60</sup> "A Letter to Ouyang Lan."

<sup>61</sup> Xu Zhi-mo, "Translations of Baudelaire's 'Une Charogne,'" *Thread of Talk*, 1 December 1924.

<sup>62</sup> "Preface," p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Yu Geng-yu, "Preface" to *The Face of the Century* (Shanghai, 1934), "Damp" is suggested by Zhao Jing-sheng, and "gloomy" is suggested by Shen Chong-wen, both of whom were very famous literary figures of the day.

<sup>64</sup> Yu Geng-yu, "Art of Poetry (part II)," *Huayan Monthly*, 1(1929).

<sup>65</sup> "Art of Poetry (part I)," *Huayan Monthly*, 1(1929).

<sup>66</sup> Yu Geng-yu, "Poetic Sentiment," *Morning Daily Supplement*, 1486 (1926).

<sup>67</sup> Yu Geng-yu, "The Power of Poetic Creation," *Morning Daily Supplement*, 28 February 1927.

<sup>68</sup> Mu Mu-tian, "On Poetry, A Letter to Guo Mo-ro," *Creation Monthly*, 1(1926).

<sup>69</sup> Quoted from Gu Gong, "Two Generations," *Shikan [Poems Monthly]*, 10(1980).