

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBJECT IN

THE SHORT FICTION OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

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ABSTRACT

This study is primarily concerned with the diverse processes of constitution and deconstitution of subjectivity at work in the writing of Edgar Allan Poe. The analysis is largely confined to the short fiction, although some reference is made to Poe's other work; twenty-one tales are examined, in greater or lesser detail, with the aid of various theoretical perspectives - sociological, structuralist and, above all, psychoanalytic.

The aim is to present a new reading of Poe's texts which rejects traditional "unity"-based interpretations. The thesis privileges the psychological dimension, but in textual, not biographical terms; it stresses the tales' often undervalued element of modernity as well as their receptiveness to emergent processes and discourses.

The psychological dimensions analysed include: the explicit presentation of mental splitting ('William Wilson') and institutionalised madness ('The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether'); the signification of alienation ('The Man of the Crowd') and self-destruction ('The Imp of the Perverse', 'The Black Cat', 'The Tell-Tale Heart') as constitutive of the subject at a determinate historical moment; the simultaneous construction and subversion of mythical signifiers of an illusory "full" subject, both metonyms (the detective, the mesmerist) and metaphors (the artwork, the interior); the symbolic emergence from repression of active female desire, perceived as threatening in the male unconscious ('The Oval Portrait', 'Ligeia'); and the disintegration of the subject under the pressure of its own repressions ('The Fall of the House of Usher').

Particular stress is laid throughout on the textual undermining of the dividing-lines between "normal" and "abnormal", "sane" and "insane", "respectable" and "criminal". It is concluded that Poe's work constitutes a map of the vicissitudes and contradictions of subjectivity in patriarchal culture; from the study of these texts, the "I" emerges as formed out of a massive repression, and as therefore constantly liable to fragmentation and rupture.

ABBREVIATIONS

- 1) The titles of certain tales are abbreviated (but only in the chapter-parts devoted to them, not elsewhere in the thesis) as follows:

<u>AO</u>	'The Angel of the Odd'
<u>BC</u>	'The Black Cat'
<u>IP</u>	'The Imp of the Perverse'
<u>LD</u>	'Life in Death' (first version of 'The Oval Portrait')
<u>MMR</u>	'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt'
<u>MR</u>	'Mesmeric Revelation'
<u>MRM</u>	'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'
<u>OP</u>	'The Oval Portrait'
<u>PL</u>	'The Purloined Letter'
<u>TRM</u>	'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'
<u>TTH</u>	'The Tell-Tale Heart'

In addition, the following titles are abbreviated only in the "interior tabulation" in Chapter 5, Part 2, pp. 498-501:

<u>A</u>	'The Assignment'
<u>B</u>	'Berenice'
<u>L</u>	'Ligeia'
<u>MRD</u>	'The Masque of the Red Death'
<u>U</u>	'The Fall of the House of Usher'

- 2) The abbreviations used to designate the various editions of Poe's works are explained below, in 'Note on Texts Used'.
- 3) The abbreviations used for titles of periodicals are summarised in 'Preliminary to the Notes' (pp. 838-39).
- 4) Any other abbreviations used in the text or notes are explained at the appropriate point.

NOTE ON PRESENTATION

Please note the following before reading the thesis:

- 1) Page references to all works of Poe are given in the body of the text, preceded where necessary by reference to the appropriate edition (for the abbreviations used to designate the various editions, see 'Note on Texts Used').
- 2) Page references to all other texts, primary or secondary, are given in the Notes.
- 3) For certain texts subjected to particularly detailed analysis, in parts of Chapters 3 and 6, reference is to numbered paragraphs, rather than pages. This applies to: 'The Man of the Crowd' (Chapter 3, Part 1), 'The Imp of the Perverse', 'The Black Cat', 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (Chapter 3, Part 2), 'The Oval Portrait', 'Ligeia' (Chapter 6, Part 1) and 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (Chapter 6, Part 2). This convention - introduced to facilitate close analysis - is used only in the chapter-parts devoted to the detailed analysis of the text(s) in question; the paragraph references are distinguished from the note numbers by their location on the line. The paragraph numbers are listed at the appropriate point in each of the relevant chapter-parts. Please note, however, that where any one of the texts in question is cited anywhere in the thesis except the chapter-part devoted to it, the usual page references are employed.
- 4) The date given for most texts, primary and secondary, cited in the main text is that of first publication - not of writing, unless otherwise specified. However, in the case of texts published posthumously, or long after composition, the date of writing is given in the main text, with full details of textual history provided in the notes. For Poe's texts, the date given is always that of the first published version, even if the text actually used is that of a later, revised version (in which case details of textual history are supplied in the notes). In some other cases (e.g. Baudelaire's poems and prose-poems, and his translations of Poe), two dates of publication are given in the notes, i.e. those of periodical and book publication.
- 5) Quotations from texts written in French have been given in the original for all primary texts, and for secondary texts wherever possible; a few secondary sources are, however, quoted in English translation. Quotations from texts written in Spanish, Portuguese, Galician and Italian also appear in the original wherever possible (but in some cases, in English or French translation). Where the

original is quoted in these languages, a translation is provided in the body of the text (this is not done for the texts cited in French). Quotations from texts written in German and Russian appear in English translation only.

NOTE ON TEXTS USED

The text of Poe's works used in this study is, wherever possible, that of the most authoritative edition, i.e. Thomas Ollive Mabbott, ed., Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1969-78). Mabbott's edition covers the poems (I) and the 'tales and sketches' (II and III) (the latter category includes a few texts, such as 'Philosophy of Furniture', which, strictly speaking, are not tales, but excludes the three longer narratives, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall' and The Journal of Julius Rodman). All quotations from the works included in Mabbott's edition are from what he prints as Poe's final text, except in the case of variant readings, which are identified as such (page references to variants are given in the notes, not the main body of the thesis). Mabbott's three volumes are referred to, in both text and notes, by the abbreviations: M I, M II, M III.

For texts not included in Mabbott's edition, the following criteria have been adopted:

- i) References to Arthur Gordon Pym are to Harold Beaver's edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) (abbreviated as: Beaver, Pym).
- ii) References to Eureka and 'Hans Pfaall' are to Harold Beaver, ed., The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) (abbreviated as: Beaver, Science Fiction).
- iii) References to Poe's letters are to John Ward Ostrom, ed., The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1948, revised edn. New York: Gordian Press, 1966) (abbreviated as: O I, O II).
- iv) References to all other works of Poe are to James A. Harrison, ed., Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, 17 vols. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1902, rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965) (abbreviated as: H I, etc.).

Quotations from Baudelaire's translations of Poe's works are, in all cases, from Poe, trans. Baudelaire, Oeuvres en prose, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1951). This edition prints the translations in their final versions; it also includes the definitive texts of Baudelaire's essays on Poe.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to present an analysis of the construction of the subject in the short fiction of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49). The texts are examined in terms of their constitution of specific models of subjectivity, and of relations between subjects and between subject and external world. It is also argued that the texts construct certain images (e.g. the artwork) and figures (e.g. the detective) which function as metaphors or metonyms for determinate concepts of the subject. It is further suggested that the ideological notions of subjectivity in question tend to be subverted in the letter of the text; Poe's work exhibits a continual tension between presentations of the subject as, on the one hand, "integrated", "unified" and "autonomous", and, on the other, "fissured" and contradictory, liable to splitting and doubling. Similarly, on the plane of self-other relations, the texts both constitute and undermine certain antitheses between "normal" and "abnormal", "sane" and "insane", "respectable" and "criminal". The texts are, therefore, not read in terms of Poe's own ideology of aesthetic "unity", but as having multiple and contradictory significations. These textual contradictions are considered to be produced by, and illuminative of, contradictory social and psychological structures external to the texts.

The detailed textual analyses are restricted, for reasons of space, to Poe's work in the area of the short story, with the one major exception of a section (Chapter 5, Part 1) on his aesthetic theories (included on the grounds that the theme of the artist in the tales cannot be usefully analysed without reference to those theories). Otherwise, Poe's other work, in poetry, the novel The Narrative of

Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket), philosophical speculation (Eureka), criticism and miscellaneous journalism, is dealt with only briefly or in passing, insofar as it throws light on the short fiction.

Some intertextual reference is made, where relevant, to the work of other, mainly nineteenth-century, U.S., British and European writers, falling into the following categories: 1) those known (e.g. Byron, De Quincey, Dickens, Hawthorne) or believed (e.g. E. T. A. Hoffmann) to have influenced Poe; 2) those known to have been influenced by Poe (e.g. Baudelaire, J.-K. Huysmans, Dostoyevsky); 3) exceptionally, a few cases of writers working quite independently of Poe, whose texts present certain thematic parallels (e.g. H. von Kleist, Balzac). In order to delimit the field of reference, intertextual comparison is not taken much outside the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, except for a few essential cases (e.g. Shakespearean references in Poe's texts).

The mode of reading adopted is not biographical, but text-centred; the texts are subjected to close analysis, in the context of determinate theoretical perspectives, especially (though not only) those of psychoanalysis. The theoretical premises on which this study is based, and its relation to existing theories of "Gothic" or "fantastic" literature, to the various tendencies in Poe criticism, and to the wider historical context, are specified in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL, CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES.

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

i. Model of the Text

The literary text is assumed to be a material object produced in history by a specific process of labour in which various determining forces interact. The determinants of the text operate (beyond the writer's conjunctural situation) on various levels: social and economic structures and processes, kinship structures, sexual power-relations, the language system, the intertextual pressures of previous literary work, and, finally, the insistence of the unconscious.

The text is, then, seen - to use a term that literary criticism has borrowed from psychoanalysis¹ - as an overdetermined object, that is, the product of multiple causal factors. It is not, however, simply the sum of its determinants; as Pierre Macherey (Pour une théorie de la production littéraire, 1966)² stresses, it is a unique object with specific characteristics, 'a composite reality where several determinations converge',³ and must be analysed on its own terms. The present study will therefore assume the relative autonomy of the text - its existence as a system of relations in its own right, which must both be analysed in itself and inserted into wider systems; in the words of Lucien Goldmann (Marxisme et sciences humaines, 1970),⁴ 'une structure partielle ... ne saurait être comprise que dans la mesure où elle est elle-même insérée dans l'étude d'une structure plus vaste dont le fonctionnement peut seul élucider sa genèse'.⁵

If the text is overdetermined, it follows that it must be polysemic; it has more than one meaning (Macherey is here followed in his rejection of the "interpretive fallacy" that would admit only a single, "intended" meaning),⁶ and, further, it signifies on several levels, which can

contradict each other. The writer's "intended" meaning is not abolished, but reduced to the status of one element (not necessarily to be privileged) in the text's signification - in Goldmann's words, 'un indice parmi beaucoup d'autres'.⁷ The meaning of a text is considered to be produced as much by the reader as by the writer; the multiple readings made of a text in the past, in the light of different discourses, all contribute to its plurality of meanings and its history, although any particular reading (the present one included) will necessarily privilege certain discourses and exclude others. However, given that the text is a finite object produced under complex but finite conditions, its signification is also considered to be finite;⁸ while a text can legitimately be read in terms of certain discourses (notably historical materialism and psychoanalysis) which offer models for interpreting previous history and culture, it cannot be read in terms of any and every discourse. Interpretation must take account both of the letter of the text, and of its historical and cultural specificity.

The present analysis therefore assumes the position of Terry Eagleton (Criticism and Ideology, 1976)⁹ against Roland Barthes (S/Z, 1970)¹⁰ over textual "plurality". For Eagleton, the text 'generates a field of possible readings which, within the conjuncture of the reader's ideological matrix and its own, is necessarily finite', and is therefore 'indissoluble to a random splay of pluralist sense'.¹¹ In this context, Barthes' descriptive model of the 'pluriel limité du texte classique'¹² is accepted ('interpréter un texte, ce n'est pas lui donner un sens ..., c'est au contraire apprécier de quel pluriel il est fait');¹³ but his normative model of an "ideal", infinitely polysemic text ('absolument pluriel') is rejected ('dans ce texte

idéal, les réseaux sont multiples et jouent entre eux ... ce texte est une galaxie de signifiants, non une structure de signifiés').¹⁴

The notion of an infinitely plural writing tends to reduce the text to the play of signifiers and alienate it from any reference to objective structures outside itself.

The notion, deriving from Jacques Derrida, of the absence (or endless deferment) of definitive meaning - of the text as an endless labyrinth of signifiers that cancel each other out - is also rejected. Derrida's critique ('Le facteur de la vérité', 1975)¹⁵ of Jacques Lacan's reading of 'The Purloined Letter'¹⁶ tends to reduce Poe's text to an instance of "writing" seen as self-referential, determined only by (inter)textuality - to 'un texte qui se dérobe à toute destination assignable'.¹⁷ By distancing itself from any hermeneutic mode of reading (Freud, Lacan) that would locate an identifiable "truth" or "message" in the text ('fonder la fiction en vérité'),¹⁸ Derrida's deconstructionist method runs the risk of alienating the text from history, denying any determinants other than the purely textual; as Fredric Jameson ('Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', 1984)¹⁹ puts it, 'depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces'.²⁰ The present analysis, in contrast, assumes that a text does contain a series of multiple (and contradictory) "messages" pertaining to the larger cultural universe outside itself - and that hermeneutic methods of analysis are therefore valid.

The text is, then, seen neither as a Derridean 'lettre ouverte',²¹ nor as a Barthesian 'galaxie de signifiants', nor (to use Macherey's designation of the traditional model) as a 'coherent and unified whole'²² - but, rather, as a space of multiple, contradictory but -

in the end - finite significations. The element of textual contradiction is given particular emphasis; it is assumed that, as in Walter Benjamin's reading of history ('Theses on the Philosophy of History', 1940),²³ the text, as historical object, can be read 'against the grain',²⁴ that is, against the writer's conscious ideology or intention. As occurs in Engels' notion (letter to Margaret Harkness, 1888)²⁵ of the 'triumph of Realism' in Balzac,²⁶ the text can be seen as the product of objective social processes that signify themselves in its letter in spite of the writer's official ideology; or, to rewrite Engels' basic historical-materialist concept in Macherey's more sophisticated terms, the writer's initial 'ideological project' can find itself negated or overturned in the process of writing, so that the text ends up signifying in two (or more) contradictory directions.²⁷ This kind of reading "against the grain", as Raymond Williams ('Marxism, Structuralism, and Literary Analysis', 1981)²⁸ puts it, can produce interpretations which 'construct a text and a subtext', articulating both 'what is reproduced from the ideology' and what 'undermines or questions or in certain cases entirely subverts it'.²⁹ It should be stressed, of course, that the "subtext" (or counter-text), if it is to make sense, must be constructed (with the aid of theory) from the text itself. Thus, for instance, 'The Man of the Crowd' will be read as simultaneously reproducing a certain ideological antithesis - "normal" versus "abnormal" - and undermining that ideology through textual structures of doubling and repetition.³⁰

If the text points in diverse directions, it also signifies on multiple levels. In the case of Poe's tales, there are, at least, the following levels: the level of the surface narrative (the text

tells a story); the "metalingual" level (the text tests and interrogates the limits of signification); the "intertextual" level (the text situates itself in relation to the rest of the Poe canon, the Gothic genre, and the universe of texts in general); the "psychological" level (the text speaks and is spoken by the discourse of the unconscious); the "sexual-political" level (the text articulates the dominant power-structures of gender relations - and their possible disturbance); and the "socio-historical" level (the text signifies certain social forces, structures or processes of mid-nineteenth-century capitalism in general, and U.S. capitalism in particular). Attention will be focussed on all the above textual levels, as appropriate, with special emphasis on the "psychological" and "sexual-political" levels. It should be noted that the most "obvious" level, that of the surface narrative (in the "Gothic" tales, apparently a sequence of supernatural events), tends to be subverted and called into question by the other levels;³¹ and that a further identifiable level, the "biographical", will not, in general, be taken into account, on the grounds that the cultural value of a text lies less in any revelation of the writer's personal idiosyncrasies than in its articulation and questioning of collective social and cultural structures.

A model of the text as overdetermined and polysemic must, necessarily, imply other determinate models corresponding to the structures which converge in the text - i.e. a model of language, a model of society, and a model of the subject. The respective models adopted in this study are presented below.

ii. Model of Language

The model of language adopted is essentially that of Ferdinand de Saussure (Cours de linguistique générale, 1916),³² with some modifications. The basic Saussurean premises employed include: the dichotomy between signifier and signified; the arbitrariness of the sign; the concept of the signifying chain; and the opposition between "syntagmatic" and "associative" (or, in Jonathan Culler's rephrasing (1974) "paradigmatic") axes.³³ Meaning, or the relation between signifier and signified, is thus not seen as "natural" or "indissoluble"; as Saussure puts it, the signifier 'has no natural connection with the signified'.³⁴ Meaning is, on the one hand, a function of the language-system (langue), and, on the other, the product of a determinate act of speech (parole) or writing - and therefore liable to transformation or disturbance. In Poe's texts, signification may vary according to context (as with the signifier 'Nevermore' in 'The Raven', where, to quote 'The Philosophy of Composition', 'monotone of sound' is accompanied by 'variations of application' (H XIV, 199)); and is capable of exhaustion, as in 'Berenice': 'to repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind' (M II, 212).

However, Saussure's supposition that both parts of the sign ("sound-image" and "concept") are exclusively mental or "psychological"³⁵ is not followed. In the light of V. N. Vološinov's critique (Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, 1930)³⁶ and Raymond Williams' discussion of the question (Marxism and Literature, 1977),³⁷ the sound-image, or signifier, is considered to be material;³⁸ and

language is seen as a means of production of ideology, itself conceived as a material force.³⁹ Language is thus considered to be an element in the complex of material forces that produce subjectivity.

Language is not, however, seen as an autonomous closed system; it is liable to disturbance under the insistence of the unconscious. An obvious example is provided by the Freudian concept of the slip, or verbal parapraxis (The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, 1901),⁴⁰ where the intended message is disturbed by repressed ideas.⁴¹ Poe's work contains, in tales like 'The Tell-Tale Heart' or 'The Imp of the Perverse', instances of the subversion of language by the unconscious, which will be considered in detail below.⁴²

Further, Saussure's prioritisation of the synchronic over the diachronic requires some revision, in the light of the kind of recent work in historical semantics represented by Raymond Williams' Keywords (1976).⁴³ As Williams has shown exhaustively, signifiers shift ground in the semantic field over history; in Poe's texts, a signifier such as 'magnetism', 'manipulate' or 'mania' is, at the least, ambivalent, in the sense that what it means to today's reader is not what it meant to Poe's original readers - the term has a history, which continues up to the present. In the present study, the signifying range of such terms in Poe's texts is considered to be produced by the interaction between the word's "historical" and "contemporary" meanings. The extremes of historicist empiricism and reader-response anarchy are thus avoided, while reference to the relevant O.E.D. entries is made where relevant.

If the subject is determined by the language system, it is, however, also true that individual acts of speech and writing can modify at least certain elements of the system; Saussure's prioritisation of langue over parole therefore needs some reformulation.⁴⁴ The act of speech or writing is both individual and social,⁴⁵ and can itself question or extend the limits of the existing language system. The subject is spoken by language, but can also speak to alter language. 'The power of words' (to borrow the title of Poe's tale of 1845) allows the subject to modify language - as, for instance, in 'The Imp of the Perverse', with its project of attaching a new signified to the old signifier "perverseness".⁴⁶

Finally, some use is also made of other, post-Saussurean linguistic concepts: Roman Jakobson's model of the six "functions" of language ('Linguistics and Poetics', 1958),⁴⁷ and Vološinov's scheme of discourse analysis (whose categories are applied to 'The Fall of the House of Usher').⁴⁸ Certain structuralist tools for literary analysis are also employed - e.g. reference is made to Barthes' model of narrative codes as expounded in S/Z (1970), although, as explained above, his notion of infinitely plural meaning is not adopted.⁴⁹

iii. Model of Society

Social reality is here considered to be an overdetermined totality of practices and discourses, within which men and women make their own history. To this extent, acceptance is given to the basic Marxist premises, as expressed in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)⁵⁰ and The German Ideology (1846),⁵¹ that 'world history is nothing more than the creation of man (sic) through human labour',⁵² and that 'life

is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life'.⁵³

However, the orthodox Marxist notion of last-instance economic determination is abandoned, in favour of a model of double last-instance determination. Subjectivity is seen as simultaneously the product of socio-economic and sexual power-structures and their corresponding ideologies; the concept of "sexual politics" is thus affirmed, in the context of certain lessons of feminism.

Ronald Aronson ('Historical Materialism, Answer to Marxism's Crisis', 1985)⁵⁴ has recently suggested that 'contemporary research has explored, and political life has revealed, one after another area not easily accommodated within traditional Marxian categories',⁵⁵ but that these "new areas" can, nonetheless, be illuminated by the historical-materialist method, which remains applicable outside traditional Marxist confines; Marxism is seen as one 'historical specification' of historical materialism,⁵⁶ a method which in itself is 'the key to a radical, structured, layered analysis of contemporary society'.⁵⁷ It is here assumed, within a similar perspective, that consciousness is determined by the structures of social organisation (economic and sexual-political), but that class reductionism should be avoided. This position may be defended as being less a rejection than a correction of the ruling principle of historical materialism, as defined by Engels (letter to Joseph Bloch, 1890):⁵⁸ 'According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real life.'⁵⁹ The 'reproduction' of life may be redefined as including women's reproductive and nurturing labour, just as 'production' may be considered to include the production of gender relations within the patriarchal family.

The most important concepts taken from Marxism for the purposes of this study are outlined below. They are: a) a model of history based on conflict; b) the notion of society as a totality; c) the category of the mode of production; d) the concept of ideology; e) the concepts of alienation, reification, and fetishisation; f) determinate tools for literary analysis.

a) History is considered to be based on conflict rather than continuity.

History may be defined as the material process through which humanity makes itself. This sense of the word is not confined to Marxism, but is central to its discourse. It is explicated as follows by Williams (Keywords): 'past events are seen not as specific histories but as a continuous and connected process ... history ... loses its exclusive association with the past and becomes connected not only to the present but also to the future'.⁶⁰ Within this perspective of history as a continuous process (but not a smooth continuum), the ideology of linear or unproblematic "progress" will here be rejected, in favour of a model based on Benjamin's notion, as specified in the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), of "history" versus "tradition". For Benjamin, "history", the line of development of established power, evolves under the continual threat of disturbance by "tradition", the line of resistance to that power.⁶¹ Power always generates opposition, whether successful or not; history (to return to the broader, more usual sense) should therefore be conceived in terms of conflict, not consensus.

b) Society is considered to be a totality, in the sense that everything in it is related to everything else; as Marx stresses

in the 'Theses on Feuerbach' (1845),⁶² 'the human essence is the ensemble of the social relations'.⁶³ This notion, dominant in the "Hegelian" Marxism of Georg Lukács (History and Class Consciousness, 1923),⁶⁴ has fallen out of favour recently,⁶⁵ but it remains necessary to the extent that the concept of determination implies that of interrelatedness; the materialist method has to distance itself from empiricism. In the sense that materialism rejects the reduction of social conflicts to isolated, individual "problems" with individual "solutions", it approaches any social formation as a complex and determining ensemble. This basic methodological principle is articulated in Lukács' critique of empiricism; the materialist dialectic is seen as permitting the supersession of the subject-object divide (both subject and object become moments in the "historical process" that determines both),⁶⁶ and is thus opposed to the closed "partial systems" of empiricist thought.⁶⁷ Also relevant here is Herbert Marcuse's distinction, in One Dimensional Man (1964),⁶⁸ between the positivist and instrumentalist "operational concept" with its discrete, isolated object, and the "cognitive concept", which integrates the object in the social totality.⁶⁹ This kind of critique of empiricism is relevant to, for instance, the analysis of Dupin's methods in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'.⁷⁰ It must be emphasised, however, that if the social formation is a totality, it is at the same time a space of contradiction; the social fabric is fissured by class, sexual and racial exploitation, antagonism and conflict. Interrelation does not have to presuppose "harmony"; the concept of totality should not be confused with the ideological notion of "unity".

c) The category of the mode of production, as determining instance,

is adopted, with certain reformulations. For Marxism, a mode of production is a (contradictory) ensemble of productive forces and social relations of production.⁷¹ In this study, it is assumed that the mode of production dominant in a particular society exercises a crucial (though not the only) determining pressure on the political and ideological spheres; to use the concepts introduced by Antonio Gramsci (Prison Notebooks, 1929-35),⁷² it exerts politico-juridical pressure in the area of the state ("force" - Gramsci's dominio), and ideological pressure in the area of civil society ("hegemony" - egemonia).⁷³ To this extent, the mode of production is constitutive of the subject.

It may be further suggested, following Eagleton in Criticism and Ideology (1976), that, within the limits of the dominant "general mode of production", particular areas of material and ideological production have their own, relatively autonomous modes of production. In this sense, one can speak of a "literary mode of production" (thus, in the U.S. of the 1830s and 1840s, the dominant literary mode of production was the commodity production of books and articles).⁷⁴

Two points should be noted here. First, the relation between subject and mode of production should be seen as dialectical; as Engels puts it (letter to Walter Borgius, 1894),⁷⁵ 'men (sic) make their history themselves, only they do so in a given environment'.⁷⁶ The subject is determined but also self-defined, within determinate limits, and the "tradition", in Benjamin's sense, of individual and collective protest and resistance, is always present or latent. Second, as already specified, the model of society adopted in this

study diverges from the classical Marxist model, in the sense that the material structures of kinship and sexual power-relations are seen as exerting a determining instance simultaneous with, and parallel to, that of the mode of production. It may be re-emphasised here that, where classical Marxism affirms the notion of "last-instance determination", as in Engels' dictum (letter to Bloch, 1890) that 'the economic movement is finally bound to assert itself',⁷⁷ the present study adopts the modified concept of double last-instance determination, economic and sexual.

d) Ideology is here defined as: a) a system of beliefs and values, purporting to explain the world, which ultimately corresponds to the interests of established power; or b) a particular belief forming part of such a system. The reductive notion of ideology as mere "illusion" or "false consciousness" is rejected; it is seen, rather, as an incomplete or distorted perception of reality, which has determinate material origins and exercises a powerful material influence. If ideology is (in Williams' formulation in Keywords) a 'set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests',⁷⁸ then it cannot be reduced, as in simplistic interpretations of the classic Marxian formulations, to a mere sum of "phantoms" or "sublimates".⁷⁹ Rather, it exerts concrete pressure as a material force⁸⁰ in the interests of social control, saturating daily life and being typically received as "natural" or "common-sensical" - to the point where experience itself becomes, to quote Williams again ('Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis', 1981), 'the most common form of ideology'.⁸¹ Ideology is thus spoken by the subject whom simultaneously it speaks: in Engels' words (letter to Franz Mehring, 1893),⁸² 'the real motive forces impelling him (sic)

remain unknown to the thinker'.⁸³ But if ideology "impels" the subject, it cannot, despite Engels' own terminology of 'illusory motive forces',⁸⁴ be seen as immaterial, since it has concrete effects; it should, rather, be viewed as a force in society that is both material and dialectical, determined by the interests of ruling groups, but also determinant of subjectivity.

Ideology may be opposed to theory, i.e. those discourses which can be appropriated in such a way as to explain social reality from oppositional positions (historical materialism, materialist psychoanalysis).⁸⁵ It is further assumed, following Macherey, that ideology can be called in question by fiction as well as by theory; the literary text, by giving ideology a determinate form, comes to expose its limits⁸⁶ ('literature challenges ideology by using it').⁸⁷ It is therefore considered possible for a particular ideology to be both constituted and deconstituted in the same text (this notion will be applied to the ideology of the "disinterested" intellectual in the Dupin tales);⁸⁸ and for a writer's conscious ideological position on, say, art or women, to be subverted in the letter of the text (see the analyses of 'The Oval Portrait' and 'Ligeia').⁸⁹

e) The concepts of alienation, reification and fetishisation should be distinguished from each other. Following Lucio Colletti ('Introduction' to Marx, Early Writings, 1975),⁹⁰ the "early-Marxian" category of alienation is retained, as a signifier pointing to the sense of lack of control over collective and individual destinies that characterises the social universe of (early to late) capitalism. Alienation is a situation of atomisation and estrangement; it can be recognised in accounts of social experience as early as Engels'

description (The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1845)⁹¹ of the London crowd as exemplifying 'the dissolution of mankind (sic) into monads',⁹² or as recent as Marshall Berman's reading of the 1970s (All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, 1982)⁹³ as dominated by a 'sense of passivity and helplessness' in the face of social forces.⁹⁴ The concept of alienation will be applied, in particular, to the account of the urban crowd, as an aggregation of atomised and separated individuals, in 'The Man of the Crowd'.⁹⁵ Alienation is, then, a sense of isolation and powerlessness, an estrangement of individuals and societies from their own potential, whose roots lie in the capitalist mode of production and its estrangement of producer from product (this is not to say that earlier modes of production do not estrange subjectivity in other ways). In Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,⁹⁶ the term occurs in various senses. It signifies, primarily, the estrangement of the worker from (control over) his/her own labour and product: 'his (sic) labour ... begins to confront him (sic) as an autonomous power; ... the life which he (sic) has bestowed on the object confronts him (sic) as hostile and alien'.⁹⁷ By extension, it also comes to mean the estrangement of the subject from her/himself and from others: 'estranged labour not only ... estranges man(sic) from himself (sic) ... it also estranges man (sic) from his (sic) species'.⁹⁸ Alienation then becomes, by a further extension, the designation of a dominant structure of consciousness in capitalist society, implying both a lack of control and a lack of communication; alienation in the most general sense - what Williams (Keywords) calls 'an act or state of estrangement between persons'⁹⁹ - results from the specific process of alienation inherent in the mode of production.

For Colletti, the later Marxian categories of reification and fetishisation (or fetishism) are continuous with that of alienation.¹⁰⁰ In Marx's discussion, in the first volume of Capital (1867),¹⁰¹ of commodities and money,¹⁰² 'the conversion of things into persons and the conversion of persons into things'¹⁰³ are seen as simultaneous effects of commodity production; fetishisation and reification are two sides of the same coin. Reification is the process by which relations between subjects are perceived as relations between objects; thus, when the value of commodities appears as a function of the objects themselves (and not of the labour that has produced them), 'the definite social relation between men (sic) themselves ... assumes ... the fantastic form of a relation between things'.¹⁰⁴ By extension, the term can also be applied to the conversion of a particular relation between subjects into a relation between subject and object.

Fetishisation is the process by which an object appears to take on subject status; as, in certain religions, the idol is seen as animate, similarly, in capitalist society the commodity appears to have a life of its own. This 'mystical character of the commodity'¹⁰⁵ derives from 'the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities'.¹⁰⁶ The object thus comes to dominate the subject: people's 'movement within society has for them the force of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them'.¹⁰⁷ An analogy may be made here between this Marxian concept and the Freudian notion of fetishism. For Freud (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 1905),¹⁰⁸ when the inanimate object replaces the human sexual object, it becomes personified as a fetish.¹⁰⁹

In both discourses, the subject - as consumer or as desiring agent - surrenders to the seduction of an emotively charged object.

Reification (conversion of subject into object) and fetishisation (conversion of object into subject) may both be seen as consequences of alienation (estrangement of subject from object and subject from subject). These categories can usefully be extended to characterise various types of social behaviour; reification, or reduction of the other to object status, can be considered to occur in the area of sexual politics as well as that of economics. Thus, in the present study, 'The Oval Portrait' will be read as presenting instances of both reification (the painter's instrumentalisation of his wife as model) and fetishisation (the conversion of the portrait into 'Life itself' (M II, 666)).¹¹⁰

f) In the specific area of Marxist literary criticism, it should be noted that the model of the overdetermined text, as specified above,¹¹¹ is an extension of the materialist model of Macherey and Eagleton.¹¹² Use is also made of Marshall Berman's definition, in All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, of post-Industrial Revolution 'modernity' as an essentially double-edged structure of consciousness. For Berman, modernity is, on the one hand, a dynamic, expansive process that tends to free the subject from traditional fixities and stereotypes; and, on the other, a continual threat of atomisation and disintegration - ¹¹³ both a 'will to change' and a 'terror of disorientation'.¹¹⁴

Some of Walter Benjamin's concepts have also been found particularly useful. In Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High

Capitalism (1935-39),¹¹⁵ Benjamin reads Baudelaire's work as marking a (failed) attempt to construct a "shock-proof" consciousness,¹¹⁶ through the concepts of the "heroic" poet and the autonomous artwork, in a society in which 'the shock experience has become the norm'.¹¹⁷ In this context, both the artwork as object of contemplation and the luxurious bourgeois "interior" can be read as metaphors for the imaginary autonomy of the subject, and as products of an ideological attempt to transcend history. The theme of the "interior" in Poe's tales is analysed below¹¹⁸ in the light of Benjamin's discussion of the question in Charles Baudelaire.¹¹⁹ Further, Benjamin's key concept of the "aura",¹²⁰ that is, the imaginary atmosphere that surrounds and isolates the "autonomous" artwork ('the unique appearance or semblance of distance'),¹²¹ is applied to Poe's aesthetic writings.¹²² The use made of historical-materialist work specifically on Poe is summarised in the account of Poe criticism below.¹²³

iv. Model of the Subject

The model, still dominant in our culture, of the subject as autonomous, "full", coherent and self-responsible, is rejected in this study. This is the notion of the "individual" as indivisible entity¹²⁴ and privileged centre of consciousness¹²⁵ - what Eagleton ('Capitalism, Modernism and Post-Modernism', 1985)¹²⁶ calls 'the unified subject of bourgeois humanism', that is, the 'conception of the subject as free, active, autonomous and self-identical'.¹²⁷ The illusory coherence of the "unified" subject is exposed in Jacques Lacan's account ('Le stade du miroir', 1949)¹²⁸ of the child's deceptive internalisation of its own mirror-image: 'l'assomption jubilatoire

de son image spéculaire par ... le petit homme ... nous paraîtra ... manifester en une situation exemplaire la matrice symbolique où le je se précipite en une forme primordiale ... cette forme situe l'instance du moi ... dans une ligne de fiction'.¹²⁹ The fixed and depthless mirror-image, as illusory objectification of the "complete" body, initiates the subject's closure in 'l'armure ... d'une identité aliénante, qui va marquer de sa structure rigide tout son développement mental';¹³⁰ this alienating identity is 'l'illusion d'autonomie'.¹³¹ The mirror-phase is, in the words of J.. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis (Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse, 1967),¹³² 'the matrix and first outline of what is to become the ego'¹³³ - but since in the mirror-image self is perceived as other, this ego is formed out of an alienation.¹³⁴

In the present study, subjectivity will be seen, not as self-sufficient and self-referential, but as produced by multiple determining structures, both external and internal. The subject is seen as determined, on different levels, by economic forces, by kinship/gender structures, by language, by ideology, and by the structures of the unconscious; it is, therefore, neither autonomous nor unified. Lacan ('Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse', 1953)¹³⁵ stresses 'la réalité transindividuelle du sujet';¹³⁶ he argues that consciousness is intersubjective, since the subject is determined by collective structures (those of language, kinship and the unconscious) which operate through internalisation and symbolisation: 'L'homme (sic) parle ..., mais c'est parce que le symbole l'a fait homme',¹³⁷ Lacan further argues ('L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient', 1957)¹³⁸ that the subject is traversed by the discourse of the unconscious;

functioning as the language of another within the self ('l'inconscient est le discours de l'Autre'),¹³⁹ and exposing 'l'hétéronomie radicale dont la découverte de Freud a montré dans l'homme [sic] la béance'.¹⁴⁰ The subject is thus non-autonomous (heteronomous, dependent on the other within) and incoherent - gaping (béant) and fissured from the workings of otherness.

The notion of the heteronomous subject is implicit in the basic positions of both Freud and Marx. For Freud (Civilization and its Discontents, 1930),¹⁴¹ psychoanalytic theory breaks with the ideology of the autonomous subject: 'our own ego ... appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else. That such an appearance is deceptive, and that on the contrary the ego is continued inwards ... into an unconscious mental entity which we designate as the id ... this was a discovery first made by psychoanalytic research'.¹⁴² Freud stresses that 'the boundaries of the ego are not constant', whether between ego and id or ego and external world.¹⁴³ For Marx and Engels (The German Ideology), the autonomous individual is equally a myth; consciousness must be understood in terms not of 'individuals ... as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination', but of their material 'life-process'.¹⁴⁴ Historical-materialist analysis cannot, therefore, begin from 'consciousness taken as the living individual';¹⁴⁵ it starts, rather, from the external collective forces that operate on the subject. The autonomous subject is also called in question by Saussurean linguistics, with its emphasis on the determination of parole by langue, seen as a transindividual structure;¹⁴⁶ any revision of Saussure's model to give greater emphasis to parole¹⁴⁷ has to acknowledge the ultimate determining instance of langue,

without which no act of parole could be effective. Materialist analysis, then, confronts the subject as non-autonomous and determined; conscious acts of self-definition and social transformation can only be understood in the context of the pressures of the determining (though not unchangeable) structures.

Nonetheless, the ideology of the "full" subject remains hegemonic in modern Western culture. The notion of "unity" exerts its power through displacement into other fields, notably that of aesthetics. The concept of the autonomous, unified artwork - crucial to Poe's own aesthetic model¹⁴⁸ - is here considered to be a displacement of the notion of the "full" subject. To the indivisible "I" corresponds the unified art-object - Benjamin's "auratic" artwork as object of contemplation,¹⁴⁹ or the text as instance of what Barthes, in S/Z, calls 'Pleine Littérature'.¹⁵⁰ This view of the art-object is classically articulated in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria (1817):¹⁵¹

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power ... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities ... blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial,¹⁵² and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.¹⁵²

Attempting to answer the questions: 'what is poetry?' and 'what is a poet?', Coleridge's text constitutes an ideological model of both the unitary subject (the 'whole soul of man', with its faculties 'fused' into coherence, hierarchised and disciplined) and the unitary artwork (the poem seen as a 'whole', harmonious and balanced).

"Whole" text and "whole" subject thus enter into a dialectical relation. In this context, Eagleton (Criticism and Ideology) argues that the 'phenomenal presence of the text ... plays its part in constituting the reader as equivalently self-coherent "subject", centred in the privileged space of an entirely appropriable meaning'.¹⁵³ For Benjamin (Charles Baudelaire), the nineteenth-century bourgeois interior - which is both a collection of art-objects and an art-object in itself - symbolises the imaginary autonomy and closure of its owner's subjectivity: 'The private citizen ... required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions ...¹⁵⁴ there appeared the house as expression of the personality ...¹⁵⁵ The interior was not only the private citizen's universe, it was his casing.'¹⁵⁶

The artwork, then, takes on the role of confirming the subject's self-image. This ideological process may be seen at work in Poe's 1847 review of Hawthorne's tales ('Tale-Writing - Nathaniel Hawthorne', H XIII, 141-55), where the "unified" text, as object of contemplation, is seen as inducing a parallel sense of plenitude in the reader: 'a picture is ... painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it ..., a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale ... has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed' (H XIII, 153). The ideology of the 'undisturbed' text shores up another ideology, that of the 'full', 'satisfied', indeed 'unblemished' subject.

The specific model of subjectivity adopted in this study is that of psychoanalysis, deriving essentially from Freud (as re-read by Juliet Mitchell (Psychoanalysis and Feminism, 1974)),¹⁵⁷ with some

reference to the post-Freudian concepts of Melanie Klein (as explicated by Hanna Segal (Klein, 1979));¹⁵⁸ the definition of certain terms is drawn from Laplanche and Pontalis (The Language of Psycho-Analysis, 1967).¹⁵⁹ With respect to Lacanian theory, certain orientations are broadly followed, i.e.: the notions of the unconscious as a language system,¹⁶⁰ and of psychoanalysis as an account of the patriarchal law,¹⁶¹ and the rejection of "ego-psychological" tendencies in the name of the subversive instance of the unconscious.¹⁶² However, the terminology used is largely "Freudian" rather than "Lacanian" (though Freud's own ideological tendencies to normativism, ahistoricism and biologism are rejected). Psychoanalysis is seen as offering a materialist explanation of the social construction of subjectivity through the internalisation of the patriarchal family and its norms.¹⁶³ It is assumed that the model in question is not one of an "eternal" or "unchangeable" human nature (whatever Freud's own views), but of subjectivity as constructed in history - specifically, in Western patriarchal culture. Thus, the Oedipus complex is seen not in Freud's own terms (as stated in the Three Essays (1905)) as an eternal constant confronting 'every new arrival on this planet',¹⁶⁴ but as constitutive of the subject in the existing culture. Repression, similarly, is considered not, as in Civilization and its Discontents, as a necessary adjunct to "civilisation" tout court,¹⁶⁵ but as a process characteristic of authoritarian culture. Psychoanalytic theory is, then, viewed not as legitimating the patriarchal order, but as providing tools for its understanding; as Mitchell stresses, 'psychoanalysis is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis of one'.¹⁶⁶ It should also be noted that (following Mitchell¹⁶⁷ against, say, Wilhelm Reich)¹⁶⁸ Freud's work is taken

as a whole, and such "late-Freudian" concepts as the compulsion to repeat, the death-drive and the superego are accepted. A summary of the main psychoanalytic concepts used in this study follows; those which are given special emphasis in the analyses of particular tales (e.g. the death-drive for 'The Imp of the Perverse',¹⁶⁹ hysteria and paranoia for 'The Fall of the House of Usher')¹⁷⁰ will be discussed at length in the relevant chapters.

This study takes as axiomatic the basic Freudian postulates of the existence of unconscious and preconscious mental processes, of repression and its return, and of the unconscious as a system, an area of the mind with its specific mode of functioning (the primary process).¹⁷¹ All this, of course, immediately negates any notion of mental "unity", constituting the subject, rather, in terms of discontinuity, contradiction and conflict. The manifest phenomena of dreams, parapraxes and symptoms become comprehensible only through translation into their latent content. Self thus emerges as other; in Freud's words, 'there is knowledge of which the person concerned nevertheless knows nothing'.¹⁷²

Freud's earlier model of the mind (The Interpretation of Dreams, 1900) based on the systems conscious/preconscious/unconscious¹⁷³ is not seen as being fundamentally incompatible with the later "structural" model (The Ego and the Id, 1923) based on the agencies ego/id/superego.¹⁷⁴ The second model, rather than substituting the first, is seen as being superimposed on it.¹⁷⁵ The term "unconscious" (as name of the system) is used in preference to "id", in keeping with usual practice. The superego is considered a necessary category, since it mediates between the subject's internal

life and the external social world. Specifically, the superego, as 'heir of the Oedipus complex',¹⁷⁶ is the internalised paternal image, the agency of the Law of the Father in the individual subject; it is in this context that Mitchell's claim that the unconscious is the 'domain of the reproduction of culture or ideology'¹⁷⁷ should be placed.

The Oedipus complex is seen as ushering in what Mitchell calls the subject's 'entry into culture';¹⁷⁸ its dissolution, coinciding with the formation of the superego,¹⁷⁹ is the moment at which the subject assumes his/her preassigned place within the patriarchal law. In Mitchell's words, the Oedipus complex (in its formation and dissolution) is 'the internalized law of patriarchal human order'.¹⁸⁰ In the case of the male child, the Oedipus complex is shattered by the castration complex; the child comes to see himself as (metaphorically) "castrated", i.e. excluded from power and pleasure, in the shadow of the more powerful father, and therefore accepts temporary "castration" in exchange for the prospect of deferred gratification and power. As Mitchell puts it, 'in the situation of the Oedipus complex ... the little boy learns his place as the heir to this law of the father'.¹⁸¹ Secure in his possession of the phallus, which guarantees access to power, he knows that 'one day he will come into his paternal heritage'.¹⁸² The process is classically exemplified in Freud's case history of "Little Hans" (1909).¹⁸³ In the case of the female Oedipus complex, the model of female sexuality adopted here - following Mitchell¹⁸⁴ - is Freud's later model (as expounded in the 1931 paper 'Female Sexuality'),¹⁸⁵ stripped of its normative dimension. In the first ("active") phase, the girl child takes as her sexual object the (pre-Oedipal) mother; the second ("passive") phase follows

on her discovery that she is "castrated" (excluded from power as member of the oppressed sex), upon which she transfers her desire to the (Oedipal) father. The female child thus undergoes a negative entry into culture; the active component of her sexuality is (at least in Freud's - or Poe's - culture) typically subjected to what Mitchell calls 'an act of massive repression',¹⁸⁶ but remains latent, always capable of reactivation. At the same time, a repressed fear (and knowledge) of female activity and aggression persists in the male unconscious. This fear, described by Freud in his 1918 paper 'The Taboo of Virginity',¹⁸⁷ may be seen as underlying such tales as 'The Oval Portrait' and 'Ligeia'.¹⁸⁸ It should also be stressed that for Freud, both men and women are psychically bisexual ('bisexuality ... is present ... in the innate disposition of human beings').¹⁸⁹ That is, male ("active") subjectivity also contains a repressed female ("passive") component; the male Oedipus complex - as, for instance, the "Wolf Man" case (1918) revealed¹⁹⁰ - includes a "negative" or "inverted" element, consisting of "passive" desire for the father.¹⁹¹ Gendered subjectivity is internalised through the Oedipal phase, and cultural role stereotypes (male/active, female/passive) are thus naturalised; but the repressed non-stereotype tendencies remain liable to break out and disturb the cultural order. The problematic of male "feminisation" will be considered in the analyses of (for instance) 'The Purloined Letter' and 'Usher' below.¹⁹²

Certain tales will be read in terms of psychoanalytic models of the aetiology of neuroses and psychoses (hysteria for 'Usher' and 'Berenice', paranoia for 'Usher' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart').¹⁹³ For hysteria, the Freudian model (Studies on Hysteria, 1893-95;¹⁹⁴

the "Dora" case, 1905)¹⁹⁵ is followed; the symptom is seen as the symbolic expression of a repressed idea ('a hysterical symptom ... has a psychological significance, a meaning').¹⁹⁶ For paranoia, however, the classical Freudian link between the illness and homosexuality (as in the Schreber case (1911)),¹⁹⁷ implying a "same-sex persecutor",¹⁹⁸ is rejected, in favour of Klein's bisexual model (i.e. the "persecutor" can, for either sex, be either a father or a mother figure).¹⁹⁹

The controversial metapsychological notion of the death-drive, or Thanatos, which Freud introduces, and opposes to the sexual drive, or Eros, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920),²⁰⁰ is retained, but is reformulated in cultural rather than biological terms. Destruction and self-destruction are seen, if not as necessarily - as Freud would have it - permanent, biological human characteristics, at least as constitutive of the subject in the present culture. The question will be discussed at length in relation to Poe's "urban murder tales".²⁰¹ It should be noted that the death-drive is appropriated in the formation of the superego, a process which helps account for the latter's sadistic, punitive character;²⁰² and that it is closely bound up with the "compulsion to repeat",²⁰³ a structure that Lacan locates in 'The Purloined Letter',²⁰⁴ and which will be read as central to 'The Man of the Crowd'.²⁰⁵

The unconscious is considered to be a language system (or signifying system) in its own right, characterised by the "primary-process" modes of condensation, displacement and symbolisation;²⁰⁶ in Lacan's words, 'l'inconscient EST un discours'.²⁰⁷ At the same time, the "secondary-process" language of conscious discourse is liable

to disturbance (e.g. through punning, ambiguity or parapraxes) by the "other" discourse of the unconscious.²⁰⁸ Specifically, a process of unconsciously motivated self-destruction through language (appropriation of language by Thanatos) will be argued to be operative in 'The Imp of the Perverse' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart'.²⁰⁹

It should be stressed, finally, that the psychoanalytic model of the subject presupposes a relative, rather than an absolute, dividing-line between "normal" and "abnormal" mental phenomena. The Oedipal socialisation process is prone to malfunction, generating neuroses;²¹⁰ the repressed always tends to return. As Freud stresses, 'the borderline between the normal and the abnormal in nervous matters is a fluid one';²¹¹ the relative, and transgressable, status of that borderline will be shown below to be exemplified in such texts as 'The Man of the Crowd' and 'Usher'.²¹²

The application of psychoanalytic theory to the texts will also take into account Freud's specific contribution to the analysis of the fantastic, in his paper 'The "Uncanny"' (1919),²¹³ which will be considered in the next part of this chapter. Poe's texts will also be analysed, where relevant, in terms of various nineteenth-century psychological models - phrenology,²¹⁴ mesmerism,²¹⁵ theories of hysteria,²¹⁶ hypochondria, mania and melancholia.²¹⁷ A distinction is drawn between "contemporaneous" psychological readings and "theoretical" psychoanalytic readings. However, in contrast to certain recent studies which have read Poe's texts only in terms of nineteenth-century concepts,²¹⁸ it is here assumed that psychoanalysis, as a model of subjectivity under patriarchy, can legitimately be applied retrospectively to nineteenth-century literary

texts. The unconscious that Freud identified is not unchangeable, but is unlikely, in its recalcitrance, to have changed radically over the last two hundred years;²¹⁹ as Frederick Crews, writing on Hawthorne, suggested in 1966,²²⁰ 'either we are entitled to use Freudianism retroactively or we must say that it is false'.²²¹

v. Towards a Methodological Synthesis

The present study assumes the possibility of a composite methodology, synthesising historical-materialist, psychoanalytic and structuralist discourses. The project of synthesising Freudian and Marxist discourses is as old as Reich's The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1933);²²² more recently, Franco Moretti ('The Dialectic of Fear', 1978)²²³ has suggested that it may be 'permissible to "integrate" Marxism and psychoanalysis into a much broader and much more solid science of modern society'.²²⁴ Freud, it may be noted, conceded in the New Introductory Lectures (1933) that 'the strength of Marxism clearly lies ... in its sagacious indication of the decisive influence which the economic circumstances of men (sic) have upon their intellectual, ethical and artistic attitudes', while at the same time affirming that 'it cannot be assumed that economic motives are the only ones that determine the behaviour of human beings in society'.²²⁵ Freud's critique of Marxism, which stresses the determining role of the unconscious and of cultural structures,²²⁶ and suggests that an injection of psychoanalytic theory could turn Marxism into 'a genuine social science',²²⁷ scarcely implies a discourse that would be less materialist than that of The German Ideology. A more wide-ranging synthesis is implied by Lacan's notion, as cited above, of the multiple determination of the subject by the structures of language, kinship and the unconscious.²²⁸

It may be added that the concepts of "overdetermination" and "over-interpretation" (or polysemy) themselves originate in Freud's Interpretation of Dreams,²²⁹ and can immediately be extended from the dream or the symptom to the wider realm of social reality.

The basic models of Marx, Freud and Saussure are all "hermeneutic" or "depth" models, implying a hierarchy of levels - signified/signifier, latent/manifest, base/superstructure - and are thus all anti-empiricist. Further, they all - especially in certain reinterpretations (Benjamin, Mitchell, Vološinov) - combine the elements of determination and contestation. Determination is best seen in Williams' terms (Marxism and Literature) as a setting of 'limits and pressures',²³⁰ rather than an iron necessity; the mode of production, the structures of the unconscious and the system of langue all define the limits of collective and individual consciousness and action. On the other hand, the logic of official "history" is contested by dissident "tradition"; the workings of the unconscious can be made conscious, and, beyond this, attempts can be made to create new social structures that could, in the future, modify those workings;²³¹ and langue can be altered by individual and collective acts of parole (the formation of new discourses).

It may be concluded, then, that - in spite of current "post-structuralist" and "anti-depth model" fashions²³² - a synthesis of hermeneutic materialist discourses is still necessary for the understanding of social reality, and, therefore, of the literary text. In the present study, then, a plurality of methods - historical-materialist, structuralist, and psychoanalytic - are employed, as and where relevant to the texts.

2. THEORIES OF "GOTHIC" OR "FANTASTIC" LITERATURE

"Gothic" or "fantastic" literature may be roughly defined as a form of narrative which tends to produce fear in the reader, and refuses, to a greater or lesser extent, to conform to a realist model of representation (the wider ramifications of the term "Gothic" will be discussed in a later chapter):¹ Tzvetan Todorov's Introduction à la littérature fantastique (1970)² is an essential starting-point for genre analysis in this area - essential for its rejection of supernaturalism and its emphasis on the role of the reader. Todorov defines the fantastic as 'un genre toujours évanescent',³ poised between two contiguous genres, the "étrange" and the "merveilleux"; the reader of a fantastic narrative is confronted with enigmatic events and situations which, once explained, may be placed either in the area of the supernatural ("merveilleux") or in the area of the unusual but possible ("étrange").⁴ For most of the narrative, the reader hesitates between the two alternative readings before finally opting for one or the other;⁵ the specificity of the fantastic genre lies in this hesitation. A "merveilleux" interpretation accepts the existence of the supernatural in the narrative: an "étrange" interpretation explains the enigmas in rational terms, whether physical (e.g. trickery) or psychological (e.g. dreams, hallucinations, madness).⁶ A "fantastic" text can thus be more specifically categorised as "fantastic-étrange", "fantastic-merveilleux", or (if the hesitation is kept up to the end) "pure fantastic".⁷

The present analysis makes use of Todorov's terminology, with the terms "étrange" and "merveilleux" retained in French, since they are not satisfactorily translatable. The English translation (The

Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, trans. R. Howard, 1973)⁸ renders them as "uncanny" and "marvelous" respectively;⁹ but this is unsatisfactory, since to employ "uncanny" runs the risk of confusion with Freud's use of the term (to be discussed later in this section), given that "unheimlich" is rendered "uncanny" in English. As Todorov himself points out with reference to Freud, 'il n'y a pas recouvrement parfait entre cet emploi du terme et le nôtre';¹⁰ Freud's sense implies a causal link between "uncanny" effects and the return of the repressed, which is not necessarily the case with Todorov's sense.

According to Todorov, most of Poe's tales belong less to the fantastic than to the "étrange" proper, a genre which includes the "extreme" or "limit-case" areas of realism (the anomalous but possible):

'D'une manière générale, on ne trouve pas dans l'oeuvre de Poe de contes fantastiques, au sens strict ... Ses nouvelles relèvent presque toutes de l'étrange, et quelques-unes, du merveilleux.'¹¹

However, there is no doubt that most of Poe's Gothic tales set up precisely the mechanism of hesitation described by Todorov, and that, historically, they have been subjected to both supernatural and psychological readings;¹² they can legitimately be placed, for the most part, in the "fantastic-étrange". In the studies of individual tales that follow, it will be demonstrated that, while "merveilleux" readings are theoretically possible, the texts in practice contain clear markers pointing to an "étrange" (psychological) reading; thus, for instance, 'Ligeia' will be read following the textual indicators of the narrator's madness and unreliability - not as a narrative of magic and resurrection, but as an account of erotic obsession, delusion and hallucination.¹³

If Todorov's generic categories offer useful tools for the formal analysis of Poe's tales, the same cannot be said of his semantic analysis, which offers a typology of 'thèmes du je', and 'thèmes du tu',¹⁴ but fails to engage seriously with psychoanalysis.¹⁵ A basis for the psychoanalytic interpretation of fantastic literature is, however, outlined by Freud in 'The "Uncanny"' (1919) - a text which, it should be noted, belongs to a transitional phase in his theoretical development, when the concepts of Eros and Thanatos, and the "structural" model of the mind were being worked out. Freud defines an "uncanny" (unheimlich) literary motif as one producing a certain kind of fear, perceived as irrational and apparently inexplicable: 'what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar ... the uncanny would always ... be something one does not know one's way about in'.¹⁶ Freud's instances include the double, the animation of the inanimate and the theme of blindness. He stresses that the German word heimlich signifies in two contrary directions: on the one hand, it can mean "homely" or "familiar"; on the other, "concealed", "secret", "inaccessible to knowledge", or even "hidden and dangerous";¹⁷ that is, there is a certain semantic overlap between heimlich and its opposite, unheimlich. The uncanny is, therefore, something which is both familiar (heimlich) and unfamiliar (unheimlich). Freud explains this apparent contradiction in terms of the unconscious origins of uncanny effects; the uncanny is an instance of the return of the repressed. It is thus both unfamiliar (in its manifestations) and familiar (in its origins) - the roots of an uncanny sensation lie in repressed childhood fantasies: 'the uncanny is something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it';¹⁸ 'what is involved is an actual repression of some content and a return of this repressed content'.¹⁹ Thus, for instance, the

uncanny effect of the theme of blindness in Hoffmann's 'The Sandman' (1816) is explained in terms of the castration complex,²⁰ while the theme of the double is related to primary narcissism and to the superego (a concept which Freud was then evolving).²¹ As with dreams and symptoms, the literary text embodies repressed ideas in the disguised form of the symbol.

Recent criticism of Freud's text has pointed out the lacunae in his treatment of Hoffmann's tale, but continues to acknowledge the theoretical importance of his concept of the uncanny.²² The concept may be considered directly applicable to Poe's tales. Indeed, both 'Usher' and 'The Black Cat' make a direct link, in the letter of the text, between, precisely, the 'familiar/homely' and the 'unfamiliar/wild', in terms which strikingly anticipate Freud's: 'while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this - I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up' ('Usher', M II, 400-401);²³ 'the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen' ('The Black Cat', M III, 849).²⁴ The texts will be read, where relevant, as giving symbolic form to repressed desires and fears; for 'The Oval Portrait', for instance, the uncanny 'life-likeness' (M II, 664) of the woman's portrait (an example of animation of the inanimate) will be seen as deriving from the narrator's fear of female sexuality.²⁵ 'The "Uncanny"' is also important for its reference to another concept, the compulsion to repeat²⁶ - later to be theorised in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920);²⁷ repetition is seen as a possible source of uncanny effects. In this case the repressed material belongs to the domain of Thanatos; thus, for 'The Man of the Crowd', the uncanny effect of the old man's repetitive movements may be traced, via the compulsion to repeat, to

the insistence of the death-drive.²⁸

The present study, then, tends to follow Todorov in the formal and Freud in the semantic analysis of the fantastic text. Several other recent theoretical studies of the fantastic/Gothic genre also deserve attention. Franco Moretti, in his essay 'The Dialectic of Fear' (1978), combines psychoanalytic and historical-materialist perspectives in the analysis of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897); both texts are seen as giving symbolic expression to class anxieties (fear of the proletariat or of monopoly capital) on the one hand, and repressed (sexual and aggressive) desires on the other.²⁹ David Punter's The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day (1980)³⁰ proposes a 'theory of the Gothic' articulated around the themes of barbarism, taboo and persecution/paranoia;³¹ Gothic is seen historically as a genre originating in the eighteenth century and extending up to the present, characterised by non-realism³² and the centrality of fear.³³ Psychoanalytic and sociological perspectives are combined in an analysis which affirms its 'underlying historical materialism';³⁴ Gothic is read, on the one hand, as a 'literature of alienation',³⁵ and on the other, as a mode of writing which subverts the illusory coherence of the subject, producing texts in which 'it is perfectly obvious that unity is not a given property of the psyche'.³⁶ Rosemary Jackson's genre study Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (1981), drawing on Freud and Lacan, sees fantasy (defined as 'any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation')³⁷ as subverting the symbolic order of patriarchal culture; the split, doubled and multiple selves encountered in fantastic literature expose as ideological the phenomenal "unity" of the psyche.³⁸ Fantasy

thus employs difference to interrogate the received category of the "real".³⁹ Jackson's heavily Lacanian terminology, and her prioritisation of the "imaginary" over the "symbolic"⁴⁰ (tending towards a rejection of the conceptual in favour of an "entropic" state of undifferentiation),⁴¹ are not followed here, on the grounds that social transformation is impossible without some continued demarcation of self from other and subject from external world. Nevertheless, the present study should be read as a detailed analysis located within the general theoretical space defined by the work of Moretti, Punter and Jackson (all of whom, it may be added, include only relatively brief comments on Poe's texts).⁴² Use is also made of recent theoretical work on the other genre practised by Poe to be studied here, i.e. detective fiction. In particular, Jerry Palmer's Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre (1978)⁴³ offers a sociological analysis of the detective/thriller form, based on the notions of competitive individualism and the fear of conspiracy.⁴⁴ This model will be discussed in detail in the chapter on the Dupin tales.⁴⁵

3. TENDENCIES IN POE CRITICISM

i. General

The British critical tradition has (with a few exceptions) notoriously tended to ignore or devalue Poe's work, perhaps owing to the same native empiricism as tends to marginalise psychoanalysis; a representative view is provided by F. R. Leavis' dismissal, in The Great Tradition (1948),¹ of the 'melodramatic intensities of Edgar Allan Poe'.² On the other hand, the French and U.S. traditions both offer

a plethora of writing on Poe, from the most diverse perspectives. Most of the Poe criticism referred to in this study belongs to one or other of these traditions, although some reference is also made to German, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Spanish-American and Brazilian readings. The French tradition begins with Charles Baudelaire's critical and biographical studies ('Edgar Allan Poe, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages', 1852;³ 'Edgar Poe, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres', 1856;⁴ 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe', 1857),⁵ which, in spite of elements of plagiarism in (above all) the biographical section of the first essay,⁶ all contain original and perceptive critical comments. The tradition has been continued with important studies by such figures as Paul Valéry,⁷ Georges Poulet,⁸ Roland Barthes,⁹ and - as already referred to above - Jacques Lacan¹⁰ and Jacques Derrida.¹¹ The U.S. tradition, if less fertile in analyses by major intellectuals, has nonetheless produced studies by T. S. Eliot,¹² Edmund Wilson¹³ and Leslie Fiedler.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the present century has seen a steady stream of critical studies, articles in such journals as American Literature and PMLA, and, since 1968, the regular contributions of the journal Poe Studies (formerly Poe Newsletter), which has given consistent attention to French criticism.

The present study makes no pretensions to offer an overall view of Poe criticism. However, it will be useful, at this point, to summarise some of the existing tendencies and indicate those which have been found useful. The various tendencies will be considered under the following headings: traditional criticism; historical-materialist criticism; structuralism, nouvelle critique and post-structuralism; psychoanalytic criticism.

ii. Traditional Criticism

Traditional criticism on Poe may be divided into the "factual" and the "interpretive". The factual tendency is best represented by Arthur H. Quinn's life, Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography (1941),¹⁵ which emphasises Poe's role as professional journalist; and by such empirical studies as Michael Allen's Poe and the British Magazine Tradition (1969)¹⁶ and John Ward Ostrom's 'Edgar A. Poe: His Income as Literary Entrepreneur' (1982),¹⁷ which locate the texts in the sociology of literature (conditions of production, readership, etc.). Specific elements in the historical context are explicated by such studies as Ernest Marchand's 'Poe As Social Critic' (1934),¹⁸ which specifies Poe's "Southernness", and Elizabeth Phillips' Edgar Allan Poe - An American Imagination: Three Essays (1979),¹⁹ which places the tales in the context of nineteenth-century concepts of landscape, democracy and psychology. Empirical psychological studies, locating the texts in the context of contemporaneous theories, are also provided by, e.g., E. Hungerford, 'Poe and Phrenology' (1930),²⁰ S. E. Lind, 'Poe and Mesmerism' (1947),²¹ and Allan Smith, 'The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe' (1973).²²

"Interpretive" readings include the supernatural, the idealist and the "ironic" (psychological readings tend to be either empirical, as with those cited above, or psychoanalytic). The supernatural tradition (which reads the "Gothic" tales in terms of Todorov's 'merveilleux') may be represented by many of T. O. Mabbott's generally rather conservative introductions to the tales in his 1978 edition²³ (e.g., for 'Ligeia': 'We cannot doubt that the author intended a story of real magic'),²⁴ or by such articles as J. O. Bailey's 'What

Happens in "The Fall of the House of Usher"?' (1964)²⁵ (which reads the tale in terms of vampirism) or Gayle D. Anderson's 'Demonology in "The Black Cat"' (1977).²⁶ Its incidence and influence in critical circles are, however, limited; its limitations are exposed by G. R. Thompson's model for reading Poe (1973), to be discussed below.²⁷

The idealist tradition has been more influential; its prime exponent is Richard Wilbur. His essay 'The House of Poe' (1959)²⁸ is simultaneously intentionist, idealist, and an example of Macherey's "interpretive fallacy", reducing the texts to a single (intended) "meaning".²⁹

Wilbur declares: 'The business of the critic ... is to divine the intention of the work, and to interpret the work in the light of that intention',³⁰ and goes on to read a series of tales as allegories of the withdrawal of consciousness from waking into dream, and therefore of the transcendence of matter by spirit. Thus he can conclude:

'When the House of Usher disintegrates or dematerializes at the close of the story, it does so because Roderick Usher has become all soul.'³¹

All disturbing and conflictive content is thus repressed out of the texts, which are converted into idealist manifestos: 'Usher' becomes, not an exposure of the possible disintegration of subjectivity in patriarchal culture, but, rather, 'a triumphant report ... that it is possible for the poetic soul to shake off this temporal, rational, physical world'.³² Similarly, in 'The Poe Mystery Case' (1967),³³

Wilbur reads 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' as an allegory of 'a soul's fathoming and ordering of itself', finally vindicating 'the reintegrated and harmonized consciousness of Dupin'³⁴ - ignoring the textual indications of disintegration and doubling that undermine the construction of Dupin as "full" subject. Wilbur's arguments concerning these and other tales will be refuted in detail below;³⁵

it may be noted here that, in this kind of reading, idealist discourse goes hand-in-glove with ideological notions of psychological and textual "unity".

E. H. Davidson's Poe: A Critical Study (1957)³⁶ similarly reads the tales from an avowedly idealist perspective ('works of art ... have meanings quite beyond anything material or temporal');³⁷ the texts are read as tending towards "unity", so that, for instance, it is claimed that in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' the narrator is 'impelled to give himself up and pay the death penalty because he may thereby return to full selfhood or primal being'.³⁸ Here, as in Wilbur's readings, all elements tending against 'full selfhood' (self-destruction, repetition, hallucination) are ironed out of the text. Similar, Wilbur-influenced readings in terms of "unity" or "transcendence" are frequent, as witness Gerhard Hoffmann's 'Space and Symbol in the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe' (1971)³⁹ (where it is claimed that the fictional use of space tends towards "unity"), or Maurice J. Bennett's "'The Madness of Art": Poe's 'Ligeia' as Metafiction' (1981)⁴⁰ (where it is argued that Ligeia represents transcendence of the material world). The ideological implications of this kind of reading are much the same as those of Wilbur's or Davidson's.⁴¹

The most sophisticated method for reading the tales that traditional criticism has devised is the "ironic" model developed by G. R.

Thompson in Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales (1973).⁴²

Thompson distinguishes three levels of meaning in the "Gothic" tales:

1) a manifest supernatural level; 2) a latent psychological level; and 3) a burlesque level at which the text is mocking both Gothic conventions and the naïve reader who remains stuck at the first level.⁴³

The intelligent reader, by contrast, will see through the first level

to the second, and simultaneously appreciate the third. To transpose Thompson's model into Todorov's terms, the tales are "étrange" masquerading as "merveilleux". The study includes dense and intricate readings of such tales as 'Ligeia'⁴⁴ or 'Usher',⁴⁵ although the insistence on finding irony and burlesque everywhere can lead to readings that underestimate the significative complexity of others ('The Man of the Crowd',⁴⁶ 'The Imp of the Perverse').⁴⁷ Thompson's work takes little account of psychoanalysis, barring occasional invocation of 'the unseen, unconscious life';⁴⁸ but it marks a necessary break with supernaturalism and the interpretive fallacy.

iii. Historical-Materialist Criticism

Historical-materialist criticism appears to have produced very little work on Poe; this is no doubt owing to what Punter identifies as a continuing normative prejudice among Marxist critics in favour of realist texts⁴⁹ (as witness Georg Lukács' strictures in Studies in European Realism (1948), against "psychologism").⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin's Charles Baudelaire (1935-39),⁵¹ however, contains a crucial (though incomplete) analysis of 'The Man of the Crowd', in which the repetitive movements of the crowd are seen as both symbol and product of the stereotyped rhythms of mass production.⁵² Poe's text is seen as signifying the determining instance of 'social forces',⁵³ via the mediating operation of a 'purposely distorting imagination ... that removes the text far from what is commonly advocated as the model of social realism'.⁵⁴ These comments contain the germ of a Marxist reading of Poe that would not marginalise the texts on the grounds of their non-realism. Benjamin's work also supplies some illuminative remarks on the "interior" theme in Poe (again in Charles Baudelaire)⁵⁵

and on the detective stories (both in that text⁵⁶ and in One-Way Street (1928)).⁵⁷

Two articles by the U.S. critic Louis Harap have more recently attempted a historical-materialist reading of Poe. In 'Poe and Dostoevsky: A Case of Affinity' (1976)⁵⁸ Harap reads several tales (including 'William Wilson', 'The Imp of the Perverse' and 'The Man of the Crowd') in terms of alienation. Poe himself is seen as an 'alienated man',⁵⁹ while 'The Imp of the Perverse' is compared with Dostoyevsky's Notes from the Underground (1864), both texts being read as expressions of protest against 'the alienating conditions of modern society'.⁶⁰

There is a clear convergence here with Benjamin; determinate literary effects are referred to their social causes. Harap also examines Poe's journalistic work in 'Edgar Allan Poe and Journalism' (1971),⁶¹ seeing him as both victim and producer of alienation - victim of the social relations of production in the magazine industry; but, at times, producer of stereotyping trivia such as the 1846 'Literati of New York' sketches.⁶² Harap also applies historical materialism to Poe's literary theory; the ideology of aesthetic autonomy is seen as a protest against alienation ('His literary theory ... is that of the alienated artist').⁶³ Marxist concepts are also applied to this area of Poe's work by Pierre Macherey, in A Theory of Literary Production.⁶⁴ 'The Philosophy of Composition' is seen as a contradictory text, which breaks down the spurious unity of the literary work, showing it to be 'the product ... of a certain labour', only to reconstitute it as the unified object of a 'passive contemplation'.⁶⁵ The comments of Benjamin, Harap and Macherey, though brief, form the nucleus of a historical-materialist reading of Poe, and many of their insights will be appropriated and developed in the present study.

iv. Structuralism, Nouvelle Critique and Post-Structuralism

In this theoretical area, important studies have been devoted to Poe. Those of Roland Barthes ('Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe', 1973)⁶⁶ and Roman Jakobson ('Le langage en action', 1942)⁶⁷ are "exemplary" in character, reading particular texts as instances of general principles or problems of signification. Barthes' essay offers a "practical" reading of 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar', in terms of its articulation of narrative codes; the result is a kind of small-scale S/Z,⁶⁸ with special emphasis on the "cultural" code of "scientific" discourse⁶⁹ and the "symbolic" code by which the textual metaphors signify Death and Desire.⁷⁰ Jakobson's text analyses 'The Raven' in order to problematise the relations addresser/addressee and question/answer,⁷¹ and to demonstrate the principle of polysemy and the contextual determination of meaning.⁷²

The readings of Jean Ricardou are meta-literary in character; they include analyses of 'Usher' ('L'histoire dans l'histoire', 1966),⁷³ Pym ('Le caractère singulier de cette eau', 1967)⁷⁴ and 'The Gold-Bug' ('L'or du scarabée', 1971).⁷⁵ Textual elements in the tales are taken as signposts indicating how to read (both the texts in question and texts in general). Thus, in 'Usher', the inset narrative of the 'Mad Trist' is seen as warning the narrator of the imminent collapse of the house, and thus as paradigmatic of the mise en abyme, i.e. the textual detail which mirrors the logic of the macro-narrative;⁷⁶ in Pym, the 'singular' water on Tsalal (Beaver, Pym, 1975, pp. 193-94) is 'une parfaite métaphore d'un texte écrit',⁷⁷ in its polychromy (= polysemy) and failure to reflect (= non-realist status); in 'The Gold-Bug', Legrand is seen as a model reader, while

the other characters are 'en mauvais termes avec le langage'.⁷⁸ Claude Richard's readings of Pym ('L'écriture d'Arthur Gordon Pym', 1975)⁷⁹ and 'The Tell-Tale Heart' ('La double voix dans "The Tell-Tale Heart"', 1975)⁸⁰ occupy much the same critical space as Ricardou's. Pym is read as consisting of a series of metatextual images (e.g. the torn-up letter in the third chapter (Beaver, Pym, 1975, pp. 74-76));⁸¹ while the text of 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is seen as constructing two discourses at once, the "false" discourse of the narrator's "story" and the "true" discourse of the heart's "tale",⁸² and thus issuing a challenge to the reader to identify the "true" discourse, and so 'apprendre à lire'.⁸³ A more "thematic" reading is that of Georges Poulet, in 'L'univers circonscrit d'Edgar Poe' (1955),⁸⁴ which subjects Poe's imagery across the canon to rigorous symbolic analysis, in order to show that the tales typically construct both a "closed space" and a "closed time" - a closed system which eventually self-destructs.⁸⁵ Finally, Jacques Derrida's "post-structuralist" reading of 'The Purloined Letter' ('Le facteur de la vérité', 1975)⁸⁶ rejects any "depth" or hermeneutic model, reducing the text to a 'labyrinthe de doubles',⁸⁷ - a sequence of endlessly self-displacing signifiers where meaning is permanently deferred.⁸⁸

In the present study, some use is made of the rigorous and detailed analyses to which structuralist criticism has subjected the texts; however, the frequent structuralist (let alone "post-structuralist") tendency to treat language and writing as autonomous, self-referential phenomena is rejected. Derrida, while drawing on Freud's 'The "Uncanny"' to emphasise the deconstructive effect of the double motif,⁸⁹ distances himself from any project of extracting psychoanalytic

"truths" from Poe's texts;⁹⁰ Barthes stresses that 'notre travail ne s'apparente pas à une critique littéraire de type herméneutique (qui cherche à interpréter le texte selon la vérité qu'elle y croit tenue cachée), comme l'est par exemple la critique marxiste ou la critique psychanalytique';⁹¹ Ricardou dismisses "psychological" readings out of hand,⁹² and claims that 'la littérature n'emprunte au monde des matériaux que pour se désigner elle-même'.⁹³ In opposition to this kind of tendency, it is here assumed that the web of textual signifiers continues to bear some causal relation to the loom on which it is woven - to the social and psychological realities outside the texts.

v. Psychoanalytic Criticism

The psychoanalytic tradition in Poe criticism is, of course, well-established. It begins with Marie Bonaparte's monumental Edgar Poe: étude psychanalytique,⁹⁴ which appeared in 1933 with a foreword by Freud, in which the founder of psychoanalysis claimed Poe as a 'great writer', and praised his pupil's 'interpretative effort'.⁹⁵ Bonaparte's book, an early instance of classical "id-psychology",⁹⁶ is essentially psycho-biographical, reading the texts in terms of Poe's infantile traumas; it is at times reductive in its relentless location of specifically Oedipal symbolism almost everywhere. Nonetheless, it stands as a trail-blazing example in its rigorous application of psychoanalytic theory to Poe's texts. Bonaparte's textual readings (but not her biographical glosses) will be referred to, where relevant - though not necessarily maintained - in the discussions of individual tales below.

Studies in the wake of Bonaparte include J.-P. Weber's 'Edgar Poe ou le thème de l'horloge' (1958),⁹⁷ which traces the clock image across the canon and relates it to an infantile primal scene;⁹⁸ the method is, again, psycho-biographical, and ingenious but reductive. Among U.S. studies, Daniel Hoffman's Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe (1972)⁹⁹ is in large part a popularisation of Bonaparte's line; Roy P. Basler's 'The Interpretation of "Ligeia"' (1944)¹⁰⁰ offers a psychoanalytic reading of the tale, which diverges from Bonaparte's line in being textual rather than biographical; while Jules Zanger's 'Poe and the Theme of Forbidden Knowledge' (1978)¹⁰¹ reads several tales, including 'Ligeia' and 'Morella', in terms of male fear of female sexuality.

Since Bonaparte, two women critics have attempted more "radical" psychoanalytic-oriented readings. Hélène Cixous' 'Poe re-lu: une poétique du revenir' (1972)¹⁰² identifies across a group of tales ('Ligeia', 'Morella', etc.) the repeated structure: woman dominates man-dies-returns to confirm domination, and thus reads the texts as narrating the triumphant and disturbing return of repressed female desire.¹⁰³ Barbara Lanati, in 'Una Ligeia, cento Ligeie: ovvero del "perturbante" ostentato e rimosso' (1978),¹⁰⁴ reads 'Berenice', 'William Wilson' and other tales in terms of R. D. Laing's model of schizophrenia (as expounded in The Divided Self (1960));¹⁰⁵ Poe's texts are seen as symbolising 'il progressivo dilacerarsi dell'io' ('the progressive disintegration of the self').¹⁰⁶ These contributions represent important developments from the "classical" psychoanalytic reading. The most celebrated of recent psychoanalytic readings is, of course, Jacques Lacan's 'Séminaire sur "La Lettre volée"' (1956),¹⁰⁷ which, rejecting psycho-biography altogether, reads the text as

exemplifying, variously, the determination of the subject by the signifier,¹⁰⁸ the workings of the compulsion to repeat,¹⁰⁹ and the disturbing insistence of female sexuality.¹¹⁰ This text will be discussed in detail in the analysis of the Dupin tales.¹¹¹ It may be stressed here that the readings of Cixous, Lanati and Lacan all tend to see Poe's texts as privileged spaces for the deconstitution of the "autonomous", "conflict-free" subject.

In conclusion, the perspectives on Poe that have been found most useful, at least as starting-points, are those of Thompson ("ironic"), Benjamin and Macherey (historical-materialist) and Bonaparte and Lacan (psychoanalytic) - and, negatively, that of Wilbur, as representing the idealist norm. The readings of structuralist criticism are used where relevant, but the main interpretive weight falls on the discourses of historical materialism and psychoanalysis.

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE 1830s AND 1840s

i. General

The principal aim of this study is not to read Poe's texts in the context of "American studies", but, rather, to insert them into more general cultural structures. However, the historical moment of the tales (the 1830s and 1840s) requires specification; the texts signify not only the structures of subjectivity under patriarchy, but also a certain crisis of the subject at a determinate historical moment. Poe's work has been read in the context of various historical problematics, including the "Southern question"¹ and the frontier myth.²

Since this is not primarily a sociological study, the questions of the South and slavery will be touched on only briefly (e.g. in relation to 'Usher' and 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue');³ while the 'Western theme' is relevant mainly to Pym, and therefore falls outside the scope of the present enquiry. The following historical themes will, however, now be examined briefly, and their textual incidence referred to: industrialisation and urbanisation; technology and science; imperialism; feminism; and the conditions of literary and journalistic production.

ii. Industrialisation and Urbanisation

Industrialisation in the U.S. may be dated from the setting-up of the first textile factory, on Rhode Island, in 1710;⁴ around 1800, the mechanised production of firearms marked the beginnings of mass production,⁵ while from c. 1812 the New England textile industry entered a phase of expansion.⁶ The first railroad was opened in 1830, and by 1836 there were over 1,000 miles of track.⁷ The 1830s saw the mass production of shoes⁸ and the increasing presence of corporations;⁹ while the next decade witnessed an intensified rhythm of industrialisation in New England and the Middle Atlantic states,¹⁰ leading to increasing concentration and accumulation of capital,¹¹ together with massive railroad building (between 1840 and 1850, the number of miles of track shot up from 2,818 to 9,021).¹² The process of urbanisation was continuous with that of industrialisation; city-dwellers, one-thirtieth of the federal population in 1790, formed one-twelfth by 1840.¹³ New York City, which had had c. 150,000 inhabitants in 1828,¹⁴ had 312,000 in 1840 and 515,000 in 1850;¹⁵ the figures for Philadelphia, the nation's second city, are 220,000

(1840) and 340,000 (1850).¹⁶

Such are the bare facts. It is sufficiently obvious that Poe - for all his "Southernness", a Northern resident for much of his working life (based in Philadelphia from 1838 to 1844, and New York from 1844 to 1849) - spent his most fertile working years in a "modern", urbanised, dynamically expanding environment; and that this experience of "modernity" can hardly fail to have marked the texts.

Specifically, the 1840s mark a point of rupture in the U.S. industrial revolution. This is, of course, also the case for Britain, where, as E. J. Hobsbawm (Industry and Empire, 1968)¹⁷ shows, the decade marks a transition from the "first phase" (dominated by textiles) to the "second phase" (dominated by railways and capital goods);¹⁸ but the specificity of the U.S. process requires stressing. Charles Post, in an important essay of 1982, 'The American Road to Capitalism',¹⁹ argues that the boom initiated in the 1840s was based, on the one hand, on the massive importation of immigrant labour²⁰ and, on the other, on the "vanguard" role of the agro-industrial complex;²¹ land ownership underwent a process of concentration, as in the 1840s and 1850s small farming ("petty-commodity production") became increasingly unviable,²² and by c. 1860 the only remaining obstacle to unlimited accumulation was slavery.²³

The 1840s were, equally, the decade of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844) and Engels' Condition of the Working Class in England (1845); the intensified social experience of alienation gave rise to the first Marxist theoretical and descriptive

accounts of the phenomenon. In this context, it is interesting to note that 1840 initiates a new phase in Poe's fiction; the "Gothic" setting, hitherto dominant in the "serious" tales, is increasingly replaced by a "modern", urban setting. The first important, distinctively urban tale is 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), set in London; it is followed by the three detective tales (1841-45), set in Paris (which, in the case of 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', is a thinly disguised version of New York),²⁴ and by the three "urban murder tales" ('The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Black Cat', both 1843; 'The Imp of the Perverse', 1845), all set in an unspecified modern city, as well as others ('Some Words with a Mummy' and 'Valdemar', both 1845) with a New York setting. This "modernising" tendency in Poe's writing may not be unrelated to the entry of U.S. capitalism on a new and irreversible phase of dynamic expansion.

Another development which requires attention is the entry of women into the labour force, within the factory system. In the first half of the century, many textile (and other) companies used what Post describes as 'the "Waltham" system of employing single young women and housing them in company dormitories'.²⁵ This system, for all its paternalism, had the objective effect of increasing the public visibility of women and integrating them into the world of work outside the home. It is described by Charles Dickens in American Notes (1842),²⁶ in his account²⁷ of a visit to a woollen factory in Lowell, Mass. ('It is their station to work. And they do work');²⁸ and is fictionalised by Herman Melville in his 1855 tale 'The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids',²⁹ which includes a visit to a paper mill ('We want none but steady workers: twelve hours to the day').³⁰ This incorporation of women into the

public sphere of work is signified in 'The Man of the Crowd':
'modest young girls returning from long and late labor' (M II, 510);
anxiety over women's entry into the male-dominated public realm may
also underlie the fear of active female intellect and desire that
marks 'Ligeia' and 'Morella'.³¹

Benjamin is correct to find the determining instance of new 'social
forces' at work in 'The Man of the Crowd';³² in this text, as will be
shown below in detail,³³ the stereotyped movements of the crowd
correspond to the rhythms of mass production, while perception is
organised in terms of shock and speed, in keeping with the expansive
dynamic of capitalist modernity (acceleration of production; permanent
technological revolution). Poe's account of crowd and city derives
in part from Dickens' description of London in Sketches by Boz (1836),³⁴
but the text also contains specific reference to New York (M II, 512).
The crowd moves with a railroad-like speed ('the rapidity with
which the world of light flitted before the window'- M II, 511);
the lexis here, with the key verb "flit", may be compared with a
passage in Poe's essay 'The American Drama' (1845) (H XIII, 33-73):
'All (the fine arts) seem to have declined, because they have remained
stationary while the multitudinous other arts (of reason) have flitted
so rapidly by them. In the same manner the traveller by railroad
can imagine that the trees by the wayside are retrograding.' (H XIII,
35). The verb "flit" here implies both the speeding-up of commun-
ication and the expansion of scientific knowledge - the whole process
which Poe would elsewhere call 'the rush of the age' ('Marginalia',
1846 - H XVI, 118).

'The Man of the Crowd' also contains specific reference to the class

structure of capitalism, from men of 'business' (508) through clerks to 'laborers' (510), and to the developing commodity structure with its new patterns of distribution and publicity ('advertisements' (507); 'a large and busy bazaar' (513)). Similarly, urbanisation and the factory system are directly specified in the apocalyptic model of history offered in 'The Colloquy of Monos and Una' (1841): 'Meantime huge smoking cities arose, innumerable. Green leaves shrank before the hot breath of furnaces.' (M II, 610). This passage clearly derives from the account of the English industrial Midlands in Dickens' The Old Curiosity Shop (1841),³⁵ reviewed by Poe in Graham's Magazine, May 1841 (H X, 142-55) (three months before the appearance of 'Monos and Una'):³⁶ 'coal-dust and factory smoke darkened the shrinking leaves ... the struggling vegetation sickened and sank under the hot breath of kiln and furnace'.³⁷ Here, as in 'The Man of the Crowd', the appropriation of Dickensian models allows Poe's texts to be read as products of both the British and the U.S. industrial revolutions, and thus underlines their "modernity". The urban theme will be considered in detail in the discussion of 'The Man of the Crowd'. Its presence will also be noted for the detective stories, with their organised police force and their characterisation of the city as space of crime and disappearance,³⁸ and for the "urban murder tales", where the police also intervene, and the psychological disintegration of the protagonists can be linked to their more or less alienated and isolated urban existence.³⁹

iii. Technology and Science

The U.S. industrial revolution was accompanied from the start by native technological innovations - the automated flour mill (1787),

the cotton-gin (1793), the assembly line (c. 1798),⁴⁰ the steamboat (1807),⁴¹ vulcanised rubber (1839), the sewing-machine (1846).⁴² The expansion of productive forces was thus reinforced by a continual process of technological development, whether native or foreign in origin. The whole process was typically symbolised by the railroad - as, for instance, in Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables (1851):⁴³ 'Everything was unfixed from its age-long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed'.⁴⁴ The speed of the train symbolises the acceleration of industrial and technological development and the consequent threat to traditional, "age-long" values.

Some of Poe's references, explicit and implicit, to the railroad have been examined in the previous section. The entire process of acceleration is summarised in 'Some Words with a Mummy' (1845), where the narrator, pledged to defend his own culture against the resurrected mummy's claims for ancient Egypt, speaks of 'our gigantic mechanical forces' (M III, 1193); the 'mechanical forces' of modern technology are both result and motor of the expansion of productive forces. In this tale, the innovations listed by the Americans in their defence include 'our railroads', Artesian wells, 'our steel' (1193), steam power (1194) and glass technology (lenses and microscopes) (1191). 'The Thousand-and-second Tale of Scheherazade' (1845), similarly, narrates an apocryphal voyage of Sinbad; the hero of the Thousand and One Nights encounters a British steam-powered battleship, moving with 'inconceivable swiftness' (M III, 1156), which takes him on board and transports him to Britain (a roc-like balloon (1164) is observed en route). In the homeland of the Industrial Revolution, the medieval Arab witnesses various technological marvels, including the railroad ('a huge horse ... strong

and swift!'), the calculating machine, a steam printing-press of 'incredible speed' (1166), the electric telegraph (1167), and the daguerreotype (1168). 'Mellonta Tauta' (1849) extrapolates from existing social and technological developments to offer a view of U.S. society in 2848; the future is seen as holding balloon excursions into space (M III, 1292), an Atlantic telegraph (1293-94) and a transcontinental railroad (1299).

However, these three tales - for all their emphasis on speed and energy, and their breathless accumulation of actual or possible inventions - are all heavily satiric. The notion of "progress" is systematically debunked: in 'Some Words with a Mummy', U.S. technology is called in question through contrast with the superior achievements of ancient Egypt; in 'Scheherazade', modern Britain is devalued through confrontation with an alien Islamic culture, which perceives its "modernity" as absurd or impossible (Sinbad reduces the sailors to 'man-animals' (1157) and the Sultan finally has Scheherazade strangled for lying (1169-70)); and in 'Mellonta Tauta', existing tendencies are seen as pointing to an anti-utopian future (as Harold Beaver (The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, 1976) puts it, 'totalitarian and overcrowded')⁴⁵ - advances in transport lead only to more accidents (the balloon sinks into the sea (1305)), and the nineteenth-century Americans ('the Knickerbocker tribe of savages' (1303)) are remembered only via a garbled pseudo-history. All three texts contest the equation of modern technological progress with cultural superiority.

The ambivalent construction of technology marks several other tales, where its achievements are both underlined and undermined. In 'The

Purloined Letter' (1844), glass technology is present, as in 'Some Words'; but the Prefect's 'most powerful microscope' (M III, 980) ironically fails to locate the letter.⁴⁶ In 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), the extraordinary 'velocity' of the phantom ship, as it rushes, 'hurrying onwards', to the South Pole (M II, 145) may be compared to the 'inconceivable swiftness' of the battleship in 'Scheherazade'; if, as will be suggested in the next section, the ship's suicide course in 'MS.' signifies the self-destructive potential of imperialism, it may also be read as symbolising a self-destructive tendency latent in the uncontrolled speed-up of technological development.

The most thoroughgoing satire on technological 'progress' in the canon is 'The Man that was Used Up' (1839). The discourse of General A. B. C. Smith proclaims the marvels of technology: 'he delighted ... in commenting upon the rapid march of mechanical invention'. In a set-piece speech, he declares: "We are a wonderful people, and live in a wonderful age. Parachutes and rail-roads - man-traps and spring-guns! Our steam-boats are upon every sea, and the Nassau balloon packet is about to run regular trips ... between London and Timbuctoo. There is really no end to the march of invention. The most wonderful ... mechanical contrivances, are daily springing up like mushrooms"⁴⁷(M II, 381-82). Smith's discourse is clearly parodic, but the railroad, steamboat and balloon references, and the lexis of speed ('rapid march', 'springing up') are convergent with the texts discussed above. The text finally exposes Smith, 'that truly fine-looking fellow' (378), as himself little more than an assemblage of 'mechanical contrivances'- artificial eyes, mechanical

palate, etc. (387-88). The tale may be inserted into a line of "artificial human", "modified human" and "automaton" fictions that include Hoffmann's 'The Sandman' (1816),⁴⁷ Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818)⁴⁸ and Hawthorne's 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844).⁴⁹ However, General Smith differs from Frankenstein's monster, and even from the visibly poisonous Beatrice Rappaccini,⁵⁰ in not being self-evidently anomalous or artificial (or, at least, not to all eyes); the closest analogy is with the lifelike automaton "Olympia", with which Nathaniel falls in love in 'The Sandman'. Technology is presented in Poe's text as deceptive, creating a universe of false appearances in which human and machine become interchangeable; the tale may be read as - inter alia - an expression of the social fear of technology as potentially subversive of traditional certainties.

The association of technology with deception is also present, in a different sense, in the two tales of balloon voyages, 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall' (1835) and 'The Balloon Hoax' (which first appeared as a special edition of the New York Sun on 13 April 1844).⁵¹ The balloon - which appears incidentally as a symbol of modernity in 'Scheherazade' and 'The Man that was Used Up', and provides the location for 'Mellonta Tauta' - dominates both, as the means of, respectively, a moon landing and an Atlantic crossing. These two tales contain an ambivalent construction of technology. On the one hand, in both texts, the accumulation of technical detail - what Dostoyevsky ('Three Tales of Edgar Poe', 1861)⁵² called their 'full and particular', 'circumstantial' and 'accurate' element⁵³ - produces a certain effect of verisimilitude, and testifies to the fascination of the new technology (both texts extrapolate from existing achievements to predict further developments). On the

other hand, the account of Pfaall's journey emerges out of a burlesque comic-Dutch narrative, while 'The Balloon Hoax' was aimed (with some success)⁵⁴ at fooling the New York public, imposing fiction on it as truth. 'Hans Pfaall' openly admits its own fictionality, while 'The Balloon Hoax' mocks the reader who fails to read it as fiction. Neither text, then, can be read as an unproblematic celebration of "progress".

The figure of the scientist, pure or applied, occurs in various texts. As will be shown below, the figures of Dupin ('The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 1841) and, to some extent, Legrand ('The Gold-Bug', 1843) correspond to a certain "heroic-positivist" myth of the scientist as competitive, isolated pioneer.⁵⁵ Legrand discovers an 'unknown bivalve' (M III, 808), while Dupin applies Cuvier's classificatory principles to identify the Ourang-Outang (M II, 559). The narrator of 'A Descent into the Maelström' (1841) appears to use scientific methods to save his life - although, in fact, the "physics" he employs has been proved totally spurious,⁵⁶ and the tale is, therefore, another hoax; similarly, 'Von Kempelen and his Discovery' (1849) presents a hoaxical account of a modern, "scientific" alchemist.⁵⁷ Another avatar of the scientist is the mesmerist, or magnetiser; as will be shown below,⁵⁸ mesmerism was believed by many in the 1840s to constitute an authentic science - as witness the reference in 'Some Words with a Mummy' to 'the marvels of animal magnetism' (M III, 1191). The mesmerist figure appears three times, in the narrators of 'Mesmeric Revelation' (1844) and 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845), and in Dr Templeton in 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844). The role of the mesmerist is ambivalent; he appears in 'Valdemar' as both heroic scientist (in the project of

expanding the frontiers of mesmeric practice) and deluded manipulator (in the project of arresting death), and in 'Ragged Mountains' as a sadist and probable murderer ('Valdemar'⁵⁹ and 'Mesmeric Revelation'⁶⁰ have, besides, their hoaxical dimension, since both were taken as factual by credulous readers).⁶¹ Nor are Dupin (doubled by the ape) and Legrand (doubled by Captain Kidd) completely innocent of violent tendencies; the scientist appears across the canon as an essentially ambivalent figure.

In conclusion, Poe's work tends to satirise or undermine the unquestioning equation of technological advance with "progress". As Baudelaire put it in 'Notes nouvelles' (1857), 'L'auteur qui, dans le Colloque entre Monos et Una, lâche à torrents son mépris et son dégoût sur ... le progrès et la civilisation, cet auteur est le même qui, pour enlever la crédulité, ... a ... le plus ingénieusement fabriqué les canards les plus flatteurs pour l'orgueil de l'homme moderne'.⁶²

The notion of the canard is applicable not only to an obvious case like 'The Balloon Hoax', but also to 'Maelström' and 'Valdemar', with their deceptive verisimilitude; the negative view of the 'vulture' science expressed in the famous 'Sonnet - To Science' (1829) (M I; line 4) is a constant across the canon. However, the texts also express the seduction and the fascination of the new technologies,⁶³ with their expansive dynamic; this seduction is above all evident in the repeated lexical emphasis, as demonstrated above, on speed, rapidity, swiftness. Poe's work is marked, for all the ideological attempts to negate it, by the material determining instance of U.S. technological development; in Dostoyevsky's words, 'Poe's fantasticalness ... seems strangely "material" ... Even his most

unbounded imagination betrays the true American.⁶⁴

iv. Imperialism and Expansionism

Poe's work contains both direct and symbolic reference to the expansionist and colonialist tendencies of the U.S. in the period, and to the contemporary, though older, phenomenon of European imperialism. To take the U.S. process first, the presidency of James K. Polk (1845-49) saw a massive expansion southward and westward, with the Oregon treaty with Britain (1846) and the Mexican War (1846-48), and the first appearances of the ideology of the "Manifest Destiny",⁶⁵ This process of frontier expansion can be seen as a prelude to the imperialist adventures outside North America which marked the later nineteenth century - intervention in Latin America (prepared by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823,⁶⁶ and first concretised in the Mexican War and the movement for the "total annexation" of Mexico),⁶⁷ and colonisation in the Pacific (the annexation of Hawaii (1898) and Eastern Samoa (1899)).⁶⁸

The Mexican War seems not to be directly signified in Poe's work, although its indirect consequence, the California goldrush of 1848-49, is reflected in two texts of 1849, 'Von Kempelen and His Discovery' (see previous section) and the poem 'Eldorado'.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the theme of westward expansion dominates Poe's unfinished novel, The Journal of Julius Rodman, Being an Account of the First Passage Across the Rocky Mountains of North America Ever Achieved by Civilized Man (1840) (H IV, 9-101). This text (another hoax) narrates an imaginary crossing of the Rockies in 1792, preceding the first actual crossing by Lewis and Clark in 1804-1806. The Rockies still constituted

the political frontier in 1840, and so to narrate their crossing was in itself an "expansionist" act. In Pym, the hero reads Lewis and Clark's account of their journey (Beaver, Pym, p. 63); while in 1837, Poe reviewed Washington Irving's Astoria; or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains (1836), a narrative of another actual crossing of the Rockies, in 1812, by a fur-trading expedition organised by John Jacob Astor (H IX, 207-43). Astor's colonisation project failed; but in the review, Poe favourably quotes Irving's description of the projected settlement as 'a colony that would ... carry the American population across the Rocky Mountains, and spread it along the shores of the Pacific' (H IX, 214). Pacific-wards expansion is here seen as a viable and desirable possibility. The classic U.S. "Western theme" of frontier expansion is, then present in the Poe canon; indeed, Leslie Fiedler reads Pym as Poe's contribution (albeit with the location displaced southwards) to the Cooper-Melville-Twain "Western" myth of escape from home and women and interracial male friendship.⁷⁰

The project of U.S. southward expansionism is explicitly referred to in Pym, in a mention of what was an actual proposal at the time for Pacific and Antarctic exploration, i.e. that outlined to Congress in 1836⁷¹ by 'Mr J. N. Reynolds, whose great exertions and perseverance have at length succeeded in getting set on foot a national expedition, partly for the purpose of exploring these regions' (Beaver, Pym, p. 177). Reynolds (1799?-1853)⁷² is also referred to in two reviews by Poe, of the Congressional Report of the Committee on Naval Affairs (report, 21 March 1836; review, August 1836 - H IX, 84-90), and of Reynolds' own Address on the Subject of a Surveying and Exploring Expedition to the Pacific Ocean and South Seas (address,

3 April 1836; review, January 1837 - H IX, 306-14). Both reviews openly defend U.S. economic and political expansion into the Pacific. The 1836 review declares:

Our pride as a vigorous commercial empire, should stimulate us to become our own pioneers in that vast island-studded ocean, destined, it may be, to become not only the chief theatre of our traffic, but the arena of our future naval conflicts. Who can say, viewing the present rapid growth of our population, that the Rocky Mountains shall forever constitute the western boundary of our republic, or that it shall not stretch its dominion from sea to sea. This may not be desirable, but signs of the times render it an event by no means without the pale of possibility. (H IX, 88)

Poe here, in effect, correctly predicts the Mexican War and the subsequent penetration of the Pacific by the U.S., seen as a commercial and military 'empire'. In the 1837 review, the Pacific is seen as 'a wide field open and nearly untouched - "a theatre peculiarly our own ..."' (H IX, 309) - a new frontier, ripe for domination; one aim of the projected Congress-approved expedition, according to Poe, is 'to overawe the savages, and impress upon them a just idea of our power' (313) (an expedition actually sailed, though not under Reynolds' command, in 1838).⁷³ The lexical emphasis on 'empire', 'dominion' and 'power' in these passages should be noted; there is, all in all, sufficient evidence for the contention that among the social forces exercising determining pressure on Poe's work one may count the U.S. expansionist and imperialist dynamic.⁷⁴

The theme of European imperialism is also present in the Poe canon, notably in Pym (1837) and 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), two texts which, as will be shown, can also, and simultaneously, be read as symbolic interrogations of U.S. imperialism. In 'MS.', the first ("real") ship, which hails from Bombay and is therefore presumably

British, is on a trading voyage between islands in the Dutch East Indies; the second ("phantom") ship is made of 'Spanish oak' (M II, 143). In Pym, the Jane Guy, a British ship, 'bound on a sealing and trading voyage to the South Seas and Pacific' (Beaver, Pym, p. 161), sails the length of the Atlantic, rounds the Cape of Good Hope, and enters the Indian Ocean (chapter 14) and then returns to the Atlantic (chapter 15); the original plan of rounding Cape Horn and entering the Pacific (176) is dropped, in favour of a southward path. The final movement of Pym is, then, from the South Atlantic to the Antarctic: 'we again made sail to the southward, with the resolution of penetrating in that course as far as possible' (ibid.); and it is beyond the Antarctic circle (182) that the imaginary island of Tsalal is discovered (chapter 18). The privileged movement of Pym is, then, 'to the southward'; the same is true of 'MS.', where the phantom ship 'thunders on to the southward' (M II, 145), towards the vortex at the South Pole.

In Pym, the British traders' reaction on arrival on Tsalal is transparently colonialist; the island is seen as a source of exportable commodities. The visitors question the king 'with a view of discovering what were the chief productions of the country, and whether any of them might be turned to profit' (199), and make plans for the processing of "biche de mer", as 'an important article of commerce' (202). The subsequent massacre of the whites may thus be read against the grain as a case of revenge on the part of the "savages" on whom, in the words of Poe's second Reynolds review, the Western powers aim to 'impress ... their power'. In 'MS.' the phantom ship, with its Spanish oak and its 'commission ... which ... bore the signature of a monarch' (144), has been identified as that of Columbus.⁷⁵ The

present of European imperialism (British hegemony) is thus confronted with its past (Spanish hegemony). This text is also marked by the presence of multiple European nationalities - apart from the British and Spanish references, the narrator sets sail from a Dutch colony and passes the coast of "New Holland" (138) (i.e. Australia - a former Dutch colony, at the time of writing British); he reads the 'German moralists' (135), and his last companion is 'an old Swede' (137). All this points to the transnational character of European colonialism; Poe's tale thus anticipates the comparable strategy of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1902),⁷⁶ where the narrative of a British trader's visit to a Belgian colony includes reference to a Danish captain,⁷⁷ a French steamer,⁷⁸ a Swedish captain,⁷⁹ a Russian manager and a Dutch trader.⁸⁰ 'MS.', with its apocalyptic end, may be read - like the tale of Mr Kurtz - as symbolising a latent "horror", or self-destructive tendency, in European colonialism ('the ship is quivering - oh God! and - going down!' (146)).

However, the multiplication of nationalities in 'MS.' also hints at the melting-pot of the U.S. (especially in the context of the suggestions of Columbus); the southward movement, besides, points as much to U.S. as to European expansionism. Indeed, 'MS.' has been read, e.g. by Jack Scherting ('The Bottle and the Coffin: Further Speculation on Poe and Moby-Dick', 1968),⁸¹ as anticipating certain elements in Melville's Moby-Dick (1851);⁸² while Beaver suggests a similar relation between Melville's novel and Pym, in his edition of Poe's text (1975),⁸³ As Scherting points out, 'MS.' and Moby-Dick both end with a ship plunged into a vortex; if the wood of Ahab's hearse 'could only be American'⁸⁴ (the Pequod is the hearse that contains the boat, his coffin), in 'MS.' the narrator's coffin is made of

the 'Spanish oak' of (arguably) Columbus's ship. In both texts, the hearse-ship or coffin-ship may be read as symbolising a self-destructive tendency at work in the U.S. imperial enterprise, in the urge to dominate other peoples and nature.⁸⁵ In Pym, a direct link is made between British and U.S. imperialism, since Pym's original ship, the Nantucket whaler Grampus was, as much as the Jane Guy, heading southward - she was, in the words of the title-page summary (Beaver, Pym, p. 41), 'on her way to the South Seas' before the mutiny in mid-Atlantic; later, the taking-up of Pym and Peters by the Jane Guy may be read as symbolising the participation of the "adult" U.S. in the colonial enterprise of the "parent" European nations. After the massacre, the two Americans are the only white survivors on Tsalal (212), and their final movement in an open boat towards the polar abyss may be read as - like the climax of 'MS.' - anticipating the catastrophe of Moby-Dick. Both 'MS.' and Pym, then, may be read in a double sense, as containing a latent critique of both European and U.S. imperialism.

European imperialism is also signified, as a subsidiary but important theme, in two other tales, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841) and 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844). In 'Rue Morgue', imperialism is responsible for the ape's presence in Paris; the animal is imported from Borneo (colonised by the Dutch and British), by a French sailor attached to a ship based in Malta (a British colony). As in Pym, colonisation turns natural objects into commodities; the ape's chief interest to the sailor lies in its status as a 'property of ... great value' (M II, 561). At the same time, the murders can be read as a symbolic return of the colonial repressed.⁸⁶ More explicitly,

'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' includes a (failed) revolt of the colonised, in its account of the insurrection of Chait Singh, Rajah of Benares (1781) against the rule of the East India Company under Warren Hastings; the text draws heavily on Thomas Macaulay's 1841 article on Hastings,⁸⁷ an avowedly imperialist document which praises his role in extending 'the power of our country in the East'.⁸⁸

The imperialist dimension of the tale, and its relation to Macaulay's text, will be considered below;⁸⁹ it may be noted here that if Singh's historical revolt failed, in the tale it nonetheless leads to the death of Oldeb. Here as in the Tsalal massacre, the colonised take their revenge.

Poe's work is, then, marked by the dynamic of both U.S. and European imperialism. The conscious endorsement of "empire", evident in the Reynolds reviews, is undermined in the letter of the tales, by the literal or symbolic representation of collective Western fears, whether of "native" revenge or of a latent self-destructiveness in imperialism. In the present study, the question will be taken up in greater detail in the analyses of 'Rue Morgue' and 'Ragged Mountains'.

v. Feminism

A feminist movement appeared in the U.S. in the 1830s, as part of a general flowering of reform movements; in 1848, a convention of women at Seneca Falls, N.Y., declared that all men and women were created equal. The movement had some practical effects - in 1839, for instance, Mississippi passed a law allowing married women to control their property.⁹⁰ The existence of a women's movement may be attributed in part to the prior existence of a feminist discourse

in Britain, as articulated in Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792),⁹¹ and is probably also not unrelated to the incorporation of women into the labour force, as mentioned above.⁹²

Wollstonecraft demanded access for women, on equal terms with men, to education, employment, physical exercise and political rights; and, beyond this, went so far as to advocate the breakdown of traditional role stereotypes, demanding that women should imitate the 'manly virtues',⁹³ and affirming that 'the sexual distinction which men have so warmly insisted upon, is arbitrary!'.⁹⁴ She thus praises the style of the writer Catherine Macaulay for its androgyny; 'in her best style of writing, indeed, no sex appears'.⁹⁵ It is, therefore, not surprising that Poe should comment on Wollstonecraft in characteristically conservative fashion, in his review of Elizabeth Barrett's The Drama of Exile, and other Poems (1845-H XII, 1-35), where he refers to women critics as 'creatures neither precisely men, women, nor Mary Wollstonecrafts' (H XII, 1); Wollstonecraft is dismissed as not a "real woman", anomalous because androgynous.

The major theorist of U.S. feminism in the period was Margaret Fuller (1810-50), whose Woman in the Nineteenth Century⁹⁶ appeared in 1845. In this text, Fuller follows 'the by most men detested Mary Wollstonecraft'⁹⁷ in demanding total sexual equality; 'By Man I mean both man and woman ... I believe that the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other.'⁹⁸ Her discourse lays particular stress on the need for 'intellectual companionship' between men and women,⁹⁹ since women 'have intellect which needs developing'.¹⁰⁰ It also takes up and develops the "androgynous" tendencies in Wollstonecraft's discourse, affirming the psychic bisexuality of the

subject: 'Male and female ... are perpetually passing into one another,...There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman ... ,Man partakes of the feminine in the Apollo; Woman of the masculine as Minerva.'¹⁰¹ The poet and artist are seen as men who 'especially share and need the feminine principle'.¹⁰² Fuller concludes that sex-role distinctions can be broken down to the point where women can do any job - 'let them be sea-captains, if you will'¹⁰³ - and thus gain autonomy: 'I have urged on Woman independence of Man'.¹⁰⁴

Fuller is generally believed to be the original of Zenobia, the sexually and intellectually affirmative protagonist of Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance (1852)¹⁰⁵ (she is mentioned in the text, when the narrator, Coverdale, receives a letter from 'Miss Margaret Fuller').¹⁰⁶ Zenobia is, however, constructed as an ambivalent figure, affirmative and seductive, yet destructive of both other and self. Poe's own direct references to Fuller are, similarly, highly ambivalent. In his paper 'Sarah Margaret Fuller' (in 'The Literati of New York', 1846 - H XV, 73-83), he politely praises her talent, but isolates her as a freak; her book is seen as one which 'few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller' (H XV, 74). Poe attempts to refute her assault on role stereotypes: 'the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences ... has not been sufficiently considered' (ibid., 74-75). Fuller's feminist discourse is thus ideologically condemned as an "unnatural" negation of the divine (i.e. patriarchal) law; indeed, in a less guarded private letter (to F. W. Thomas, 14 February 1849 - O II, 426-28), Poe dismisses her out of hand as 'that detestable old maid' (O II, 427).

In general, according to Ernest Marchand ('Poe as Social Critic', 1934), Poe's 'ideas on women were the thoroughly naïve and unrealistic ones traditional in the South';¹⁰⁷ indeed, 'in all matters touching women, sex, marriage, "morals", no more conventional-minded man than Poe ever lived'.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, it will be argued below that, in many tales, this conscious traditionalist and anti-feminist ideology is subverted in the letter of the text, by the signification of active femaleness: in the "independent" female figures of the Dupin tales (the L'Españayes in 'Rue Morgue', the queen in 'The Purloined Letter'), in the symbolic acts of female resistance or revenge in 'Berenice' (the scratching of Egæus), 'Usher' (the return of Madeline), 'The Oval Portrait' (the intimidation of the narrator by the portrait), even 'The Black Cat' (the wife's resistance, leading to her murder). Women die resisting male violence; or return from the dead to intimidate men. Above all, the figures of Ligeia and Morella, both of them sexually and intellectually active women who challenge existing stereotypes, may be read as displaced expressions of the same social processes as, a few years later, produced Fuller's text. Besides, Fuller's notion of androgyny has its parallel in Poe's tales, not only in the active women but in the "feminised" male figures, from Usher to the narrator of 'The Black Cat' and even (as Lacan stresses)¹⁰⁹ Dupin.¹¹⁰ As Moretti ('The Literature of Terror') emphasises (giving 'Ligeia' as one of his examples), 'much of nineteenth-century bourgeois high culture (treats) Eros and sex as ambivalent phenomena', in texts where 'fear and desire incessantly overturn into one another'.¹¹¹ In Poe's tales, the ambivalence with which female sexuality is constructed betrays, not only an unconscious male fear of active femaleness,¹¹² but also the determining pressure of the feminist

movement perceived (both consciously and unconsciously) as a threat to existing sex-roles and to male power.

vi. Conditions of Literary and Journalistic Production

What Eagleton calls the "literary mode of production"¹¹³ underwent considerable changes in the U.S. over the first half of the nineteenth century, under the pressure of social developments and technological innovation. The invention of the steam-driven printing-press (1825), and new breakthroughs in paper technology, created the conditions (at least in the North-Eastern states) for a mass-market journalism, aimed at a newly literate middle-class (and even working-class) public.¹¹⁴ Hence the appearance of mass-circulation periodicals (for which there was no exact British precedent),¹¹⁵ like Godey's Lady's Book (founded in Philadelphia, 1830) and Graham's Magazine (founded in the same city, 1841).¹¹⁶

Poe was, throughout his working life, a professional man of letters - or, as he put it, a 'littérateur' (letter to F. W. Thomas, 14 February 1849 - O II, 427) - a member of a social category that had only recently come into existence (as from the 1820s).¹¹⁷ He was thus dependent for economic survival on a precarious income from journalism; books tended not to be a viable source of income, barring an exceptional case like that of a best-selling novelist such as Fenimore Cooper, whose standard first-edition run was 5,000¹¹⁸ (the absence of any international copyright law led to the widespread pirating of British books).¹¹⁹ Poe wrote in 'Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison-House' (1845 - M III, 1206-1209): 'The want of an International Copy-Right Law, by rendering it nearly impossible to obtain anything

from the booksellers in the way of remuneration for literary labor, has had the effect of forcing many of our very best writers into the service of the Magazines and Reviews' (M. III, 1206). He worked, then, successively on newspapers and magazines: the Southern Literary Messenger, Richmond (editor, 1835-37), Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, Philadelphia (editorial assistant, 1839-40), Graham's Magazine, Philadelphia (literary editor, 1841-42), the New York Mirror (critic and sub-editor, 1844-45), and the Broadway Journal, New York (co-editor, later - for two months - editor-cum-proprietor, 1845-46).¹²⁰ His attempts to start his own elite magazine (to be called The Penn Magazine, later The Stylus), and thus to gain control over his own conditions of production, foundered¹²¹ (the Broadway Journal was moribund by the time he took charge of it).¹²² His books did not sell well in his lifetime;¹²³ working pre-eminently as a journalist, Poe remained, throughout his life, in a subaltern position, dependent for subsistence on meagre editor's salaries and/or the low piece-rates paid for tales, articles, etc.

It was a situation not only of dependence, but of exploitation. Louis Harap, ('Edgar Allan Poe and Journalism', 1971) has suggested that Poe's status as journalist was paradigmatic of that of the 'alienated artist';¹²⁴ indeed, the evidence tends to confirm that his situation as 'poor devil author' ('Some Secrets', M III, 1207) was precisely what Marx was later to call that of 'the writer who turns out stuff for his publisher in factory style' (Theories of Surplus Value, 1861-63).¹²⁵ While George R. Graham, for instance, appropriated massive profits - in the words of A. H. Quinn (1941), 'made a fortune'¹²⁶ - from the sales of his magazine (circulation, about 5,000 on foundation in 1841,¹²⁷ rose, largely thanks to Poe's efforts, to around 40,000

by late 1842),¹²⁸ his literary editor was chronically underpaid. Graham paid Poe, beyond his salary, only \$4 per page for contributions, while others received \$12 or more.¹²⁹ Poe's salary of c. \$800 per annum (\$15 per week) contrasts with Graham's profit in 1841, of \$15,000.¹³⁰ Yet Poe was, if anything, better off with Graham's than with his other employers; Burton's, for instance, paid only \$3 per page,¹³¹ and a salary of \$10 per week.¹³²

J. W. Ostrom ('Edgar A. Poe: His Income as Literary Entrepreneur', 1982), examining Poe's entire literary career, has shown that 'throughout his professional life ... he was above the equivalent of our (i.e. the U.S.) national poverty level only once'.¹³³ Poe's negative insertion into the mode of literary production marks the direct incidence of capitalist relations of production on his work. His project of starting his own magazine implied, of course, a purely individualist critique (the employee aims to turn businessman himself); but, as will be argued below, his ideology of the autonomous artwork may be read, on one level, as an (again individualist) protest against the writer's situation of alienated dependence.¹³⁴

CHAPTER 2

SOME MODELS OF THE SUBJECT IN POE.

i. A Psychological Project: General

Poe's work - as will be shown in detail below - contains a series of figures and images which can be read as metaphors or metonyms for the illusory "full", conflict-free subject: on the one hand, the artist, the detective, the mesmerist; on the other, the interior, the artwork. It will be argued that these images of "unity" are, in fact, subverted in the letter of the texts. At the same time, however, even on the level of intention, a contrary tendency may be distinguished across the canon. Poe's work as a whole bears the traces of an evidently conscious psychological project, aimed at exploring and defining "anomalous" and "marginal" mental states. Such a project is, in itself, enough to subvert any ideology of psychological or textual "unity" constructed elsewhere in the canon.

A whole critical tradition has tended to read Poe's work as a "literature of extremes" - above all, of psychological extremes. Thus Baudelaire, in 'Edgar Poe, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres' (1856), already sees Poe as 'l'éccrivain des nerfs': 'Aucun homme (sic) ... n'a raconté avec plus de magie les exceptions de la vie humaine';¹ while, for Dostoyevsky ('Three Tales of Edgar Poe', 1861), Poe typically 'chooses ... the most extravagant reality, places his hero in a most extraordinary ... psychological situation, and, then, describes the inner state of that person with marvellous acumen and amazing realism'.² In the same tradition, J.-K. Huysmans, in A rebours (1884),³ refers to 'ce profond et étrange Edgar Poe', whose writings explored 'la voie de la psychologie morbide';⁴ and Paul Valéry ('Situation de Baudelaire', 1928) sees him as 'le psychologue de l'exception', responsible for 'l'introduction dans la littérature

des états psychologiques morbides'.⁵ More recently, similar readings have been offered by Julio Cortázar ('El poeta, el narrador y el crítico', 1956),⁶ who sees 'la noción de anormalidad' ('the notion of abnormality')⁷ as central to the tales, and Tzvetan Todorov ('Préface' to Poe, Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires, 1974),⁸ who places Poe as 'un écrivain des limites':⁹ 'Poe est l'auteur de l'extrême ... il pousse toute chose à ses limites'.¹⁰

This critical tradition tends to see Poe's work as, on the one hand, an oeuvre where "extremes" and "exceptions" are signified, and, on the other, a privileged space of psychological analysis (the notion of the "exceptional" or the "abnormal", however, requires problematisation, since, as will be shown below, certain tales tend in fact to break down the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal").¹¹ Poe's work is, it should be noted, seen explicitly by Huysmans and Valéry as primarily an exercise in "psychology". The term itself appeared in its modern sense in English, according to Williams (Keywords), in 1748.¹² It is not, in fact, used with any frequency in Poe's writing (although 'Silence: A Fable' (1838) was originally subtitled: 'In the manner of the Psychological Autobiographists'¹³ - i.e. Bulwer Lytton and De Quincey);¹⁴ in preference, expressions like 'the science of mind' ('Ligeia', M II, 313) or 'systems of mind' ('The Imp of the Perverse', M III, 1219) are employed. However, if psychology is defined in Coleridge's terms of 1818, as 'the Philosophy of the Human Mind',¹⁵ the concept is visibly present across the Poe canon, through a whole series of detailed investigations of "marginal" mental states.

In this sense, Poe's work continues a romantic tradition, following on from, especially, Coleridge and De Quincey. Coleridge offered

'Kubla Khan' (1798)¹⁶ to the world, in his introduction of 1816, with its account of the poem's alleged opium-dream origins, as a 'psychological curiosity';¹⁷ and, similarly, wrote of 'The Three Graves' (1798): 'Its merits, if any, are exclusively psychological.'¹⁸ His interest in 'psychology' was noted by De Quincey in his essay 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (1835),¹⁹ while Shelley, similarly, introduced Coleridge into Peter Bell the Third (1819)²⁰ as 'a subtle-souled psychologist'.²¹ Coleridge's exploration of 'marginal' mental phenomena (dream and delirium) produced, not only 'Kubla Khan' (with its subtitle 'A Vision in a Dream'), but also The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798),²² which De Quincey described as 'a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream scenery with external things'.²³ De Quincey himself, in Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821)²⁴ and 'Suspiria de Profundis' (1845),²⁵ attempted a detailed examination of 'the shadowy and the dark'²⁶ in the human mind, through the description of dreams, hallucinations, delirium and reverie. In the 'Suspiria', marginal states of consciousness are seen as giving access to unexplored areas of the mind: 'the machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain' is 'the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy'.²⁷ In the Confessions, the expansion of the subject's self-awareness, through dreams and drugs, is double, and contradictory, in character. On the one hand, in the 'Pleasures of Opium' section, the subject appears as coherent and unified: 'whereas wine disorders the mental faculties, opium ... introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony'.²⁸ On the other, this 'serenity and equipoise'²⁹ disintegrates altogether in the later 'Pains of Opium' section, where the fixed and static gives way to the expansive and fluid: 'I seemed every night to descend ... into

chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths ... Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity.³⁰ The loss of limits disorients and overwhelms the subject, now dominated by 'a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness';³¹ while objects are 'multiplied into a thousand repetitions'.³² This dialectic between coherence and disintegration, between the subject's sense of autonomy and its total loss of bearings, recurs in Poe; in a tale like 'The Assigination' or 'The Masque of the Red Death', "equipoise" is followed by disorientation.³³ Indeed, many of Poe's tales can be read as "psychological curiosities" in the Coleridge-De Quincey tradition; Poe's interest in Coleridge is attested in, for instance, the 'Letter to B—' (1836; H VII, xxxv-xliii), where the older poet is described as 'a giant in intellect and learning' (xxxviii-xxxix),³⁴ while the Confessions are mentioned (and attributed to Coleridge) in 'How to Write a Blackwood Article' (1838) (M II, 339-40) (Alethea Hayter, in the 'Introduction' to her edition of the Confessions (1971), claims that 'Poe's Tales are steeped in De Quincey's influence',³⁵ and, as will be shown below, echoes of De Quincey's texts are certainly present in 'William Wilson'³⁶ and 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'.)³⁷

The view of Poe's tales as, above all, psychological explorations is implicit in his own 'Preface' to Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (1840; M II, 473-74): 'If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul, - that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results.' (473). This passage, claiming psychological rigour for the tales, is sufficient justification, on the level of intention alone, for the privileging of "étrange" over "merveilleux"

readings; Michael Allen (Poe and the British Magazine Tradition, 1969) argues that 'short psychological case-studies' constitute Poe's 'favoured genre',³⁸ and concludes that 'the heroes of Poe's earlier "confession"—type stories ... were meant to be seen by the more sophisticated reader as studies in mental illness'.³⁹ Indeed, several of the narrators refer to themselves, or to other characters, in the language of mental science. Thus, in 'Usher', the narrator, commenting on his friend's manic 'excitement' and his own strategy for alleviating it, remarks: 'the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies' (M II, 413); in 'Ligeia', the narrator classes lapses of memory among 'the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind' (M II, 313); in 'The Black Cat', the narrator expresses the belief that, one day, science will be able to explain his present mental state: 'Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place - ... which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.' (M III, 850). Above all, the narrator of 'The Imp of the Perverse', developing on a suggestion of his counterpart in 'The Black Cat' (M III, 852), proposes a new psychological term, "perverseness", to signify a certain 'principle of human action' (M III, 1220) unknown to the existing 'systems of mind' (1219).⁴⁰

Of course, in all these cases there is irony directed against the narrators - either because they can begin to analyse, but not control, their own irrational tendencies, or because they fail to recognise in themselves the 'anomalies' they diagnose in others. The extreme, and parodic, case is that of the narrator of 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether', who claims 'a long acquaintance with the

metaphysics of mania' (M III, 1004), but fails to recognise madness when confronted with a houseful of mental patients.⁴¹ The presence of textual irony does not, however, invalidate the general psychological project, even if the narrators are incapable of carrying it out fully; what is in question is the fictional attempt to signify mental 'anomalies' in such a way as to make them accessible to the discourses of the 'science of mind' - both the existing ones and those of 'hereafter'.

Across the canon, various kinds of "marginal" or "borderline" mental states are signified - not only 'mental disorder' ('Usher', M II, 413) with its delusions, hallucinations, psychosomatic disturbances and states of dissociation, but also the following: fainting fits or swoons (Pym (Beaver, Pym, p. 229); 'The Pit and the Pendulum', M II, 682-83; 'The Imp of the Perverse', M III, 1226); drug-states ('Ligeia', M II, 326-27; 'Usher', M II, 397, 402); waking fantasies ('Hans Pfaall' (Beaver, Science Fiction, pp. 40-41)); the mesmeric trance ('Mesmeric Revelation', 'Valdemar', 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'); the cataleptic trance ('Berenice', 'Usher', 'The Premature Burial'); delirium (Pym (Beaver, Pym, pp. 124-25); 'The Oval Portrait', M II, 663); and, finally, the moment of death ('The Colloquy of Monos and Una', 'Valdemar').

The theme of dreaming is recurrent. Explicit significations or representations of dreams in the literal sense - what Freud, paraphrasing Aristotle, calls 'the mental activity of the sleeper'⁴² - are surprisingly rare in Poe's work, although specific dreams are described in Pym (Beaver, Pym, pp. 65-66), and 'The Premature Burial' (M III, 963-65), and 'The Black Cat' contains a brief reference to 'dreams of unutterable fear' (M III, 856). On the other hand, the

lexis of dreaming ('to dream', 'dream', 'dreamer', 'vision', 'visionary') appears in tale after tale, typically signifying, not mental life during sleep, but the invasion of waking perceptions by fantasy or hallucination. To be a dreamer is to be dominated by fantasy, to have one's perceptions of the external world dimmed by the light of internally-produced images, as in 'The Assniation', where the Visionary declares: "'To dream has been the business of my life'" (M II, 165), or 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', where the narrator describes Dupin and himself as 'weaving the dull world around us into dreams' (M III, 724). Certain tales, e.g. 'MS. Found in a Bottle', with its early reference to opium (M II, 136), and 'The Angel of the Odd', with its broad hints at delirium tremens,⁴³ can be read virtually in their entirety as extended dreams or hallucinations; while the readings to be offered of, for instance, 'Ligeia' and 'Usher' are posited on the marked presence of hallucination in the consciousness of the narrators and characters.⁴⁴ Across the canon, reality and "dream", external and internal perception, are frequently confused: 'The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn, not the material of my every-day existence, but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself.' ('Berenice', M II, 210); 'Have I not indeed been living in a dream?' ('William Wilson', M II, 427); 'They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.' ('Eleonora', M II, 638).

This repeated irruption of "dream" into daytime reality has, of course, been appropriated by idealist critics - in Wilbur's schematic reading, as noted above,⁴⁵ and, more interestingly, by the Nicaraguan writer Rubén Darío, in 'Edgar Poe y los sueños' (1913).⁴⁶ Darío, listing a long series of dream-references in the tales and poems in pursuit of his

claim that 'el sueño se encuentra en todo Poe, en toda su obra' ('dreaming is to be found in all of Poe, in all his work'),⁴⁷ stresses the repeated struggle with language in the effort to signify the oneiric, 'hasta más allá de los límites de lo expresable' ('even beyond the limits of the expressible').⁴⁸ However, Darío's discourse is, in the end, openly occultist;⁴⁹ the present study, in contrast, assumes that the task of criticism is to explain the "dream" element in Poe's work without recourse to idealist or mystical theories of the oneiric. The dream references should be understood in terms of the discourse of the unconscious; the protagonists who, like William Wilson, see themselves as 'living in a dream', may be read as subjects in whom internal perception is increasingly dominant over external perception - and whose consciousness is, therefore, liable to invasion by the unconscious.

Indeed, much of Poe's fiction can be seen as giving voice to the unconscious and its silenced discourse. Hence the recurrent struggle to signify what resists signification, 'beyond the limits of the expressible', to answer questions that remain unanswered. In key passages of both 'Usher' and 'Ligeia', there occurs the same crucial question: 'What was it?', with reference, respectively, to the indefinable fear produced in the narrator by the House (M II, 397), and to the 'expression' of Ligeia's eyes (M II, 313). In neither case can the narrator adequately answer his own question. In 'Usher', he concludes: 'It was a mystery all insoluble' (397); in 'Ligeia', he admits of the 'sentiment' produced by the 'expression': 'Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyze, or even steadily view it.' (314). The reader may conclude that the unnameable sensations derive from the repressed, and pertain to the discourses of Death and

and Desire respectively;⁵⁰ but the texts have already raised the possibility of naming the nameless by asking 'What was it?', even if the lack of an answer defers the revelation. Similarly, in 'The Imp of the Perverse', the narrator strives to attach signifiers to intractable signifieds, to sensations perceived as 'unnameable' (M III, 1222); while in 'MS.', as the phantom ship heads towards destruction, the narrator declares: 'A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul - a sensation which will admit of no analysis' (M II, 141). The narrators are, in fact, struggling to 'name', 'define' and 'analyze' mental processes which could not be adequately signified until Freud's discovery of the unconscious; yet, as the passage from 'The Black Cat' quoted above⁵¹ suggests, the texts tend to imply that 'hereafter' a discourse will be found which will make such 'phantasms' comprehensible.

Outside Poe's fictional work, there is further evidence for a conscious depth-psychological project. In one of the series of 'Marginalia' (1848 - H XVI, 128), Poe challenges 'any ambitious man' to 'revolutionize ... the universal world of human thought', at a stroke: 'All that he has to do is to write and publish a very little book. Its title should be simple - a few plain words - "My Heart Laid Bare." But - this little book must be true to its title.' This project of rigorous self-analysis is, Poe concludes, impossible: 'No man dare write it. No man ever will dare write it. No man could write it, even if he dared. The paper would shrivel and blaze at every touch of the fiery pen.' The uncharted areas of the mind are seen as containing culturally unacceptable material, which would generate such internal and external resistance as to make itself unwritable. Nonetheless, the project - to 'lay bare', to unveil what conscious discourse conceals - had already been

given fictional shape in tales like 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Imp of the Perverse' (either of which could have been titled 'My Heart Laid Bare');⁵² and Poe's challenge was later to be taken up, both by Baudelaire, in the section of the Journaux intimes titled - precisely - 'Mon Coeur mis à nu' (1859-66),⁵³ and by Dostoyevsky in Notes from the Underground (1864).⁵⁴

In another of the series of 'Marginalia' (1846 - H XVI, 87-90), Poe suggests a different project - that of the investigation and 'analysis' (90) of a specific marginal state, i.e. the hypnagogic hallucinations that sometimes occur on the 'border-ground' (ibid.) between waking and sleep: 'at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams' (88). These hallucinations are seen as 'a class of fancies, ... to which, as yet, I have found it absolutely impossible to adapt language' (ibid.). He claims, however, that in the future language will be 'adapted' so as to signify these 'fancies', through the constitution of a new discourse: 'I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of the reach of language. (ibid.) ... Now, so entire is my faith in the power of words, that, at times, I have believed it possible to embody even the evanescence of fancies such as I have attempted to describe. (89) ... In a word, should I ever write a paper on this topic, the world will be compelled to acknowledge that, at last, I have done an original thing.' (90). The projected 'paper' was never written; but the project is of greater theoretical importance than its realisation, since it signifies possible directions for future enquiry.

There is, then, across the canon, a repeated series of attempts to

signify obscure mental states - to subject apparently intractable material to 'the power of words'. The same phrase provides the title for a tale of 1845, which culminates in the declaration that words can create a new world; the angel Agathos claims that a certain star is the product and symbol of the verbal expression of his desire: 'This wild star - it is now three centuries since, with clasped hands, and with streaming eyes, at the feet of my beloved - I spoke it - with a few passionate sentences - into birth. Its brilliant flowers are the dearest of all unfulfilled dreams, and its raging volcanoes are the passions of the most turbulent and unhallowed of hearts.' (M III, 1215). Mystical though the tale is, the image of language creating a new object can be read as a symbolic representation of the creation of a new discourse; it should also be noted that the star is seen as a metaphor for a desire that is both explicitly sexual ('passionate') and perceived as disturbing ('turbulent') and subversive ('unhallowed'). The transforming power of words is thus linked to the "other" discourse of the unconscious.

Poe's project of evolving a "new" psychological discourse is comparable to similar tendencies in the work of Hawthorne, which includes studies of anomalous behaviour ('Wakefield', 1835)⁵⁵ and mesmerism (The House of the Seven Gables, 1851; The Blithedale Romance, 1852).⁵⁶

Frederick Crews (The Sins of the Fathers, 1966) sees Hawthorne's work as providing a 'chart of the ways of the unconscious' (292);⁵⁷ the parallel with Poe is evident in a passage like the following narratorial comment (on witchcraft) from The House of the Seven Gables: 'Modern psychology, it may be, will endeavor to reduce these alleged necromancies within a system'⁵⁸ (one may compare the passage from 'The Black Cat' quoted above).⁵⁹

Both writers' work can be seen as partial anticipations of Freud's discovery; it was, after all, via the study of "borderline" states

(hysteria, the hypnotic trance) that the unconscious was first postulated.⁶⁰ Besides, it is evident from the various examples above that in Poe's psychological explorations the subject tends either to be riven by internal conflicts, or to experience disturbances in the relation between self and external world. On both counts, the autonomy of the subject is subverted.

ii. Eureka: A Dialectical Model

The construction of subjectivity in Poe's writings tends to function in terms of conflict, contradiction and fragmentation. These processes will be examined in detail in the substantive analyses of major groups of texts that form the main body of this study. At this stage, by way of introduction to the general questions posed by Poe's texts, a series of more summary analyses is offered: first, brief discussion of the relevant aspects of the two major long works whose detailed analysis space does not permit, i.e. Eureka and Pym; second, some considerations on three tales which do not fit into the main groupings adopted in this study, but which raise important questions of subjectivity, i.e. 'The Man that was Used Up', 'William Wilson' and 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether'.

Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe (1848)

(Beaver, Science Fiction, pp. 205-309), described by Poe as both 'a Prose Poem' (205) and a 'Book of Truths' (209), is a genre-problematic text, which can be read both as a scientific-philosophical treatise, and as fiction. Given that it deals in "unverifiable" speculation on the origins and future of the universe, it is best read as fiction. However, where the former reading prevails, the text tends to be appropriated - especially by such idealist critics as E. H. Davidson

(Poe: A Critical Study, 1954)⁶¹ or Maurice Beebe ('The Universe of Roderick Usher', 1956)⁶² - to justify reading Poe's work in general terms of "unity". Nevertheless, the text of Eureka does not, in practice, necessarily imply an unproblematic model of the "unified" subject.

The bulk of Eureka is concerned with defining a model of the universe, until the last pages (306-309), when the emphasis shifts to questions of subjectivity or 'self-inspection' (307). The model of the universe presented may, however, be read as a metaphor for a model of the subject. This model is, besides, not a unitary but a dialectical one; it is based on the alternation of 'Attraction' and 'Repulsion' (256), that is, the rival principles of unification and differentiation. Certainly, the finite 'Universe of Stars' is distinguished from the infinite 'Universe of Vacancy' in terms of its 'insulation', or 'isolation' (279), which would tend to make it a symbol of the autonomous subject. The stars are seen as possessed by 'a spiritual passion for oneness' (304) which will impel them to return to 'absolute Unity' (306). Autonomy and "unity", however, do not coincide. The insulation of the 'Universe of Stars' is, in the end, conjunctural, since it is to be destroyed, and will then be indistinguishable from the 'Nothingness' (ibid.) outside it; the stars' 'passion for oneness' will contribute to that destruction, plunging them into a 'common embrace' (304). The tendency to "Unity" thus finally undermines the notion of the fixed subject, since it implies destruction rather than stasis.

Besides, the text predicts that the annihilation of the existing universe will be followed by an infinite series of further creations and destructions; it asks whether 'the processes we have ventured to

contemplate will be renewed forever, and forever, and forever; a novel Universe swelling into existence, and then subsiding into nothingness, at every throb of the Heart Divine?' (307). The history of universes is thus seen in terms of the continual alternation of antagonistic principles - systole/diastole, creation/destruction, 'existence'/ 'nothingness'; this is scarcely a unitary model. "Oneness" or "Unity" is, rather, only one side of the dialectic of Eureka; the return to "Unity" is followed by a return to differentiation, attraction gives way to repulsion, and so on ad infinitum.

At the same time, Eureka constructs an explicit model of the subject, which, equally, cannot be reduced to a simple matter of "unity"; rather, it corresponds to the dialectical model of the universe outlined above. The dimension of subjectivity is suddenly and unexpectedly privileged near the end, with the question: 'And now - this Heart Divine - what is it?', and its answer: 'It is our own.' (307). The subject is seen as, finally, interchangeable with the force that governs the external world, the 'Heart Divine' which creates and destroys universes; the systole and diastole of one individual's heart-beat thus control the fate of the external world. The text goes on to predict 'the absorption, by each individual intelligence, of all other intelligences (that is, of the Universe) into its own' (309); the external world is reduced to an epiphenomenon of the omnipotent subject ('each must become God' - *ibid.*). That this discourse is idealist and mystical goes without saying; but, in the context of the text as a whole, what it does not do is constitute the subject as either fixed or autonomous. The absorption of the universe by the subject is only one moment in a dialectical process, a 'perpetual variation of Concentrated Self and almost Infinite Self-Diffusion'

(ibid.); the subject alternately activates the principles of "unity" (attraction) and differentiation (repulsion) - alternately absorbs the universe, and reaffirms its own separateness. This dialectic was to be taken up by Baudelaire, in the Journaux intimes (1859-66): 'De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi. Tout est là.';⁶³ the cosmic fiction of Eureka finally constitutes a model of subjectivity that is not fixed, but fluid—not unitary, but dialectical.

iii. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket: Disintegration

Poe's one completed novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1837), has been subjected to various interpretations. For Leslie Fiedler (Love and Death in the American Novel, 1960),⁶⁴ it is a parodic version of the frontier myth, 'an anti-Western disguised as the form it utterly travesties';⁶⁵ for Harold Beaver ('Introduction' to his edition of Pym, 1975), it is a displaced expression of Southern anxieties about race and slavery,⁶⁶ to be read in the context of Nat Turner's 1831 slave revolt in Virginia;⁶⁷ for Jean Ricardou ('Le caractère singulier de cette eau', 1967)⁶⁸ and Claude Richard ('L'écriture d'Arthur Gordon Pym', 1975),⁶⁹ Poe's novel is an essentially meta-fictional document, overflowing with metaphors and metonyms for textuality, writing and reading;⁷⁰ for Marie Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933), Pym is essentially a quest for the lost Oedipal mother,⁷¹ finally consummated in the 'wish-fulfilment phantasy'⁷² of the plunge into the cataract. The present brief analysis, however, will concentrate neither on the novel's sociological nor on its metatextual dimension (the former has been considered to some extent in the comments on imperialism above);⁷³ nor will it attempt a hermeneutic Oedipal reading. Rather, it will concentrate on the novel's constitution of

subjectivity in terms of self-destruction, fragmentation and disintegration.

The narrator and protagonist, Arthur Gordon Pym, is presented from the beginning as being especially susceptible to the kind of "borderline" mental states characterised in the previous section (e.g. delirium - Beaver, Pym, chapter 9, 124 ; fainting - chapter 1, 51; chapter 24, 228-29).⁷⁴ At such moments, he becomes dissociated from his own body. Thus, in the first chapter, on a nocturnal expedition in a boat, he faints and is nearly drowned, to be picked up by the crew of a whaler, to which his body has accidentally stuck; the events are later narrated to Pym, who re-narrates them in his own discourse: 'The body of a man was seen to be affixed ... to the ... bottom (of the ship) ... I was finally disengaged from my perilous situation and taken on board - for the body proved to be my own' (53). Pym here retrospectively sees himself as a body without consciousness, existing - as the passive verbs indicate - only as the object of others' discourse and actions; self is perceived as other.

Pym exhibits, besides, a marked and avowed tendency towards self-destruction; he suffers from frequent attacks of 'perversity', a concept later to be theorised at greater length in 'The Black Cat' and 'The Imp of the Perverse'. The concept will be examined in detail, and further reference made to the relevant passages in Pym, in the chapter dealing with those tales, where it will be argued that Poe's 'perverse' can be equated with the Freudian death-drive.⁷⁵ For the present, it may be noted that Pym describes himself in the second chapter as one of the 'race of the melancholy among men', and as being positively attracted to the sea by tales of 'suffering and despair',

of 'shipwreck and famine', 'death or captivity' (57). These confessed 'desires' for suffering (ibid.) are amply gratified in his ensuing adventures, during which, besides, Pym at certain moments quite deliberately inflicts avoidable unpleasure on himself. In chapter 3, he drinks up a bottle of peach liqueur - all that is left of his provisions in the hold of the Grampus - knowing the act to be against his rational interest: 'I felt myself actuated by one of those fits of perverseness which might be supposed to influence a spoiled child in similar circumstances, and, raising the bottle to my lips, I drained it to the last drop' (78-79). A similar instance of 'perverseness' occurs in chapter 24, when Pym and Peters, on Tsalal, find themselves forced to attempt the descent of a hill overlooking a precipitous gulf: 'And now was I consumed with the irrepressible desire of looking below. ... I threw my vision far down into the abyss ... in the next instant my whole soul was pervaded with a longing to fall; a desire, a yearning, a passion utterly uncontrollable' (229). Pym then faints, and falls into the abyss, but is rescued by Peters. Both episodes may be read as directly anticipating 'The Imp of the Perverse', as Mabbott (for the second)⁷⁶ and Beaver (for both)⁷⁷ suggest; at these moments, Pym is actuated by the "perverse" tendency to self-destruction, the 'desire' or 'yearning' to return to a state of zero tension and non-differentiation.

The perverse impulse ultimately leads to death; across the text, indeed, Pym's physical dissolution is continually anticipated - and continually deferred, up to the ambivalent final catastrophe. The threat of 'destruction' hangs over Pym and his companion Augustus, even in the boat episode in the first chapter: 'I knew that ... a fierce wind and strong ebb tide were hurrying us to destruction.' (50). The initial threat is averted, though not before both Augustus and Pym

have anticipated their own deaths by falling, respectively, 'senseless' and 'insensible' (51). The rest of the narrative is strewn with scenes of death and carnage, and with images of fragmentation - disintegrated objects and disintegrating bodies - that constitute metaphors or metonyms for the dissolution of the subject. Thus, for instance, in chapter 3 Pym, imprisoned in the dark of the hold, tries to read the slip of paper sent him by Augustus in the light of a few 'fragments' of phosphorus matches (73), and, after turning up the blank side, tears the letter into pieces (74), which he then has to reassemble in order to read the message on the other side. The fragmentation and reconstitution of the letter can be read as symbolising parallel tendencies in the subject - the dialectic of self-destruction and survival, Thanatos and Eros, that marks Pym's actions throughout. Later, it is the human body that fragments or disintegrates. The corpses on the Dutch brig that appears in chapter 10 are 'in the last and most loathsome state of putrefaction' (132), and a seagull drops a 'horrid morsel' from the liver of one of these at the feet of Pym's companion Parker (133). Soon after, in chapter 12, Parker is dismembered and cannibalised by Pym, Peters and Augustus: 'having ... taken off the hands, feet and head, ... we devoured the rest of the body, piecemeal' (146). In the next chapter, after Augustus' death, Pym and Peters throw the body - reduced to a 'mass of putrefaction' - overboard: 'It was then loathsome beyond expression, and so far decayed that, as Peters attempted to lift it, an entire leg came off in his grasp.'; in the sea, it is 'torn to pieces' by sharks (155). Finally, in the massacre of the whites on Tsalal (chapter 22), Captain Guy's men are 'absolutely torn to pieces in an instant' (215) by the inhabitants, who in their turn are dismembered when the ship blows up: 'the whole atmosphere was magically crowded, in a single instant, with a wild chaos of wood, and metal,

and human limbs - ... a dense shower of the minutest fragments of the ruins tumbled headlong in every direction around us' (218).

These repeated images of fragmentation and dismemberment - of the body in pieces - have their counterparts elsewhere in the Poe canon, in 'The Man that was Used Up' (to be discussed in the next section), and in the climax of 'Valdemar', where the protagonist's body collapses into a 'mass of loathsome - of detestable putridity' (M III, 1243).⁷⁸ On the one hand, these images anticipate Pym's physical death; on the other, it may also be suggested that Pym's own tendencies to mental disintegration have their symbolic equivalent in the physical disintegration of the bodies of others. The parallel appears close if it is assumed that the ego is primarily a bodily ego, that the subject's self-image is, as in the Lacanian mirror-phase, above all a physical one. In Pym, the images of the dismembered body tend to subvert the coherence of Pym - and the reader - as "full" subjects.⁷⁹

It should be stressed, however, that in spite of the repeated textual indicators of disintegration and dissolution, Pym's death is continually deferred, through a series of hair's-breadth rescues and recoveries. Thus he is rescued from starvation in the hold by Augustus (chapter 3, 19), from starvation and exposure by the Jane Guy (chapter 14, 161), from the artificial avalanche on Tsalal by chance (chapter 21, 211-12), from falling by Peters (chapter 24, 229). Destruction endlessly impends and is endlessly averted: 'We alone had escaped from the tempest of that overwhelming destruction.' (212); 'he ... arrived just in time for my preservation' (229). Symbolically, Pym dies time and time again before his death; in the avalanche episode, he is almost buried alive, experiencing 'the blackness of darkness ... the allotted

portion of the dead' (208), and imagining 'that the whole foundations of the solid globe were suddenly rent asunder, and that the day of universal dissolution was at hand' (207). Yet here and elsewhere, Pym survives; it must be concluded that the novel is traversed not only by the tendency to 'universal dissolution', but also by a counter-tendency, the impulse to physical and mental survival. There is a dialectic of Eros and Thanatos at work, to be resolved in favour of Thanatos only after a prolonged struggle; in this context, the novel's problematic climax will now be examined.

The disintegrative tendency present across the text reaches its climax in the final pages (chapter 25), where disintegration threatens to shade into non-differentiation and total dissolution, symbolised by 'perfect whiteness' (239). The colour white (which technically signifies the absence of colour) comes to signify breakdown of limits and loss of identity; there is a taboo on whiteness on Tsalal, where white objects invariably produce fear (192). In Pym, as in the 'Whiteness of the Whale' chapter of Moby-Dick⁸⁰ (which Beaver sees as drawing on Poe's text),⁸¹ whiteness has connotations of absence, dissolution, death; in Melville's words, 'Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way?'.⁸²

At the end of chapter 25, Pym and Peters, heading in an open boat towards the South Pole, sight 'a limitless cataract, rolling silently into the sea', towards which their boat is impelled 'with a hideous velocity' (238). The narrative ends as follows:

And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of the snow. (239)

The enigmatic white figure has been subjected to multiple interpretations. For Bonaparte, it is the mother's 'milk-white body', with which the son is at last reunited;⁸³ the 'perfect whiteness of the snow' symbolises both the maternal milk and the coldness of death.⁸⁴ The text thus contains a fantasy of death as a kind of utopia, the return to a symbiotic, fatherless relation with the mother. Beaver sees the figure as pointing to 'the weightless, relaxed, wholly passive condition of death', but beyond that, to a rebirth⁸⁵ (hence Pym's return to the U.S., to write the narrative).⁸⁶ Richard interprets the white figure as signifying a different kind of death, that of writing - 'la fin de l'écriture ... dans le néant de la "blancheur parfaite"'.⁸⁷ What all these readings have in common is the element of death; to this may be added the factor of non-differentiation. The whole Antarctic region, as perceived by Pym, is characterised by the absence or weakening of limits and of difference. The cataract is 'limitless', its summit 'utterly lost in the dimness and the distance' (238); the object has lost its contours and its definiteness. The silence of the region ('rolling silently', 'soundless winds') (ibid.), though broken by the screaming birds (239), points not only to death but to the disappearance of language, and therefore of definition and separateness (given that differentiation is crucial to language). Pym appears to be heading towards the total non-differentiation of death.

However, the birds' cries may be read as a protest against the silence of death; and in this context the white figure appears as ambivalent,

pointing both towards and away from death. On the one hand, it is 'shrouded' (which connotes death), and its 'perfect whiteness' signifies the absence of colour and of differentiation; and its anomalous size suggests an oneiric distortion, a blurring of the contours of the object. On the other hand, it is differentiated from the surrounding 'darkness' (238), and may be intervening to protect Pym and Peters from being swallowed up by the 'chasm', and so, perhaps to preserve their lives. The figure, it may be, represents not so much death as a stage preceding death, the limit-point of non-differentiation and dissociation, to cross which is death itself.

Critics have disagreed over whether or not Pym and Peters die in the 'embraces of the cataract'. Poe's text is here itself ambivalent - on the one hand, Pym is made to contribute a 'Preface' in which he refers to 'my return to the United States' (43), and a concluding 'Note' specifies 'the late sudden and distressing death of Mr Pym' after that return and describes Peters as 'still alive' (240); on the other, no details are given of their return home, and the imagery of silence, shrouding and whiteness of the last pages does strongly suggest their death. Fiedler argues that the novel ends with 'total destruction, a death without resurrection';⁸⁸ the preface would then be a hoax on the reader. Beaver, in contrast, claims that the 'final descent ... implies a parallel rise or resurrection', and concludes that 'somehow Pym escaped' (possibly through the vortex then believed by some to exist at the South Pole, which would have disgorged him and Peters at the North Pole).⁸⁹ If the letter of the text is accepted, following Beaver, it may be supposed that Pym did escape, but only to die soon after. To return to the white figure, it may, in conclusion, be read as

signifying, not an immediate, but an imminent death. Symbolising at one and the same time death and its deferment, differentiation and annihilation, it externalises that conflict within Pym which can finally only be resolved in death. The figure may, indeed, be a hallucinatory projection of Pym's own body, a magnified and distorted version of himself, almost dissolved in death yet still perceived as a discrete object.

In conclusion, the text of Pym tends to subvert the notion of the unified subject, through its accumulated images of dismemberment and fragmentation. Subjectivity is, rather, presented dialectically as characterised by an ongoing conflict between self-destructive and self-preservative tendencies - between the drive to disintegration and non-differentiation, and the contrary impulse to survival and separation. The destructive tendency ultimately prevails, in Pym's death - whether at the Pole or in the U.S. - but only after a prolonged and repeated struggle. The dialectic of Pym is, in the end, parallel to that of Eureka (the latter text taking up Pym's suggestion of 'universal dissolution' (207)); Pym may be seen as torn between the rival pulls of "attraction" and "repulsion", finally plunging into the 'embraces of the cataract', as the stars in Eureka 'flash ... into a common embrace' (Beaver, Science Fiction, p. 304).⁹⁰ In Pym, subjectivity is not abolished, but signified in terms of contradiction. There are no mirrors on Tsalal, and those brought by the white men produce fear, not reassurance, in the inhabitants (chapter 18, 191); even the rivers fail to reflect (ibid., 193-94). The absence of the deceptive mirror-image points to the objective function of Poe's novel, as subversive of the illusory autonomy and coherence of the subject.

iv. 'The Man that was Used Up': Fragmentation

The theme of fragmentation, whose repeated presence in Pym has been demonstrated, becomes dominant in 'The Man that was Used Up' (1839).

As suggested in the previous section, the motif occurs frequently across the Poe canon - in the decomposition of Valdemar's body ('his whole frame at once ... shrunk - crumbled - absolutely rotted away' -

M III, 1243), in the collapse of the House of Usher ('I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder' - M II, 417), even in the piecemeal description, organ by organ, of Ligeia's physique (M II, 311-12).

It has already been argued for Pym that the fragmented object or body may be read as symbolising the rupture of the imaginary coherence of the subject, the shattering of the deceptive mirror-image. This process of rupture is taken to its limits in 'The Man that was Used Up', where the main character is quite literally an assemblage of fragments (this tale has already been examined from the point of view of its critique of technology;⁹¹ it has also been read as a political satire, e.g. of President Martin Van Buren (1837-41),⁹² but this dimension will not be considered here).

The tale plays ironically on the antitheses between completeness and fragmentation, appearance and reality. The naïve narrator is, at first, impressed by the 'entire individuality' of the protagonist, General Smith (M II, 378); the 'supreme excellence of his bodily endowments' (380), which are detailed one by one, appears to constitute him as full, entire subject. Indeed, this 'hero' (381) seems paradigmatic of "Man" as conceived by mid-nineteenth-century individualist ideology: 'He was a remarkable man - a very remarkable man - indeed one of the most remarkable men of the age' (380). He is a believer

in "progress", at home in 'public meeting' (378) and private soirée alike, confident in his racial superiority to both blacks (as represented by his servant Pompey, whom he calls 'you dog' and 'you nigger' (388)) and Native Americans (as represented by the (real) Kickapoos⁹³ and the (imaginary) Bugaboos, whom he sees as 'vagabonds' (389)); he appears, in fact, to be the archetypal white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male, with the suitably representative name of A. B. C. Smith.

However, the text is marked by repeated and ironic punning on the signifier "Man" - in the title, and in the references to 'Man alive', 'man-traps' (381), 'man that is born of a woman' (383), 'mandragora', 'Captain Mann' (384), 'Man-Fred', 'Man-Friday' (385), 'the man in the mask' and 'the man in the moon' (386). The repetition and punning tend to drain the signifier of sense, and suggest that the concept of "Man" is, in fact, to be subverted and its meaning "used up". The reference to Byron's Manfred (1816)⁹⁴ is heavily ironic. In Byron's drama (which the narrator effectively devalues by mistitling it 'Man-Friday' (385)), the protagonist, virtually isolated from social relations, affirms himself in his dying speech as autonomous subject, independent from all external determinants and totally self-responsible:

The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good and evil thoughts, -
Is its own origin of ill and end -
And its own place and time: its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without ...⁹⁵

It is precisely this notion of the unitary, self-referential subject that Poe's text subverts; the autonomy of 'Man', symbolised in 'Man-Fred', is negated by the fragmentation of the body.

The initial description of Smith, with its piecemeal dismemberment of his body, proves to have been an ironic prolepsis; the General turns out to be, not an 'entire' man, but a sum of fragments, having been mutilated in a fight with Native Americans. The artificial limbs and prosthetic devices - leg, arm, shoulder, chest, wig, teeth, eyes, palate - conceal the mutilated remains of a man, 'a large and exceedingly odd-looking bundle of something' (386) - a 'thing' (387), an 'object' (388). Smith is a man half-transformed into 'machine' (388), more artificial than human. But besides, the General is sexually 'not a man', in the sense of being castrated. So much is clear from his 'squeak' (387), and from various ironic doubles entendres which suggest a (non-existent) phallic potency; 'in the matter of eyes ... my acquaintance was pre-eminently endowed' (379); 'that ... interesting obliquity which gives pregnancy to expression' (ibid.). Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933) comments: 'The castration of prisoners ... holds high place among tribes quite as savage as were the Kickapoos and Bugaboos!'⁹⁶ Smith is, therefore, not 'entire' in the sexual sense either; one may compare Byron's comments (letter to J. C. Hobhouse and D. Kinnaird, 1819) on the text of Don Juan: 'I will have no cutting or slashing. Don Juan shall be an entire horse or none.'⁹⁷ If Smith is not 'entire', this would account for the narrator's extreme reaction of fear on hearing his 'squeak': 'I fairly shouted with terror' (387); the mutilated General reactivates castration anxiety in him.

In conclusion, 'The Man that was Used Up' presents an extreme instance of the body in pieces, with fragmentation producing an effect of disturbance and terror (in spite of the comic-satiric framework).

In contrast to Pym, there is minimal emphasis on the counter-tendency

to the disintegrative movement, the impulse to survival; the General has, objectively, survived the mutilation and manages to function in society thanks to the prosthetic devices, but the tale is told not from his viewpoint but from that of the narrator, whose reactions to his discovery are a mixture of terror and resentment at being duped. The final effect of this text is to disorient the reader; the apparent coherence and continuity of the body (and therefore, symbolically, of the ego) is reduced to an accumulation of discrete fragments, with the castration fear at its (absent) centre! 'Man' is thus seen to be a cultural illusion; what passes for 'entire individuality' is exposed as constructed out of the repression of heterogeneity and contradiction.

v. 'William Wilson': The Double

If the autonomous subject is undermined in one direction by fragmentation, the figure of the double subverts it in another; the "indivisible" ego is equally called in question by images of internal division and external duplication. If, as Arthur Rimbaud was to write in his famous letter to Paul Demeny (15 May 1871), 'JE est un autre',⁹⁸ then "I" is no longer "I" the unique individual, but, rather, a series of multiple and contradictory selves. Nineteenth-century literature is marked by repeated appearances, in the works of the most diverse writers, of the motif of the double, as signifier of the breakdown of the autonomous subject. In Poe's work, doubling of various kinds is apparent, in the relations of intersubjective duplication constituted in such tales as 'The Man of the Crowd' (narrator/old man), 'Usher' (narrator/Usher), 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (Dupin/ape) or 'The Purloined Letter' (Dupin/D—); typically, the "normal" subject is doubled by the other, on to whom he projects his own culturally unacceptable

tendencies (to destruction, disintegration, criminality or "abnormality"). In these tales, the other appears as the subject's counterpart, his uncanny, unfamiliar-yet-familiar alter ego. However, this kind of doubling should be distinguished from the appearances of the double in the literal sense, i.e. the other who is physically identical to and interchangeable with the subject. Poe's one contribution to the literature of the double in this strict sense is 'William Wilson' (1839). Before analysing this text, it will be useful to consider some other instances of the double theme in nineteenth-century literature and psychiatry and to examine certain perspectives offered on the question by psychoanalytic theory.

The double makes an unequivocal appearance in E. T. A. Hoffmann's The Devil's Elixirs (1816),⁹⁹ a text which has been seen as influencing 'Wilson', e.g. by Palmer Cobb (The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, 1908).¹⁰⁰ The protagonist and narrator of Hoffmann's novel, the monk Medardus, believes he is split into two selves: 'even to myself I am an insoluble riddle, for my personality has been torn apart'.¹⁰¹ His double, Viktor (explained as being his half-brother), is physically identical to him; he seems to externalise Medardus' own criminal tendencies in, for instance, the episode when he knifes the latter's bride-to-be, Aurelia, to death.¹⁰² Medardus declares: 'The monk (i.e. Viktor) ... became the evil principle which plunged me into the most abominable crimes.';¹⁰³ he sees his 'ghostly double'¹⁰⁴ as 'a terrible, distorted reflection of my own self'.¹⁰⁵ The double, then, corresponds to the subject's anti-social, destructive element. Hoffmann's text is, however, complicated by the presence of a second double-figure, in the form of an

enigmatic painter who occasionally intervenes in Medardus' life.

This painter, who turns out to be a blood-relation of the protagonist (and is therefore, presumably, to some extent physically similar to him), appears at moments when Medardus himself (independently of Viktor) is about to commit some culturally prohibited act: "It was I who appeared to you whenever you balanced recklessly above the open grave of damnation. ... I warned you, but you did not heed me."¹⁰⁷ This second double points, then, in the opposite direction from Viktor, representing the insistence of cultural norms within the subject. 106

Dostoyevsky's The Double (1846)¹⁰⁸ has also been compared with 'Wilson', e.g. by Louis Harap ('Poe and Dostoevsky', 1976).¹⁰⁹ In this novel, a third-person narrative, the protagonist, Golyadkin, is a clerk in a government office. He meets his double - physically identical to him - on the street one night: 'Mr Golyadkin's nocturnal acquaintance was none other than himself ... in every respect what is called his double'.¹¹⁰ The double later turns up at the office and gradually gets himself on good terms with the employers, as surely as Golyadkin himself loses favour. The protagonist is eventually told: "you have lost your self-respect and your reputation", whereas his double is 'highly esteemed by right-thinking people'.¹¹¹ In the end, Golyadkin is sacked and sent to a madhouse; as he boards the carriage that takes him away, the double stands outside, looking on with 'unseemly and sinister joy'.¹¹² The double-figure may here be seen as representing certain social values - hard work, deference, etc. - from which the protagonist himself gradually becomes estranged. The subject, once alienated from its "acceptable" self, heads towards mental disintegration and exile from culture, culminating in the asylum.

In Hoffmann's text, the two double-figures represent respectively the subject's "unacceptable" and "acceptable" tendencies; in Dostoyevsky's, it is the latter aspect that is symbolised. In both cases, the subject is signified as liable to splitting, indeed multiplication; Medardus is not merely doubled but trebled, while Golyadkin at one point imagines 'an endless string of Golyadkins all exactly alike'.¹¹³ Other forms of splitting and duplication of the subject are present, on the one hand, in nineteenth-century literature, and on the other, in the records of contemporaneous psychiatry; various types of doubling occur, as will now be shown, in the contexts of mesmerism/hypnosis, drug-states and hysteria.

Victor Race, a patient of the Marquis de Puységur, a pupil of Franz Anton Mesmer, displayed a second consciousness in the mesmeric trance: 'an entirely new personality emerged when his patient fell into a deep "magnetic sleep." ... During his waking life, for example, Victor never uttered a word against his sister, but for the duration of the trance he openly discussed the hostile feelings he harbored toward her.' (Maria M. Tatar, Spellbound (1978), paraphrasing Puysegur's Mémoires (1820)).¹¹⁴ Another practitioner of mesmerism was Charles Dickens, who in 1845, in Italy, regularly mesmerised Mme de la Rue, a banker's wife suffering from psychosomatic disturbances (see Fred Kaplan, Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction, 1975).¹¹⁵ In the mesmeric trance, Dickens' patient believed herself pursued by a 'phantom';¹¹⁶ as Kaplan suggests, this kind of delusion implies a propensity to splitting in the mesmerised subject, which can be related to the literary motif of the double.¹¹⁷ Dickens' mesmeric practice no doubt underlies a passage in The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870)¹¹⁸

which explicitly raises the question of double consciousness: 'in some cases of drunkenness, and in others of animal magnetism, there are two states of consciousness which never clash, but each of which pursues its separate course as though it were continuous instead of broken (thus, if I hide my watch when I am drunk, I must be drunk again before I can remember where)',¹¹⁹ (the concept of doubleness is immediately applicable to the 'scattered consciousness',¹²⁰ of Jasper, Drood's uncle and probable murderer, who leads a double life, alternating between cathedral and opium-den, takes opium and practices auto-hypnosis, and may be presumed to have murdered his nephew in the 'other' state of consciousness induced by the narco-mesmeric trance).¹²¹ The mesmerised (or self-mesmerised) subject, then, tends to exhibit a tendency to doubling: he/she either becomes another, assuming an alien identity (see Victor Race, Jasper), or splits into "acceptable" or "unacceptable" selves (Mme de la Rue).

Similar mental phenomena are signified in literary representations of the opium trance. Thus, in Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone (1868),¹²² Franklin Blake, when unwittingly dosed with opium, steals the jewel, acting "out of character" with his waking self and against his rational interest.¹²³ This act is explained, in the theoretical discourse of Ezra Jennings, in terms of double consciousness (much as in Edwin Drood, and with explicit reference to the writings of Dr John Elliotson (Human Physiology, 1840),¹²⁴ Dickens' mesmeric mentor);¹²⁵ Blake, it is concluded, stole the jewel 'unconsciously',¹²⁶ having become another in the opium trance.¹²⁷ Further, in De Quincey's Confessions (1821), the subject under opium sees himself as 'persecuted by visions as ugly, and as ghastly phantoms as ever haunted the couch of an Orestes';¹²⁸

as with Mme de la Rue, the 'phantoms', or 'shadowy enemies',¹²⁹ may be interpreted as split-off "unacceptable" components of the subject himself. In both the mesmeric trance and the opium trance, then, the subject may either become another, or else split or disintegrate. The culturally unacceptable tendencies in a Victor Race, a Jasper, or a Franklin Blake come to the surface during, and only during, certain "marginal" mental states; what was unconscious becomes conscious.

Mesmerism (or hypnosis, as it came to be called later in the century), can claim to be the precursor of psychoanalysis, as will be shown in detail below.¹³⁰ The recognition of a second consciousness in the mesmeric trance pointed towards the discovery of the unconscious, and it was through the use of hypnosis to treat hysterical patients that Freud evolved the technique of free association.¹³¹ The splitting of the subject in hypnosis and hysteria is a crucial element in Josef Breuer's case-study of "Anna O." (1880-82; Freud and Breuer, Studies on Hysteria, 1893-95). "Anna O.", a young girl suffering from hysteria, exhibited two forms of double consciousness; the first under hypnosis, the second in her hysterical "absences". Among her symptoms was a tendency to regular self-hypnosis. In such moments (or else when hypnotised by Breuer), she was able to recall otherwise inaccessible memories, which lay at the root of her illness;¹³² Breuer stresses 'her peculiarity of remembering things in hypnosis'.¹³³ Her memory thus became "another" in the hypnotic trance. At the same time, she was also double outside the trance, characterised by two, alternating, 'entirely distinct states of consciousness'. In the first state, she was 'melancholy and anxious, but relatively normal'; in the second, 'she hallucinated and "was naughty"'.¹³⁴ Breuer called

the periods corresponding to the second state her 'absences, or condition seconde'.¹³⁵ During these "absences", she 'would complain ... of having two selves, a real one and an evil one which forced her to behave badly'.¹³⁶ After a certain stage in her illness, a new complication appeared in the "condition seconde"; now, when "normal", she continued to live in the winter of 1881-82, but in her "absences", she believed she was living in the winter of 1880-81, hallucinating scenes belonging to the previous year. Thus, for six months, 'she lived through the previous winter day by day'.¹³⁷ Breuer concluded that 'the patient was split into two personalities of which one was mentally normal and the other insane'.¹³⁸ "Anna O." was, then, doubly double; repressed memories emerged under hypnosis, while repressed unconscious fantasies distorted her perceptions in the "absences". The two conditions were linked, since it was in the hypnotic state that the repressed material related to the genesis of the symptoms present in the "condition seconde" could be brought to light.¹³⁹

From the analysis of "Anna O."s case and others, Breuer and Freud concluded in the theoretical section of the Studies that hysterical subjects in general were characterised by a split in consciousness; in Breuer's words, 'in hysterical patients a part of their psychical activity is inaccessible to perception by the self-consciousness of the waking individual and ... their mind is thus split'.¹⁴⁰ The theoretical position was thus reached that (to quote Breuer again) 'unconscious ideas exist and are operative';¹⁴¹ at this stage, however, the application of the concept was confined to hysterical subjects. It was left to Freud on his own to establish that unconscious ideas are not only 'operative' but 'normal',¹⁴² and thus

to construct a model of 'normal' subjectivity as necessarily split.

The case of "Anna O." offers certain parallels with the fictions of Hoffmann and Dostoyevsky referred to above; the subject emerges as liable to splitting and disintegration both in the literature of the double and in the annals of medical history. The double motif in nineteenth-century literary texts corresponds, it may be argued, to a growing latent cultural awareness that the subject is not unitary but divided, and thus anticipates the Freudian discovery of the unconscious. It is therefore not surprising that psychoanalytic theory should have rapidly taken note of the double theme. The question is discussed at length by Otto Rank in The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study (1914),¹⁴³ and also examined by Freud, in 'The "Uncanny"' (1919),¹⁴⁴ and Marie Bonaparte, who considers both the theme in general and the text of 'William Wilson', in Edgar Poe (1933).¹⁴⁵

Rank relates the double theme to the concept of narcissism, arguing that the motif signifies 'the interesting and meaningful problem of man's relation to himself - and the fateful disturbance of this relation'.¹⁴⁶ The subject is seen as transferring on to the double both its narcissistic and its self-destructive tendencies - both 'pathological self-love' and 'pathological fear of one's self'.¹⁴⁷

Above all, however, Rank places the emphasis on the double's role of signifying the subject's desire for self-preservation, and thus denying death. This concept, however applicable it may be to some of Rank's examples, is not, on the whole of great relevance to the appearances of the theme in Poe's fiction, where the double often corresponds to the unacceptable or anti-social elements within the

subject (although, as suggested earlier in this chapter, the white figure at the end of Pym can be read as the protagonist's double which he hallucinates as a protection against death;¹⁴⁸ and Roderick Usher's invitation to the narrator, his psychological double, derives from a last-ditch attempt to preserve his own life and reason).¹⁴⁹ In 'William Wilson', however - as in the Hoffmann and Dostoyevsky texts - the double's appearances produce fear, not reassurance.

In 'The "Uncanny"', Freud considers the double as a source of "uncanny" effects, concluding that its appearances tend to derive from the workings of a specific mental 'agency' - 'a special agency ... which has the function of observing and criticizing the self and of exercising a censorship within the mind', and which can become 'dissociated from the ego'.¹⁵⁰ This 'agency' is the superego, a category which Freud was still evolving at the time of writing 'The "Uncanny"', and which was to be fully theorised in The Ego and the Id (1923), which introduced the tripartite model ego-id-superego.¹⁵¹ Bonaparte, drawing on the full 1923 model, expands on Freud's suggestion, to distinguish between two types of "double" fictions. In the first, represented by R. L. Stevenson's 'Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' (1886),¹⁵² the double (Hyde) symbolises the culturally unacceptable demands of the id, and the protagonist (Jekyll) represents an alliance between ego and superego; in the second, represented by 'William Wilson', the double corresponds to the superego, and the protagonist to an ego-id alliance.¹⁵³ The double can then, symbolise either the affirmation or the negation of the cultural order, and can externalise a 'split in personality ... in either direction'.¹⁵⁴ On the basis of Bonaparte's model, The Devil's Elixirs may be read as containing

both an id-double (the criminal Viktor) and a superego-double (the admonitory painter); while in The Double, the second Golyadkin may be seen, in his adherence to cultural norms and cultivation of favour with the boss, as corresponding to the superego (Bonaparte rather strangely reads the double in Dostoyevsky's novel as an id-figure,¹⁵⁵ but Louis Harap ('Poe and Dostoevsky', 1976) is nearer the mark in seeing him as representing 'socially acceptable qualities').¹⁵⁶ As for 'William Wilson', Poe's tale will be analysed in accordance with Bonaparte's identification of the double with the superego. First, however, it will be useful to clarify certain aspects of this Freudian concept.

On the basis of Freud's comments in The Ego and the Id, the New Introductory Lectures (1933) and elsewhere, the following points should be noted in relation to the superego - that is, the mental agency whose functions include the observing, judging and punishment of the ego. First, this psychoanalytic concept should be distinguished from the conventional notion of "conscience", since its operations are in large part unconscious.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, it exists in close relation to the id; coming into being on the site of the Oedipus complex, it enters into 'intimate relations with the unconscious id'.¹⁵⁸ Specifically, in its formation the superego appropriates the death-drive present in the id, and thus remains closely linked to the subject's unconscious (self-) destructive tendencies: 'when the super-ego was first instituted, in equipping that agency use was made of the piece of the child's aggressiveness towards his parents for which he was unable to effect a discharge outwards'.¹⁵⁹ As Juliet Mitchell puts it in Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974), 'in the very internalization of powerful authority, the death-drives of one's own id are given full play'.¹⁶⁰ This accounts for the superego's severity, in Freud's

terms, its 'general character of harshness and cruelty'¹⁶¹ - or what Hanna Segal (Klein, 1979) calls its 'savage' character,¹⁶² in its punitive and judging functions. Its relation to the ego can, indeed, be described as sadistic; thus, in Civilization and its Discontents (1930), Freud writes: 'The fear of this critical agency ... is an instinctual manifestation on the part of the ego, which has become masochistic under the influence of a sadistic super-ego'.¹⁶³ Finally, although the superego is the 'heir of the Oedipus complex',¹⁶⁴ it is far less the representative of the literal, biological father than the internalisation of the symbolic father, of the inherited law and ideology of patriarchal culture. In Freud's words, 'The past, the tradition of the race and the people, lives on in the ideologies of the super-ego';¹⁶⁵ this point is clarified by Mitchell, who states: 'It is ... its historic role whereby parental stances and the law of the father are transmitted, that makes the superego the heir to the cultural acquisitions of mankind.'¹⁶⁶ The harshness of the superego is thus not necessarily proportionate to the harshness of the child's upbringing; as Freud stresses, 'the super-ego can acquire the same characteristic of relentless severity even if the upbringing had been mild and kindly'.¹⁶⁷ In conclusion, the superego is the internal representative within the subject of the Law of patriarchal culture, with its authoritarian prohibitions and punitive morality.

The text of 'William Wilson' will now be examined in the light of the above comments. It may be noted immediately that the title already places the text under the sign of doubling. As H el ene Cixous ('Poe re-lu', 1972) suggests, the text 'pivote sur ... la lettre w';¹⁶⁸ "w" can be read as "double-you", implying that Wilson is an "I" who sees himself as "you", as other. His name is also double

in the sense that he is William, or Will, "son of Will"; the surname, or 'patronymic' (434), symbolically turns Wilson into a continuation of his father, and thus places him (and the whole tale) firmly within the patriarchal order - indeed under the name of the father.

This is, self-evidently, a tale of a subject divided against itself; its germ may lie in a passage of De Quincey's 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (1835) in which the poet is seen as 'a mind ... overthrown or threatened with overthrow ... by the treachery of his own will, and the conspiracy as it were of himself against himself!'¹⁶⁹ The double, the second Wilson, has universally been read as a dissociated part of the narrator, the first Wilson, and the tale is thus seen as narrating the struggle of 'himself against himself'. Critics have, however, variously read the double in terms of the discourse of conventional morality ("conscience") or that of psychoanalysis (the superego). The reading in terms of "conscience" might seem to be validated by the epigraph, ostensibly from William Chamberlayne's Pharonnida (1659) but in fact concocted by Poe:¹⁷⁰

What say of it? What say of CONSCIENCE grim,
That spectre in my path? (M II, 426)

One may also adduce a further passage from De Quincey's 'Coleridge', where the poet is described as hiring a man to stop him physically from buying opium, in a desperate attempt to wean himself off the drug; De Quincey sees the 'delegated man' as the 'external conscience, as it were, of Coleridge', engaged in a figurative 'duel' or 'struggle' with the poet, which the latter eventually won.¹⁷¹ This is virtually the scenario of 'Wilson': a struggle between the subject and its 'external conscience', which "conscience" eventually loses. In spite of the above evidence, however, it may be contended that the concept of

"conscience" is, in practice, inadequate to explain the complexities of Poe's text.

Among the critics who read the tale along conventional lines are Mabbott (1978) ('a man's struggle with his conscience'),¹⁷² Vincent Buranelli (Edgar Allan Poe, 1961)¹⁷³ (who uses exactly the same phrase),¹⁷⁴ and Marc L. Rovner ('What William Wilson Knew: Poe's Dramatization of an Errant Mind', 1976)¹⁷⁵ ('Wilson ... killed his good half').¹⁷⁶ Harry Levin (The Power of Blackness, 1958),¹⁷⁷ employing Jungian terminology, idealises the double as 'a spiritual emanation of the self as it ought to be'.¹⁷⁸ Rank, in keeping with his overall theory, reads the second Wilson as a would-be preserver, a kind of 'guardian angel';¹⁷⁹ otherwise, Freudian or Freudian-influenced critics have generally read the double as a superego figure. Bonaparte (1933), as already noted, takes this line, and is followed by Cixous (1972) who sees the figure as an 'espèce de surmoi';¹⁸⁰ Daniel Hoffman (Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, 1972) effectively repeats Bonaparte's reading, while stressing the sadistic aspect of the double, seen as both Wilson's 'conscience' and his 'Imp of the Perverse'.¹⁸¹ Harap ('Poe and Dostoevsky', 1976), taking a more "sociological" approach, here as for Dostoyevsky's The Double, reads 'the opposition of the two selves' as being between 'socially-eligible and ineligible behavior';¹⁸² in contrast to, say, Levin's reading, the concept of the norm is here shifted from the metaphysical to the cultural plane. Barbara Lanati ('Una Ligeia, cento Ligeie', 1978) similarly sees the conflict between Wilson and the double as symbolising the antagonism between desire and the cultural law.¹⁸³

From the above survey of the criticism on 'Wilson', the question emerges whether the double is best read as a benevolent or a persecutory figure. A further critical question raised by the text is that of the status of the fictional events, in terms of Todorov's categories of "étrange" and "merveilleux". Here, in practice, critics have tended to assume that the double is hallucinatory - G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973), for instance, suggests it may be a 'construct of the mind'¹⁸⁴ - or else ignore the problem. It is, however, worth examining and resolving, since it bears on the mental condition of Wilson as both protagonist and narrator, and therefore affects the reader's stance towards the double and its role.

In the first paragraph, Wilson at once exposes himself as an unreliable narrator. His discourse is that of megalomania, as is evidenced by the hyperbole of his self-reference: his 'unparalleled infamy', he claims, is notorious even in the 'uttermost regions of the globe' (M II, 426). The reader is thus already alerted to distrust Wilson's version of events, to read his perceptions as distorted and exaggerated; a large part of his alleged career of 'unpardonable crime', of Roman emperor-like excesses surpassing 'the enormities of an Elah-Gabalus' (ibid.), may in fact be imaginary. Wilson also displays a tendency to splitting, even before any reference to the double, in his address to himself (self as other): 'Oh, outcast of all outcasts most abandoned! - to the earth art thou not forever dead?' (ibid.). Further, in the second paragraph he admits that he may be living in a private universe of delusion: 'Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am I not now dying a victim to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions?' (427). Wilson's mind is, then, invaded by 'dream' and 'visions', with internal

fantasy dominant over external perception (later, he refers to 'my disordered imagination' - 439). It therefore follows that, as protagonist, he may be liable to hallucinations; and that, as narrator, he may, at least at times, be presenting as 'recollections' (427) what are in fact false memories, or paramnesias.

It is, therefore, legitimate to read the double as purely imaginary - at least in its later manifestations. It may be claimed that the double is "real" in its first appearances, at Dr Bransby's academy, where the circumstances that Wilson and his schoolmate have the same name and birth-date (432), and are physically 'singularly alike' (434), though forming a remarkable series of coincidences, remain within the bounds of the possible. The double's subsequent reappearances, starting with its intrusion at Eton (438-39), are, however, best read as hallucinations of the protagonist and/or paramnesias of the narrator. In the Eton episode, Wilson's perceptions are marked as unreliable by his confessed drunken state (he is 'madly flushed with ... intoxication' - 438); the apparent confirmation of the double's reality provided by the 'voice of a servant' admitting the visitor (*ibid.*) may be a narratorial paramnesia. When the double intervenes to denounce Wilson's gambling tricks at Oxford (440-44), it leaves what seems a concrete trace, in the form of a cloak, which doubles Wilson's own cloak; the first is 'picked up upon the floor', while Wilson perceives the second 'already hanging on my own arm' (444). However, it may be suggested either that the cloak on Wilson's arm - which no-one sees except himself - is hallucinatory, and that the intruder is "real", but misperceived by Wilson as being the same person as his schoolmate from Bransby's; or, alternatively, that the whole episode is a paramnesia, a distorted

recollection of a scene in which Wilson in reality confessed to his own practice of trickery. The rest of the double's 'spectral' appearances (445) may be similarly explained. In the final episode, at Rome (446-48), Wilson's perceptions are more unreliable than ever, since he has become an irreclaimable alcoholic ('of late days, I had given myself up entirely to wine' - 446), and, on the occasion in question, 'had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table' (ibid.); the intervention of the double, and the subsequent "murder", may be a total hallucination, facilitated by the 'maddening influence' (ibid.) of alcohol. On this reading, the imaginary murder marks Wilson's definitive passage into psychosis, his crossing-over as protagonist into the world of private fantasy, of imaginary crimes and atrocities, which the first paragraphs have shown him to inhabit as narrator.

The textual evidence, then, tends to support the "étrange" reading, and the contention that the double is, in its later appearances, a projection of elements in Wilson's own mind; its symbolic signification remains to be determined. In the double's various interventions, what springs to the eye is, above all, its sadistic, punitive character; it not only warns and advises, but torments and persecutes. The schoolboy at Bransby's (on to whom, it may be argued, Wilson is already projecting certain tendencies in himself) is characterised by 'impertinent and dogged interference with my purposes', 'actuated ... by a ... desire to thwart, astonish or mortify myself' (432). The double-figure thus exercises the functions not only of 'supervision' (436) and 'advice' (435), but of domination and punishment - its characteristics are essentially authoritarian, and Wilson correspondingly reacts to it with a mixture of 'esteem', 'fear' and 'animosity'

(433). Later, the hallucinatory double is perceived as a persecutor: 'My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation' (444); 'From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken' (445). Wilson sees the double as 'my tormentor' (445, 446), his 'authority' as 'imperiously assumed' (445), his 'will' as 'arbitrary' (446). The peremptory, sadistic character of the double suggests strongly that it should be identified with the superego; its 'apparent omnipresence and omnipotence' (446), and the ambivalence ('awe' (ibid.) and 'hatred' (433)) of Wilson's reactions, point to its intimate relation with the authoritarian principle, the internalised father. The double's function is to inhibit or condemn any action of Wilson's which transgresses the prohibitions of the patriarchal law ('his moral sense ... was far keener than my own' - 435); thus, it intervenes in Wilson's 'debaucheries' (drinking, gambling and other unspecified 'seductions') at Eton (438), card-sharpening at Oxford (443), 'ambition' at Rome, 'revenge' at Paris, 'passionate love' at Naples, 'avarice' in Egypt (445), and, finally, his attempt to seduce Di Broglio's wife, again at Rome (446). It is true that many of Wilson's activities involve 'mischief' (445), the exploitation of others (cheating, seduction); but in some cases, his only crime is a Byronic pursuit of pleasure and sensation through the gratification of the senses. The law that he transgresses is not a democratic but an authoritarian law; the 'Draconian Laws' (429), not only of Bransby's academy, but of puritanical culture, proscribe all and any expression of desire. In this context, the double-figure demands to be read, not as the incarnation of - as Rovner would have it - a timeless, abstract 'moral truth',¹⁸⁵ but as the bearer of a historically specific cultural law; the second Wilson's 'moral sense' (435) is not a metaphysical essence, but the product of determinate social structures. As with its equivalents in

Hoffmann and Dostoyevsky (its warning function parallels that of the painter in The Devil's Elixirs,¹⁸⁶ its cruelty that of the second Golyadkin in The Double),¹⁸⁷ the double in 'William Wilson' symbolises the determining instance of the superego. The question remains to be considered as to how Wilson becomes alienated from his own superego, how the split in his subjectivity develops. It must be stressed that Wilson belongs to a group of Poe's protagonists (which also includes the Byronic-sensualist figure of Prospero in 'The Masque of the Red Death')¹⁸⁸ who can be described as relatively un-repressed, in the sense that they more or less visibly seek both sexual gratification, and pleasure in general; these figures contrast with the likes of Usher, Egaeus (in 'Berenice') or the narrators of 'Ligeia' and 'Morella', who are alienated from their own bodies and desires.¹⁸⁹ In Wilson's case, this relative absence of repression may be explained by his "liberal" upbringing: 'Weak-minded, ... my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me ... I was left to the guidance of my own will' (427). However, as Freud stresses, a non-authoritarian upbringing does not guarantee the absence of a harsh superego;¹⁹⁰ and in any case, Wilson is subject to the influences of patriarchal culture at Bransby's academy, where the principal, 'ferule in hand' (429), amply fills the role which the biological father had failed to fit. Indeed, it may be that the relatively unchecked insurgence of desire in the young Wilson provokes, in reaction, a reinforcement of his superego, to the point where the latter assumes an unusually harsh and primitive character, and eventually becomes split off from his ego, confronting it as an autonomous power. This process of dissociation begins at the academy, where an accident in the external world (the 'similarity' (434) between Wilson and his schoolmate) facilitates the projection

of the superego on to the other. The double is, at first, a physical person, Wilson's perceptions of whom are distorted by a high degree of projection (hence, quite arguably, he comes to exaggerate the degree of resemblance, as in the scene when he examines his sleeping school-mate and believes he sees his own 'lineaments' (437)); the tendency to projection later becomes pathological, from the moment (at Eton) when the superego takes on total autonomy as a hallucinatory other. The rest of the tale dramatises Wilson's gradual drifting towards psychosis; in the imaginary murder, he "kills" the superego, and in this sense frees himself from its domination - but at the price of a total withdrawal from culture, into a private universe of megalomaniac delusions and extravagant paramnesias. In the dying words of the double, "In me didst thou exist - and in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself." (448). Freed from the superego, Wilson is now able to give full rein to his desires in the realm of fantasy - at the cost of social suicide and exile. As a madman, he is now an 'outcast' (426), 'dead to the World, to Heaven and to Hope!' (448). The dissociation of ego from superego leads, in the end, to the total disintegration of the subject; as Lanati suggests, 'Wilson' is a narrative of 'progressiva pazzia' ('progressive madness').¹⁹¹ In a repressive culture, if desire does manage to emerge, it is likely to do so in largely destructive and anti-social forms, and at the cost of an unremitting internal struggle with the agency of law, to be resolved either in renewed repression, or in madness or death; in Lanati's words, in 'Wilson' 'il desiderio consuma se stesso nell'auto-distruzione' ('desire consumes itself in self-destruction').¹⁹²

The elements of doubling and disintegration in this tale tend towards a violent subversion of the illusion of the autonomous subject. At

the end, Wilson is confronted by another who speaks to him as himself: 'I could have fancied that I myself was speaking' (448). Just before the final revelation of the double, the mirror-motif appears, in a mocking, deceptive attempt at reconstitution of the coherent subject: 'A large mirror, - so at first it seemed to me in my confusion - now stood where none had been perceptible before' (447-48). However, the possible reassurance offered by the supposed mirror is shattered, as the subject confronts, not its "unitary" self, but self become other: 'as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image advanced to meet me' (448). The double gives external form to the Other within; in 'William Wilson' it is not, as in the cases of Hoffmann's Viktor or Victor Race's second self,¹⁹³ the repressed discourse of desire that emerges in the double, but, rather, the discourse of the patriarchal law. The internal agency of that law is, however, as Freud shows, intimately related to the repressed;¹⁹⁴ in patriarchal culture, the Other within may take the form of the superego as well as that of the id, and this destructive insistence of the superego will recur elsewhere in Poe's work, especially in the "urban murder tales", to be discussed below.¹⁹⁵

vi. 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether': Self as Other

'The System of Doctor and Professor Fether' (1845), superficially a comic tale, in fact offers a detailed account of madness and systems of treatment. If in 'William Wilson' the subject drifts into psychosis as it becomes progressively more alienated from its socially acceptable self, in 'Tarr and Fether' subjects already living in a psychotic universe are made to signify themselves as other.

The plot of 'Tarr and Fether' revolves around a French mental hospital, where the traditional confinement system has been abandoned in favour of the 'soothing system' (M III, 1005), under which chains were abolished. The narrator, who is travelling in southern France, pays a visit to the asylum, which he believes to be run by one Maillard. Unknown to him, however, Maillard has in fact gone mad himself, and become a patient; but he has recently masterminded a successful patients' revolt. The patients are now in charge, with the former keepers consigned to the cellars. Maillard invites the visitor to dinner with him and the inmates-turned-keepers; but the narrator fails to discover the real situation, until, during the evening, the keepers at last emerge from their prison, and enter the dining-room to restore "normality".

The 'soothing system' actually existed; under it, in the narrator's words, 'all punishments were avoided - ... even confinement was seldom resorted to - ... the patients, while secretly watched, were left much apparent liberty, and ... most of them were permitted to roam about the house and grounds, in the ordinary apparel of persons in right mind' (1004). This apparently liberal system was an innovation in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century psychiatric practice, and requires contextualisation. Michel Foucault has shown, in Histoire de la Folie (Madness and Civilization) (1961),¹⁹⁶ how chains were first taken off the mental patients in the wake of the French Revolution, under the systems of Samuel Tuke at York (Description of the Retreat, an Institution near York for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends, 1813) and Philippe Pinel at Bicêtre,

Paris (Traité complet du régime sanitaire des aliénés, 1836).¹⁹⁷
Both Tuke and Pinel introduced their innovations in 1792.¹⁹⁸ At
Tuke's Retreat, the 'moral treatment' included work, and occasional
'social occasions', such as tea-parties, at which patients were able
to meet "normal" visitors.¹⁹⁹ Chains and confinement were abolished
for most patients; but the fear of punishment, of a return to chains,
replaced the chains themselves as a disciplinary agency.²⁰⁰ In spite
of his/her apparent freedom of movement, the patient 'was observed,
and knew he (sic) was observed'.²⁰¹ In Pinel's system at Bicêtre,
confinement was similarly abandoned as the norm;²⁰² but the patient
was, typically, alienated from her/himself by being encouraged to
recognise and condemn madness in the other patients, as a preliminary
to doing the same for him/herself. Foucault writes of the first
phase (condemnation of the other): 'Madness is made to observe itself,
but in others: it appears in them as a baseless pretense';²⁰³ and
of the second (self-condemnation): 'Awareness was now linked to
the shame of being identical to that other, of being compromised in
him (sic), and of already despising oneself before being able to
recognize or to know oneself.'²⁰⁴ In both systems, the patient was
led to devalue him/herself, whether from the fear of confinement or
the condemnation of one's own delusions in those of the other.
Imprisonment in chains was replaced by imprisonment in guilt; the
patient 'must know that he (sic) is watched, judged, and condemned'.²⁰⁵

The reforms of Tuke and Pinel were later adopted by various asylums
in the U.S., including those at Frankford, Pa. (run by Dr Pliny Earle
(1809-92)),²⁰⁶ and South Boston, Mass. and Hartford, Conn. (both
visited by Charles Dickens, as described in American Notes (1842)).²⁰⁷
Earle rejected confinement in favour of manual labour;²⁰⁸ and
Dickens, giving a favourable account of the regime at South Boston

(work, exercise and confinement), defended 'moral influence' as being far preferable to 'strait-waistcoats, fetters, and handcuffs'.²⁰⁹

It is in this context, then, that Poe's tale should be read. Superficially, at least, the 'soothing system' or 'moral treatment' appears to have dire results; the patients, led by Maillard, the ex-superintendent turned inmate, take advantage of their relative liberty to rebel against the keepers, whom they imprison in underground cells until the latter violently break out and restore the old regime. "Soothing" is thus replaced by confinement, with the roles of keepers and patients reversed, until, finally, "soothing" is once again restored, but 'with important modifications' (1021). The text thus confronts two antagonistic "systems": the 'soothing system' and the confinement regime, the latter being presented in extreme form by Maillard as a 'new system', the brainchild of the imaginary Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether (1017). The 'soothing system' seems, at least superficially, to generate a cycle of violence - first patients against keepers, then keepers against patients - and thus to be potentially more dangerous than confinement. The tale has been read in these terms by, for instance, William Whipple ('Poe's Two-edged Satiric Tale', 1954), as a satire on the 'moral treatment', and therefore an instance of 'Poe's essential conservatism in facing issues which were not literary'.²¹⁰

Other satiric or symbolic interpretations have, however, been proposed for the text. Whipple further suggests that Dickens, with his naïve enthusiasm for the new liberal system, is satirised in the person of Poe's ingenuous, gullible narrator.²¹¹ Harold Beaver, in his 'Commentary' to The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe (1976), sees the tale

as a (highly conservative) allegory of slavery, warning that abolitionism (symbolised by the 'soothing system') would lead to uncontrolled violence by blacks (patients) against whites (keepers);²¹² the Southern fear of racial violence would thus underlie 'Tarr and Fether' as, on Beaver's reading, it also marks Pym.²¹³ David Galloway ('Notes' to The Other Poe: Comedies and Satires (1983))²¹⁴ similarly sees the text as a conservative social satire, attacking the alleged excesses of the French Revolution.²¹⁵ Richard Wilbur ('The House of Poe', 1959) reads the keepers and inmates as symbolising the 'rational' and 'irrational' parts of the mind respectively; the tale thus becomes an allegory of a psychic conflict finally - and reassuringly - resolved in favour of 'reason'.²¹⁶ The comments of Barbara Lanati ('Una Ligeia, cento Ligeie', 1978), in contrast, stress the disturbing elements in the tale's treatment of madness - the fact that 'i medici coperti di piume e catrame si comportano ... da matti' ('the tar- and feather-covered physicians behave ... like lunatics'),²¹⁷ and the worrying statistic that 'tra i malati di disturbi nervosi, la percentuale piū alta riguarda le donne' ('among sufferers from nervous disorders, the majority are women').²¹⁸

The readings of Beaver and Galloway suggest that the keeper/patient, sane/insane antithesis in the text can be read as metonymic of power in general, running parallel to such other antitheses as white/black, masters/slaves, rulers/ruled. Beaver's "Southern" reading certainly has textual support, in the tale's location in the 'extreme Southern Provinces' (deep South) of France (1002), in Maillard's remarks about customs 'here in the South' (1016), and in the tar-and-feather treatment itself; while Galloway ingeniously suggests a parallel between the patient Eugénie Salsafette's exhibitionism (1014) and Napoleon's

sister Pauline's nude posing for the sculptor Canova²¹⁹ (in which case the text would be attacking the alleged erotic licence unleashed by 1789). The question of power-relations will be considered below, in the context of the tale's overall structure; for the present, attention will be focussed on the textual construction of madness.

'Tarr and Fether' is a text that, from the beginning, openly proposes the lifting of a cultural taboo; madness is not to be swept under the carpet, but to be visibly signified and discussed. The existence of a taboo on madness is indicated through the reaction of the narrator's travelling companion to the idea of visiting the asylum: 'To this he objected - pleading ... a very usual horror at the sight of a lunatic.' (1002-1003). 'Tarr and Fether' thus places itself alongside Poe's other, more evidently "serious" tales which challenge that 'very usual horror' in order to signify the psychotic universe of delusion and hallucination - 'William Wilson', 'Ligeia', 'Usher', 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. Indeed, the beginning of this tale exhibits clear textual parallels with the opening of 'Usher'. Both tales begin in the 'autumn' ('Tarr and Fether', 1002; 'Usher', M II, 397), and the asylum, isolated in its domain overgrown by a 'dank and gloomy wood', is a 'fantastic château, much dilapidated', whose appearance induces a frisson in the narrator: 'Its aspect inspired me with absolute dread' (1003). The reader is here reminded of the approach to the House of Usher, and of how the isolated, decayed mansion produces 'a sinking of the heart' in the narrator (M II, 397).²²⁰ Both 'Usher' and 'Tarr and Fether' place psychic disintegration in an environment characterised by isolation and physical decay; the same may be said of 'Ligeia', where the hallucinations of the second part take place in a 'gloomy', isolated abbey located in a 'remote and unsocial region'

(M II, 320). If in 'Usher' and 'Ligeia' physical isolation contributes to the development of psychosis, in 'Tarr and Fether' a problematic "cure" is attempted in an isolated space.

The question of madness is ambivalently focussed in the title. On the one hand, here as in 'The Cask of Amontillado' the title signifies an object which will prove to be non-existent in the tale; the 'system' exists, as a respectable form of treatment, along with the two supposed physicians, Doctor (or Professor) Tarr and Professor Fether (1017), only in the deluded brain of Maillard, and, later, in the gullible brain of the narrator, who searches 'every library in Europe for the works of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether', but admits: 'I have ... utterly failed in my endeavors at procuring an edition' (1022). The title thus refers to an imaginary psychiatric 'system' contained in the imaginary works of two imaginary academics. To this extent, psychosis, in the form of Maillard's delusive beliefs, appears as absence or unreason. On the other hand, even if Tarr and Fether do not exist and their 'system' is wholly Maillard's invention, it nonetheless has highly concrete results, in the incarceration of the keepers; further, the association of delusion with the idea of 'system' suggests indirectly that delusion itself can be organised, can follow its own specific logic (if what seems a system is a delusion, perhaps a delusion can also be systematic).

The various delusions presented in the tale will now be examined, from the viewpoint, first of their content, then of their structural characteristics. All the patients, Maillard included, may be seen as living in a psychotic private universe, suffering from delusions of identity and/or splitting and multiplication. To take Maillard

first, the text states: 'This gentleman had, indeed, some two or three years before, been the superintendent of the establishment; but grew crazy himself, and so became a patient.' (1021) His illness may be diagnosed as a form of megalomania accompanied by disturbance of identity; he believes he has 'invented a better system of government than any ever heard of before - of lunatic government' (1018). At the same time, the credit for this alleged feat of psychiatric genius is to a large extent displaced in the delusion from Maillard himself on to two imaginary, split-off selves, the 'learned Doctor Tarr' and the 'celebrated Professor Fether' (1017). Maillard thus not only gives full rein in his fantasy to his megalomaniac desire for power ('government') and fame, but splits himself off from that desire, which is then itself split, perceived as belonging to two imaginary others. The extent to which Maillard has disintegrated, in his own perception, into three selves is evident from a passage in his dialogue with the narrator:

"And the new system is one of your invention?"

"Not altogether. Some portions of it are referable to Professor Tarr, of whom you have, necessarily, heard; and, again, there are modifications in my plan which I am happy to acknowledge as belonging of right to the celebrated Fether, with whom, if I mistake not, you have the honor of an intimate acquaintance." (1017)

Tarr and Fether can be seen as together representing an ideal, socially valuable and successful ('celebrated') self which Maillard longs to become and yet can only conceive as other; in this sense they may be read as parallel figures to the double in 'William Wilson', although here the subject's desire runs towards, not away from the acceptable self.

The delusions of the remaining inmates are narrated at the dinner which the narrator attends. There are twenty-seven patients-turned-

keepers present (1015), of whom twelve speak and eleven describe (and in some cases try to act out) their delusions or aberrations. It may be noted that, although all are prone to anti-social acts, none is uncontrollably violent; as Maillard specifies, "'with the raging maniac we have nothing to do. He is usually removed to the public hospitals.'" (1006). In most cases, it is a question of disturbed identity; there are patients who believe themselves to be, respectively, a tea-pot, a donkey, a Cordova cheese, a bottle of champagne, a frog, a pinch of snuff, a pumpkin, a teetotum and a chicken-cock (1009-14). In these instances, the subject converts itself into either an animal or an inanimate object, thus effecting an act of self-exile from the human community. Two patients diverge from this pattern: Bouffon Le Grand, who 'fancied himself possessed of two heads', one of which is Cicero's, the other a 'composite' of Demosthenes' and Lord Brougham's (1012-13); and Eugénie Salsafette, who has no delusion of identity, but who suffers from an exhibitionist tendency to undress in public, and is only just prevented from 'putting herself upon a par with the Medicean Venus' (1014). Le Grand's delusion is a form of psychic splitting; he splits himself into two selves, one of which is itself further split into two. The triple subjectivity that thus emerges parallels the case of Maillard, split into "Maillard", "Tarr" and "Fether". Similar splitting tendencies mark the delusions of the unnamed patient who thinks he is a cheese, and Jules Desoulières, who believes himself a pumpkin. The first 'went about, with a knife in his hand, soliciting his friends to try a small slice from the middle of his leg' (1011); the second 'persecuted the cook to make him up into pies' (1012). Here as in 'The Man that was Used Up', physical dismemberment suggests the castration fear²²¹ - and, further, the disintegration of the subject

into multiple, fragmentary selves (symbolised by the slices of cheese or pumpkin). Eugénie Salsafette is another split subject, with her double personality; when first introduced to the narrator, she appears 'subdued', acts with 'graceful courtesy' and excites his 'respect', thus giving an impression of respectability and decorum (1004) - but her exhibitionist tendency transforms her into her own opposite. Having described herself as a 'painfully modest young lady' (1014), she goes on to initiate an action which is both anti-social and unrepressed.

A little may be deduced from the text as to the origins of the patients' illnesses. Eighteen of the twenty-seven are women (1015); this fact, seen as disturbing by Lanati,²²² might suggest a link between madness and the social control and repression of sexuality, more intensive in the case of women. Of the twelve patients who speak, however, one, Ma'mselle Laplace, is given no specific delusion (1010), and of the eleven delusions or aberrations, only two are attributed to women. The text, then, permits all the nine male patients, plus Maillard, to give voice to their delusions - yet only three out of the eighteen women are allowed to speak at all. Even the discourse of female madness is thus relatively silenced - the narrator affirms that 'the ladies, as usual, talked a great deal' (1009), yet refuses to transmit their discourse on equal terms with the men's. At all events, there are certain elements in the text which hint at a sexual/familial origin for psychosis. Le Grand 'grew deranged through love' (1012), and his self-multiplication may be read as a symbolic protection against the fear of disintegration and castration induced by affective rejection. Eugénie is (if Maillard is to be believed), his niece (1005), and first appears 'attired in deep mourning' (1004)

(for her father?); it is possible that a complex "family romance" may underlie both her and her uncle's illnesses. There is, besides, a clear element of sexual symbolism in several of the delusions. Apart from the castration symbolism already noted for the cheese and pumpkin delusions, the tea-pot, the champagne bottle with its 'frothing' (1011), and the 'chicken-cock' (1013) are not innocent of sexual connotations. Further, the women in particular are signified as diverging from the dominant behavioural norms. The narrator comments on how the older women 'wore their bosoms and arms shamefully bare' (1008); Madame Joyeuse, the lady who believes she is a rooster, is ordered by Maillard to 'conduct (herself) as a lady should do' (1014); and Eugénie's actions invert her own claim to be 'modest' (ibid.). It appears that madness permits a more open emergence of female desire than would otherwise be possible; by becoming a chicken-cock, and noisily crowing, Madame Joyeuse symbolically asserts her claim to the phallic (i.e. active) power monopolised by men, and then has to be put in her place by Maillard (she thus becomes a comic counterpart to the 'more than womanly' (M II, 317), sexually active and culturally dangerous Ligeia).²²³

It may be concluded that the hidden insistence of desire underlies most of the delusions and anti-social acts of the patients; the origins of their illnesses may lie, variously, in sexual repression, frustration or guilt. Frustration has avowedly marked Le Grand, and his delusion may be seen as a reaction against that frustration; the repression of bodily language is undone, symbolically in Madame Joyeuse's delusion and literally in Eugénie's exhibitionism; while a guilt-induced castration anxiety may explain the dismemberment fantasies of Desoulières and the "cheese man". Desire, blocked by a

repressive culture, returns to overwhelm the subject in psychosis.

Certain structural characteristics of the delusions will now be examined. It should be noted, first, that madness is here presented as being characterised by repetition; the patients talk almost exclusively about their own symptoms, which in most cases they then act out (or try to do so) - and, once given the opportunity by the keepers' invasion, act them out again: 'And then, again, the frog-man croaked away as if the salvation of his soul depended upon every note that he uttered. ... As for ... Madame Joyeuse, ...(all) she did ... was to stand up in a corner by the fire-place, and sing out incessantly, at the top of her voice, "Cock-a-doodle-de-doooooh!"' (1021). The symptom thus 'incessantly' repeats itself; the inmates of the asylum, like the old man in 'The Man of the Crowd', are dominated by the compulsion to repeat,²²⁴ and are thus alienated from themselves, unable (in the end) to control their actions.

The text of 'Tarr and Fether' indicates, besides, that madness implies an alienation from the wider linguistic community. Thus, the patients tend to use language to signify what are generally regarded as impossibilities - for instance, the notion of a human 'pumpkin pie à la Desoulières' (1012). Maillard, trying to persuade the narrator that Desoulières is "normal", claims he is speaking figuratively: "'our friend here is a wit - a drôle - you must not understand him to the letter'" (1012). Desoulières, however, does appear to believe in his delusion 'to the letter'; and the phrase recurs tellingly later during the dinner, when Maillard calls out to the inmates: "'Hold your tongue, every one of you!'" (1015). One of the female patients

'obeyed Monsieur Maillard to the letter, and thrusting out her tongue, which was an excessively long one, held it very resignedly, with both hands, until the end of the entertainment' (ibid.). The text here implies that psychosis can involve a failure to distinguish between the literal and the figurative sense of words, a reading of metaphors 'to the letter', and thus an alienation from the generally accepted conventions of language.

If, however, the language of madness is essentially private, this does not make it non-existent, 'Tarr and Fether' demonstrates that madness has a discourse - far from being a state of unbeing or animality, it has its own logic and coherence. Foucault specifies:

The man who imagines he is made of glass is not mad, for any sleeper can have this image in a dream; but he is mad if, believing he is made of glass, he thereby concludes that he is fragile, that he is in danger of breaking ... such reasonings are those of a madman; but again we must note that in themselves they are neither absurd nor illogical. On the contrary, they apply correctly the most rigorous figures of logic ... (At) the secret heart of madness, ²²⁵ we discover, finally, the hidden perfection of a language.

Madness can, then, reveal what Foucault calls 'a rigorous organization dependent on the faultless armature of a discourse'.²²⁶ In 'Tarr and Fether', the logic of delusion can be seen at work in the case of Maillard - if the system of Tarr and Fether exists, then it is logical that it should be tried out. The same applies to the "tea-pot man", who says of himself: ' "Our gentleman was a Britannia-ware tea-pot, and was careful to polish himself every morning with buckskin and whiting.'" (1009) (I am a teapot, therefore I should be polished). Similarly, in the "cheese man" and Desoulières cases, if I am a cheese or a pumpkin, it follows that I should be cut up and eaten. If the premises are accepted, the deductions follow logically. The

logic of madness in this tale is paralleled elsewhere in the Poe canon, in, say, the paranoiac delusions of Roderick Usher, which, as will be shown below, are rigorously structured.²²⁷

But even if, in Maillard's words, 'a madman is not necessarily a fool' (1019), the patients in 'Tarr and Fether' remain trapped in a private discourse that alienates them from themselves. This state of alienation is strikingly demonstrated in the dinner conversations (or monologues), in which the patients universally refer to themselves in the third person - as in the case of the "frog man": "'And then there was an ignoramus," said he, "who mistook himself for a frog"' (1012).

Maillard, similarly, when referring to himself as inmate rather than director, employs the third person: "'it all came to pass by means of a stupid fellow - a lunatic"' (1018). Madness is thus to convert "I" into "he" or "she", to see and signify oneself as other. It is true that the patients' mode of self-reference is in part dictated by Maillard's strategy for fooling the narrator (who fails to recognise them as patients); however, the same effect of hoaxing could have been produced if each inmate had been asked to describe the delusions of another, rather than his/her own. To signify self as other adds a quite different psychological dimension; the subject thus demonstrates its estrangement from itself.

Besides, not only do the inmates refer to themselves in the third person, but they tend to do so in disparaging, self-condemning terms. Thus, Maillard sees himself as a 'stupid fellow' (1018); Monsieur De Kock describes himself as a 'troublesome patient' and a donkey 'allegorically speaking' (1010); and the "frog man" calls himself an 'ignoramus' (1012). Alternatively, they sometimes signify themselves in

exaggeratedly flattering terms, which may either be tongue-in-cheek, or else represent the manic opposite pole to depressive self-denigration; for instance, the "frog man" also refers to his own 'genius' (1012), Jules Desoulières uses the same term, in its concrete sense, to describe himself (*ibid.*), and Madame Joyeuse praises her own 'common sense' and 'mature deliberation' (1013). On the other hand, the inmates universally speak disparagingly of their fellows: the "champagne man" dismisses the "cheese man" as a 'great fool' (1011); Madame Joyeuse calls Monsieur Boullard a 'very silly madman', saying of his delusion: "'who, allow me to ask you, ever heard of a human teetotum? The thing is absurd.'" (1013); and Eugénie sees Madame Joyeuse as a 'fool' (1014). The patients, then, alternate between positive and negative evaluations of themselves, while systematically devaluing their fellow-sufferers.

This pattern of evaluation may be illuminated by reference to Pinel's version of "moral treatment", as described by Foucault. As explained above,²²⁸ the patients were encouraged: 1) to see through the delusions of their fellows, and to despise them as mad; 2) later, to recognise the parallel between the others' delusions and their own, and thus to despise themselves too. The treatment exploited the logic of madness to confront the patient with his/her irrationality and moral inferiority. Foucault cites an instance of Pinel's technique in action:

Three insane persons, each of whom believed himself to be a king, and each of whom took the title Louis XVI, quarreled one day over the prerogatives of royalty, and defended them somewhat too energetically. The keeper approached one of them, and drawing him aside, asked: 'Why do you argue with these men who are evidently mad? Doesn't everyone know that you should be recognised as Louis XVI?' Flattered by this homage, the madman immediately withdrew, glancing at the others with disdainful hauteur.²²⁹

This is the first phase, in which the patient is persuaded to look down on the others as 'evidently mad', and, conversely, to elevate him/herself in 'hauteur'. In the second phase, however, the patient's euphoria is punctured as her/his delusion is subjected to rational demystification. Thus, of another inmate of Bicêtre who believed himself a king, Foucault writes:

One day ..., the keeper approached him and asked why, if he were a sovereign, he did not put an end to his detention, and why he remained mingled with madmen of all kinds. Resuming this speech the following days, 'he made him see, little by little, the absurdity of his pretensions ... At first the maniac felt shaken, soon he cast doubts upon his title of sovereign, and finally he came to realize his chimerical vagaries ...'²³⁰

In 'Tarr and Fether', the patients' reactions to self and other may be read as exhibiting a mixture of the characteristics of both phases (in Foucault's terms, 'the phase of exaltation'²³¹ and 'the phase of abasement').²³² Madame Joyeuse, devaluing Boullard and elevating herself, is in the phase of exaltation; Monsieur De Kock, who denigrates himself, is in the phase of abasement; while the "frog man", self-styled as both 'ignoramus' and 'genius' (1012), seems to alternate between the two. In De Kock's case, a similar method of persuasion has been used to that cited by Foucault for the "sovereign" of his second example: "'For a long time he would eat nothing but thistles; but of this idea we soon cured him by insisting upon his eating nothing else.'" (1010). The logical potential of delusion is thus here too, exploited in order to depress the patient. However, the technique fails to effect a meaningful cure; De Kock is 'cured' of thistle-eating, but not of the basic "donkey" delusion, and the patients in general remain in the grip of their symptoms. It may

be concluded that the inmates of Maillard's asylum typically exhibit a double alienation from themselves, perceiving self as other both grammatically (the third person) and qualitatively (as morally and intellectually inferior - the madman as fool).

In general terms, the structural model of madness presented in 'Tarr and Fether' may be summarised as follows: the mad person's behaviour is characterised by compulsive repetition, alienation from linguistic norms, logically organised delusions, perception of self as other and alternate self-aggrandisement and self-degradation. If the disintegrative tendencies in the patients' minds originate (as the sexual symbolism of their delusions suggests) in the repressive influences of their culture, their alienation from themselves is only reinforced by a treatment which inculcates notions of inferiority and otherness. In the asylum, the lifting of repression can only be bought at the price of guilt, as when Madame Joyeuse 'hung down her head' at Maillard's reproof (1014).

At the same time, Poe's tale is also noteworthy for its tendency to undermine the rigid antithesis between "sane" and "insane". The narrator himself takes for granted the distinction between 'lunatics' (1008) and 'persons in right mind' (1004); but fails to recognise the inmates as such, in spite of his professed 'long acquaintance with the metaphysics of mania' (ibid.). Indeed, the existence of a discourse in madness is objectively proven by the success of the cunning trick which Maillard practises on him. The visitor fails to realise that the "keepers" are actually patients in revolt, even with the evidence under his nose - as when the third-person deception breaks down and Maillard addresses Madame Joyeuse under her own name (1014), but the penny fails to drop. The success of the hoax proves that a

mad person can devise an elaborate, structured plan, and show greater intelligence than a "normal" person; the narrator only gathers the truth after the keepers' invasion. Besides, he himself becomes impregnated by Maillard's delusion, taking the works of Tarr and Fether to be actual publications, and religiously searching for them in 'every library in Europe' (1022). The dividing-line between madness and "normality" is thus called in question, since a "normal" person is shown as capable of repeating a "madman's" delusion. The narrator of 'Tarr and Fether' is, in his obtuseness, a parallel figure to those of 'The Man that was Used Up' and the detective stories; furthermore, in his refusal to recognise the thinness of the divide that separates him from "abnormality", he resembles his counterparts in 'The Man of the Crowd'²³³ and 'Usher' - especially the latter, whose consciousness is modified by the 'influences' of Usher's delusions (M II, 411) as the asylum guest's is by Maillard's.²³⁴

The mad/sane antithesis is also subverted by the tale's narrative structure, with its complex sequence of role reversals. Maillard is a director turned inmate turned pseudo-director, and presumably ends up as an inmate once more; the other inmates become pseudo-keepers, then inmates again; the keepers become pseudo-inmates, then resume their place. The keepers, it may be noted, take on not only the position but the characteristics of mental patients. They interrupt the dinner with 'a series of loud screams, or yells' (1014), and finally invade the dining-room with animal violence: 'leaping through these windows, and down among us pêle-mêle, fighting, stamping, scratching, and howling, there rushed a perfect army of what I took to be Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, or big black baboons of the Cape of Good Hope' (1021). The keepers are thus reduced to the same animal status as

that assumed by the patients, with their "cock" or "donkey" delusions. Lanati, as cited above,²³⁵ argues that their behaviour, at this point, is that of lunatics; it may, indeed, be suggested that they are here actually more violent, more barbaric than the patients ever are.

This reversal of roles undermines Wilbur's simplistic claim that the keepers represent the 'rational part' of the mind;²³⁶ rather, the forces of authority here exhibit their latent continuity with the patients, and the episode demonstrates that the potential for "animal" violence exists in the "normal" as well as in the "abnormal".

The marked element of role reversal in 'Tarr and Fether' has the effect of denaturalising the antithetical power-relation between "mad" and "sane", which comes to appear as something culturally produced, modifiable and reversible. Given Beaver's reading, the same would apply to the antithesis between masters and slaves; if the inmates symbolise blacks, they exhibit the "white" quality of intelligence, while the keepers (whites) reveal the "black" attribute of violence. The structure of Poe's tale, in fact, strikingly anticipates that of a text which deals directly with the master/slave relation, Melville's 'Benito Cereno' (1856).²³⁷ In Melville's tale, set on a Spanish slave-ship, the slaves have rebelled and are, in reality, in control; they deceive the U.S. visitor, Delano, by playing the role of docile slaves and forcing the captive whites to play the role of masters. 'Benito Cereno' thus, like 'Tarr and Fether', contains the elements of role reversal and role-playing; the slaves are illegitimate "masters" pretending to be legitimate slaves, while the inmates are illegitimate "masters" pretending to be legitimate "masters". There is a close structural parallel, in particular, between the careers of Poe's Maillard, keeper turned patient turned "keeper", and Melville's Atufal,

a former African king turned slave turned rebel leader;²³⁸ both are instances of the dominator turned dominated turned dominator. In Melville's text as in Poe's, "order" is finally restored as the revolt is violently crushed; but the role reversals have served to denaturalise the power-relations imposed by culture.

It may finally be asked to what extent the text of 'Tarr and Fether' in fact invalidates the "soothing system" - how far, that is, Poe's ideological project imposes itself on the materiality of the text. Whipple's analysis, cited above,²³⁹ views the tale as a satire on the "moral treatment" and those, like Dickens, who believed in it. The "soothing system" is, certainly, presented as leading to violence; however, the confinement system, in the extreme form imposed by Maillard, is presented as the brainchild of a madman, and as equally conducive to violence. Indeed, Maillard plans his rebellion specifically because he has re-invented the confinement system (1018), and wants to 'give his invention a trial' (ibid.); the insurrection may, therefore, be blamed as convincingly on one system as on the other. As for the general effect of the two systems on those subjected to them, if confinement reduces the keeper-inmates to animal status, the "moral treatment", as shown above, replaces chains with self-denigration, and permits a self-expression which only condemns the patients to endless repetition of the symptoms. It may be concluded that - whatever Poe's conscious intentions - the text is in practice neither a reactionary defence of confinement nor a naïvely "liberal" vindication of "soothing"; rather, it calls both systems in question, by undermining the rigid antithesis between "mad" and "sane", on which both depend.

In 'Tarr and Fether', madness is signified as being, above all, a state of alienation from self (which may take the form of splitting or multiplication, or of perception of self as other); and as having its own logic and discourse, and therefore being potentially accessible to analysis. These dimensions of madness, as well as the questioning of the "normal/abnormal" line, are fundamental to the understanding of Poe's more "serious" representations of delusion, above all in 'Usher'. The themes of alienation and splitting will be taken up in more detail in the analyses of 'The Man of the Crowd' and the "urban murder tales" which form the subject-matter of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

ALIENATION AND SELF - DESTRUCTION.

1. 'THE MAN OF THE CROWD': "NORMAL" AND "ABNORMAL"

i. The Context: The City, the Crowd and the 'Flâneur'

In the previous chapter, it has been shown how in Poe's writing subjectivity is continually under threat, liable to dissolution, fragmentation and splitting, and how the "I" confronts itself, or split-off parts of itself, as other. The four tales to be discussed in this chapter - first 'The Man of the Crowd', and then the group of 'urban murder tales', 'The Imp of the Perverse', 'The Black Cat' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart' - place this disintegrative tendency in clearer focus; the divisions in the subject emerge as produced or exacerbated by the alienating pressures of early capitalism and the contradictions of patriarchal culture. These tales are linked by their shared metropolitan location and by the common theme of criminality; along with the three Dupin stories, they form the nucleus of the "modern", urban pole of Poe's fiction.

It has been pointed out above that the year 1840 marks a watershed in Poe's literary production, with a shift in emphasis from "Gothic", archaic settings to contemporary locations; and it has been suggested that the altered character of Poe's writing in the 1840s should be viewed in the context of the quantum leap taken by both the British and the U.S. industrial revolutions in that decade.¹ Poe's first characteristically "urban" tale, 'The Man of the Crowd', is especially important for its detailed signification of the alienating experience of modern city life; at the same time, it is notable for its interrogation of the dividing-line between "normal" and "abnormal", "respectable" and "criminal", and its exposure of the fundamentally alienated character of what passes for "normality". The narrator, who gives

little information about himself but clearly regards himself as "normal", is convalescing after a long illness. He sits at a café window in London, observing the crowd, which he describes in detail, breaking it down into classes and occupations. Suddenly, his attention is arrested by a face in the crowd - that of an enigmatic old man, whom he decides to follow, anxious to penetrate the mystery of his expression. He pursues the old man across London for twenty-four hours, repeating all his circuitous movements, until finally he gives up the quest, without making contact, concluding: "This old man ... is the type and the genius of deep crime.... He is the man of the crowd." (M II, 515).

Before the text is analysed in detail, attention will be focussed on the wider literary context (the signification of "modernity" and the city in early nineteenth-century writing); and certain theoretical perspectives on this will be established, drawn from historical materialism (the theories of nineteenth-century modernity proposed by Walter Benjamin and Marshall Berman) and psychoanalysis (the compulsion to repeat).

'The Man of the Crowd' is set in London, then the largest city in the Western world, and the capital of the first and most powerful industrial nation. The London crowd had already entered literature, as a metonym for the new urban/industrial society, in the works of William Blake and William Wordsworth. Blake's 'London' (Songs of Experience, 1794)² presents the city as a space of alienation, and the crowd as an agglomeration of standardised and oppressed subjects:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,

And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.³

From Blake's openly political perspective, the experience of alienation in the crowd is seen as the joint product of oppressive institutions (church, state and marriage) and people's acceptance of those institutions (the 'mind-forg'd manacles').⁴ Wordsworth, lacking Blake's political analysis, saw London in The Prelude (Book VII) (1805)⁵ as a space in which bearings are lost and ideologies confused:

- And first the look and aspect of the place,
The broad highway appearance, as it strikes
On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
Of colours, lights and forms; the Babel din;
The endless stream of men, and moving things ...⁶

The city here induces a sensation of speed ('quick dance') and loss of limits ('endless stream'); the crowd is perceived as a sum of isolated subjects, 'strangers' to each other. Wordsworth's text goes on to present the crowd and its strangers as a source of enigmas:

... one feeling was there which belonged
To this great city, by exclusive right;
How often, in the overflowing streets,
Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, 'The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!'
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
And all the ballast of familiar life,
The present, and the past; hope, fear; all stays,
All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man
Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.⁷

The mysteries of the street are not penetrated; rather, the spectacle distorts the onlooker's perceptions, the crowd becomes a phantasmagoria ('a second-sight procession'), and the subject's ideological certainties ('stays' and 'laws') dissolve. The 'feeling' which belongs to the city 'by exclusive right', the urban experience in its historical

novelty, is here one of disorientation and menace. As Raymond Williams stresses in The Country and the City (1973),⁸ the perceptions here are qualitatively new - 'a new way of seeing men (sic) in what is experienced as a new kind of society ... strangeness, a loss of connection ... a failure of identity in the crowd of others which worked back to a loss of identity in the self, and then, in these ways, a loss of society itself'.⁹ Williams' analysis stresses that the disorienting experience of the crowd is not merely a detached perception of the alienation of others; the sense of alienation also characterises the observing subject, and an objective bond is thus formed between the "I" and the crowd of which it is part.

Similar perceptions of the city are present in some of the early works of Dickens. As will be shown below,¹⁰ 'The Man of the Crowd' draws directly on several of the descriptions of London in Sketches by Boz (1836); it may be noted here that in one sketch, 'The Streets - Morning',¹¹ the crowd is seen as a space of isolation, in which movements and gestures become standardised:

Middle-aged men ... plod steadily along, apparently with no object in view but the counting-house: knowing by sight almost everybody they meet or overtake, for they have seen them every morning (Sundays excepted) during the last twenty years, but speaking to no one. If they do happen to overtake a personal acquaintance, they just exchange a hurried salutation, and keep walking on ...¹²

The theme of the crowd recurs in The Old Curiosity Shop (1841), in the episode where Nell and her grandfather pass through a Midlands city:

The throng of people hurried by, in two opposite streams, with no symptom of cessation or exhaustion; intent upon their own affairs; and undisturbed in their business speculations, by ... all the noise and tumult of a crowded street in the high tide of its occupation: while the two poor strangers, stunned and

bewildered by the hurry they beheld but had no part in, looked mournfully on; feeling, amidst the crowd, a solitude which has no parallel but in the thirst of the shipwrecked mariner ...

They ... watched the faces of those who passed, to find in one among them a ray of encouragement or hope. Some frowned, some smiled, some muttered to themselves, some made slight gestures, as if anticipating the conversation in which they would shortly be engaged, some wore the cunning look of bargaining and plotting, some were anxious and eager, some slow and dull; in some countenances, were written gain; in others, loss. It was like being in the confidence of all these people to stand quietly there, looking into their faces as they flitted past. In busy places, where each man has an object of his own, and feels assured that every other man has his, his character and purpose are written broadly in his face.¹³

The crowd is here seen, on the one hand as a space of perceptual confusion that leaves the observer 'stunned and bewildered'; but on the other, as a challenge to the intellect, throwing up a series of enigmas that demand resolution - a text to be deciphered. The city is perceived as simultaneously massifying and alienating, producing the paradoxical situation of separation which, in Barnaby Rudge (1841),¹⁴ Dickens called 'the solitude in crowds';¹⁵ at the same time, the project of reading the crowd, of decoding the message 'written' in the face of the other, is an attempt to overcome that separation (without direct communication) by assimilating other to self.

A similar ambivalence towards the crowd is present in Dostoyevsky's writing on St Petersburg (which, as Marshall Berman shows in All That Is Solid Melts Into Air (1982),¹⁶ was an island of capitalist "modernity" in Czarist Russia). Notes from the Underground (1864)¹⁷ will be considered below; also important in this respect is 'The Landlady', a tale of 1847.¹⁸ Here, the student Ordinov is forced to leave his lodgings in search of fresh accommodation, after a long seclusion; he is overwhelmed by the plethora of conflicting sensations offered by the Petersburg crowd:

Certain new and strange feelings gradually began to steal over him ... with great curiosity he set himself to take note of his surroundings. The crowds, the din and life of the streets, the bustle and movement around him, the many unfamiliar sights which he beheld ... evoked in Ordinov's breast ... a sensation of calm, bright cheerfulness, ... 19

So this afternoon he walked the streets like a stranger - like an ascetic who has left his dumb solitude for the din and bustle of a town. Everything seemed to him novel and unfamiliar. Yet so unused was he to this world which boiled and seethed around him that he had no room even for astonishment at his own sensations....20

With increasing delight he pursued his way through the streets; looking at everything in a critical way, and, faithful to his mental habit, reading the pictures which unrolled themselves before him in the same manner that a person reads between the lines of a book. Everything made an impression upon him, and not a single impression escaped him as, with thoughtful gaze, he scanned the faces of the passers-by ... Everything here seemed to move faster.... His heart beat with a gush of involuntary love and sympathy as eagerly he set himself to consider the passers-by. Yet suddenly he perceived that some of them looked anxious and absorbed! ... He felt himself growing weary of the flood of new impressions which had come upon him ... blinded by the glitter and sparkle and turmoil of life, stunned by the roar of human activity, and confused by the sounds emitted by the ever-changing, ever-seething crowd around him.... A thought which particularly troubled him was the circumstance that always he had been alone in the world, without love or the prospect of love. For example, some few passers-by whom, early in his walk, he had tried to engage in conversation had turned from him with an air of brusquerie and estrangement (which, indeed, they had some reason to do); and instantly he had remembered that confidences of his had always been repelled in this way, and that throughout his boyhood persons had invariably avoided him ... he made up his mind that always, and for ever, he would find himself avoided ...21

Dostoyevsky's text emphasises the novelty of the experience of the crowd ('new and strange feelings', 'unfamiliar sights', 'flood of new impressions'); for Ordinov, the novelty derives from his history of seclusion, but on a more general level the text is indicating the qualitatively new character of urban life in the nineteenth century. As in The Old Curiosity Shop, the crowd becomes a text, to be read 'in the same manner that a person reads ... a book'; but what the observer reads there is the confirmation of his own alienation - an estranged subject, 'alone in the world', watches the estrangement of

others, 'anxious and absorbed', and fails in his attempts to make contact. Nonetheless, there is something exhilarating about the spectacle, with its 'bustle and movement' and unprecedented speed ('everything here seemed to move faster'); the crowd induces 'delight' as well as disorientation.

The fascination of the crowd is given classic expression in Baudelaire's work, in the 'Tableaux parisiens' section of Les Fleurs du Mal (collected 1857, 1861, 1868),²² the prose-poems of Le Spleen de Paris (collected 1869),²³ and the essay 'Le Peintre de la Vie moderne (1863).²⁴

Typically, an isolated speaker or narrator confronts the spectacle of the Paris crowd, and identifies with the imagined subjectivity of the strangers that it throws up. The crowd produces real or possible relationships, or at least brings the opportunity of observing other lives. Thus in the poem 'A une Passante' (1860),²⁵ the crowd suddenly forces a woman into the speaker's view, with a violent shock - and as suddenly removes her from his sight:

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une forme passa ...
Un éclair! ... puis la nuit! - Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?²⁶

As Benjamin suggests in Charles Baudelaire (1935-39), this is 'love - not at first sight, but at last sight'; desire presents itself in the form of a shock or flash ('un éclair'), 'a love which only a city dweller experiences'.²⁷ In the crowd, objects and others become fugitive and unattainable. In the narrative prose-poem 'Mademoiselle Bistouri' (1869)²⁸ - an important text which will be discussed later, in relation to 'Usher',²⁹ - the streets are seen as a source of chance contacts, of enigmas to be deciphered; the narrator, accosted by an

unknown woman 'à l'extrémité du faubourg, sous les éclairs du gaz', declares: 'J'aime passionément le mystère, parce que j'ai toujours l'espoir de le débrouiller. Je me laissai donc entraîner par cette compagne, ou plutôt par cette énigme inespérée.'³⁰ Here, as in The Prelude, the other in the crowd becomes a 'mystery', an obscure text that demands to be interpreted.

Another prose-poem, 'Les Foules' (1861),³¹ affirms the pleasure of the crowd; the speaker presents himself as an isolated observer in the streets who is yet able to overcome his isolation, at least in imagination, through an identification with the others in the crowd, which permits a multiplication of self:

Le poète jouit de cet incomparable privilège, qu'il peut à sa guise être lui-même et autrui. Comme ces âmes errantes qui cherchent un corps, il entre, quand il veut, dans le personnage de chacun ...

Il adopte comme siennes toutes les professions, toutes les joies et toutes les misères que la circonstance lui présente.³²

Dickens' paradox of 'the solitude in crowds' is thus reformulated; the crowd comes to stimulate an imaginary expansion of the self, so that 'crowd' and 'solitude' become interchangeable: 'Multitude, solitude: termes égaux et convertibles pour le poète actif et fécond.'³³

What is in question here is the key mid-nineteenth-century figure of the flâneur - the urban stroller who wanders through the streets, or sits on a café terrace, typically alone or with one companion, observing and speculating on the crowd. The figure is described by Gérard de Nerval, in his account of Paris by night in 'Les Nuits d'Octobre' (1852):³⁴ 'l'ami dont j'ai fait la rencontre est un de ces ... produits assez communs de notre civilisation et de la capitale.... Pas un cercle entourant quelque chanteur ou quelque marchand de cirage,

pas une rixe, pas une bataille de chiens, où il n'arrête sa contemplation distraite.³⁵ The capital provides its leisured inhabitants with an endless flow of scenes for 'contemplation'. Street-observation, or flânerie, is present in Poe's work - in 'The Man of the Crowd', as will be shown below in detail, and also in the nocturnal excursions of Dupin and his companion in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue': 'Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, ... roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking, amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford.' (M II, 533).³⁶ The dimension of 'contemplation' (Nerval) or 'observation' (Poe) is crucial; the flâneur's overcoming of his isolation is only partial, since he typically stops short of any construction of concrete relationships, or any but the most superficial communication, with those he observes. Benjamin comments: 'The flâneur only seems to break through (the) "unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest"³⁷ by filling the hollow space created in him by such isolation, with the borrowed - and fictitious - isolations of strangers.'³⁸ The subject in imagination "becomes" another with whom he has no objective contact; thus, in the prose-poem 'Les Fenêtres' (1863),³⁹ Baudelaire could write: 'Avec son visage, avec son vêtement, avec son geste, avec presque rien, j'ai refait l'histoire de cette femme, ou plutôt sa légende ... Et je me couche, fier d'avoir vécu et souffert dans d'autres que moi-même.'⁴⁰ Similarly, in Balzac's 'Facino Cane' (1836),⁴¹ the narrator refers to his flânerie in the faubourg as follows: 'Chez moi l'observation était déjà devenue intuitive, elle pénétrait l'âme sans négliger le corps ... elle me donnait la faculté de vivre la vie de l'individu sur laquelle elle s'exerçait, en me permettant de me substituer à lui'.⁴² The flâneur is an alienated

subject who can overcome his alienation only in part, by an act of identification which is not a concrete relationship.

Baudelaire's most celebrated account of the flâneur is in Le Peintre de la Vie moderne (1863), where the fascination of modernity is signified in terms of speed and transience ('La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif').⁴³ The painter Constantin Guys is presented as 'le parfait flâneur':

Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini.... Ainsi l'amoureux de la vie universelle entre dans la foule comme dans un immense réservoir d'électricité.... C'est un moi insatiable du non-moi, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive.⁴⁴

The pleasure ('jouissance') of the crowd lies in the rapidity with which its impressions succeed each other; the key adjective, here as in 'À une Passante', is 'fugitif'. The crowd is seen as a source of energy ('un immense réservoir d'électricité') that transmits a charge of euphoria to the observer. However, the flâneur remains trapped in the solitude of observation and aesthetic identification. The crowd may produce art, but not - at least in this text - solidarity; it emerges, at all events, as a privileged space for the interrogation of the relation between self and other, 'moi' and 'non-moi'. Baudelaire's discussion of flânerie in this text also includes reference to 'The Man of the Crowd', with emphasis on the element of pleasure; this reading will be considered below.⁴⁵

The nineteenth-century metropolis, then, as signified by Wordsworth, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Baudelaire and others, is a space that is disorienting yet fascinating; the crowd both epitomises the disintegration

of human relations, and seductively promises novel sensations. The literature of Marxism has attempted to place this experience of crowd and city within a theoretical framework. As noted above,⁴⁶ it was in the 1840s - the decade of 'The Man of the Crowd', The Old Curiosity Shop, 'The Landlady' - that Marx evolved the concept of alienation, as a generalised estrangement of the subject from self and other, in the context of capitalism's specific estrangement of producer from product and labour-process.⁴⁷ It was in the same decade that Engels published The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845), which includes a description of the London crowd that may be read as an account of alienation in action:

And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads of which each one has a separate principle and a separate purpose, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.⁴⁸

For Engels, the central paradox of the crowd is that it symbolises both the objectively collective character of human activity and the ideological triumph of competitive individualism. The critique of individualism as the dominant ideology of Victorian Britain - 'the unfeeling isolation of each in his (sic) private interest', 'the dissolution of mankind (sic) into monads' - converges with Marx's notion of alienation as a state of estrangement between people.

Engels' picture of isolation and non-communication is confirmed by the representations of the crowd in Dickens ('The Streets - Morning', The

Old Curiosity Shop); and, as will be seen, in Poe.

Benjamin quotes the passage from Engels in Charles Baudelaire (1935-39), as a record of the objective situation of estrangement against which flânerie was a protest;⁴⁹ he also compares Engels' version of the crowd with Poe's in 'The Man of the Crowd', finding in both an emphasis on its 'menacing' dimension.⁵⁰ For Benjamin, the experience of nineteenth-century modernity, as registered in Baudelaire's works, was coloured by the alterations in the structures of perception consequent on the development of productive forces and the pace of technological innovation. Shock and speed increasingly characterised the new, urban mode of perception. The invention of the lucifer match in the mid-nineteenth century and the rise of photography are instances of this process.⁵¹ As Benjamin shows in his analysis of 'A une Passante', that poem is organised around a central shock ('un éclair');⁵² the importance of the shock factor in nineteenth-century perceptions may be corroborated by the extracts above from The Old Curiosity Shop, with its 'bewildered' observers, and 'The Landlady', where Ordinov is 'stunned' by the 'ever-changing ... crowd'.⁵³ Perception comes to be organised in the form of repeated shocks which bewilder the unprotected subject. The speed of material development also has its literary effects, as in the account of the crowd in 'The Man of the Crowd'; Benjamin places the speed and haste of Poe's pedestrians in the context of what Marx, in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852)⁵⁴ called 'the feverish and youthful movement of ... material production',⁵⁵ in the mid-century U.S.⁵⁶ The structuring of collective perception in the form of rapid shocks was, according to Benjamin, crucial to the development of Baudelaire's work: 'The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the

more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli ... Baudelaire placed the shock experience at the very centre of his artistic work'.⁵⁷ Baudelaire's modernist project was thus to 'parry the shocks',⁵⁸ with the aim of constructing shock-proof forms of consciousness - through, for instance, the building of ideological systems (the theory of "correspondances"),⁵⁹ the myth of the autonomous artwork with its "aura",⁶⁰ or the self-image of the poet as hero.⁶¹ The flâneur's self-multiplication can also be seen as a manifestation of this project - an attempt at preserving, through extension, a shock-threatened identity. For Benjamin, then, modernity is largely a question of the shock experience and the subject's possible range of reactions to it. In his analysis of 'The Man of the Crowd', to be discussed in detail below, the movements of Poe's crowd are seen as corresponding not only to the speed of material production, but to its organisation in the form of shocks via automation.⁶²

More recently, Marshall Berman, in All That Is Solid Melts Into Air (1982), has undertaken an extension of Benjamin's work on Baudelaire into the wider field of nineteenth-century "modernity".⁶³ For Berman, modernity, as signified in the work of Baudelaire, Dostoyevsky and others, is an essentially ambivalent experience:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.... it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.⁶⁴

Modernity is thus simultaneously a challenge and a threat - it offers the possibility of new and unimagined perspectives, even as it undermines traditional values. This ambivalent dynamic may be seen at work

in those of the texts discussed earlier which, like Book VII of The Prelude or 'The Landlady', simultaneously register the fascination and novelty of the modern, and the threat posed to ideological certainties and to the subject's sense of identity. Berman's notion of the ambivalence of the modern will also prove illuminative of Poe's account of the crowd.

Some of the perspectives opened up by the comments of Engels, Benjamin and Berman will be applied to the analysis of Poe's tale. A further theoretical element requires introduction at this stage: the Freudian concept of the compulsion to repeat. In 'The Man of the Crowd', as will be shown, the movements of the crowd, and of the old man, are repetitive, and the narrator himself repeats those repetitive movements; the text thus constructs a whole cycle of repetitions, whose function requires the illumination of psychoanalysis. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), Freud expounded the notion that the instincts are characterised by a 'compulsion to repeat', or to 'restore an earlier state of things';⁶⁵ in particular, the death-drive activates the compulsion to return to (repeat) the zero tension of the inorganic state.⁶⁶ Repetition is thus seen as intimately linked with the self-destructive tendency in the subject, overriding the pleasure principle and forming the return of 'unwanted situations and painful emotions';⁶⁷ in the traumatic dreams of ex-combatants, for instance, the compulsion to repeat dictates the re-living of the trauma.⁶⁸ It may also be noted that in 'The "Uncanny"' (1919), Freud traces back the uncanny effect of certain kinds of repetition to the same psychic mechanism: 'whatever reminds us of this inner "compulsion to repeat" is perceived as uncanny'.⁶⁹ As an example, Freud cites an autobiographical incident; wandering in an Italian town, he suddenly found himself in

the red-light quarter, upon which: 'I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time ..., I suddenly found myself back in the same street ... I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another détour at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny'.⁷⁰ The uncanny effect of involuntary repetition here may, perhaps, be attributed to an unconscious self-destructive desire to commit socially unacceptable acts!

A literary instance of the compulsion to repeat occurs in Dostoyevsky's Notes from the Underground (1864), in the incident in which the Underground Man appears, self-invited, at Zvierkov's dinner. Once he is rejected by the company, his movements are characterised by a degree of repetition which can only serve to confirm the others' view of him as an anti-social person: 'I... started to pace the length of the room - from the table to the stove, and back again ... Thus, from eight o'clock to eleven, I tramped to and fro before the company, always keeping to the same beat (namely, from the table to the stove, and back again).'⁷¹ He engages in these bizarre repetitive movements, fully aware of their effect; 'More unconscionable, more gratuitous, my degradation could not have been'.⁷² Repetition is here directly linked with self-destruction; the Underground Man's to-and-fro movements are also parallel to those of the man of the crowd, which will be described later.⁷³ Lacan, as has been stated above,⁷⁴ reads 'The Purloined Letter' in terms of the compulsion to repeat; the structure can, indeed, be seen in action across the Poe canon, determining the events of, say, 'Ligeia' or 'Usher'.⁷⁵ 'The Man of the Crowd', as will be shown, is the locus par excellence for the analysis of its operations.

ii. The Tale: A Refusal to Recognise

'The Man of The Crowd' will be analysed in detail in the context of the above literary, historical and theoretical perspectives. As a preliminary, the critical literature on the tale will now be examined. Poe's tale constructs three fictional subjects - one collective (the crowd) and two individual (the narrator; the old man). Criticism has, however, tended to concentrate on only one or two of these discrete elements, rather than examining their complex interrelation.

Baudelaire commented on Poe's text twice, in 'Edgar Allan Poe, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages' (1852) and Le Peintre de la Vie moderne (1863).

In the earlier text, his reading stresses the indeterminacy attaching to the old man: 'L'Homme des foules se plonge sans cesse au sein de la foule; il nage avec délices dans l'océan humain.... A mesure que le cercle de la lumière et de la vie se rétrécit, il en cherche le centre avec inquiétude ... Est-ce un criminel qui a horreur de la solitude? Est-ce un imbécile qui ne peut pas se supporter lui-même?'⁷⁶

The enigma of the old man - criminal or madman- remains unresolved in Baudelaire's analysis; it may also be noted that the experience of the crowd is seen as ambivalent, marked by alternating pleasure ('délices') and unrest ('inquiétude') - both the euphoria of 'Les Foules' and the anxiety of 'À une Passante'. In Le Peintre de la Vie moderne, the mental state of the artist-flâneur, Guys, is described as being parallel to that of Poe's narrator; that is, the narrator is seen as typifying the flâneur: 'Derrière la vitre d'un café, un convalescent, contemplant la foule avec jouissance, se mêle par la pensée, à toutes les pensées qui s'agitent autour de lui.... il aspire avec délices tous les germes et tous les effluves de la vie ...

Finalement, il se précipite à travers cette foule à la recherche d'un inconnu dont la physionomie entrevue l'a, en un clin d'oeil, fasciné.⁷⁷ Here, the narrator's reaction to the crowd is read in terms of 'jouissance', or pleasure (the word 'délices' recurs), while the shock factor is also signified, in the reference to the sudden impact of the old man's face. The narrator is, further, seen as attempting to reinforce his identity by self-multiplication, mingling his 'thought' with the (imagined) 'thoughts' around him; as in the account of Guys in the same text, the 'moi' appropriates the 'non-moi'. The flâneur's observation and speculation may thus be a mode of self-defence against the shocks of the crowd. It may be noted that Baudelaire's two accounts of the tale focus respectively on the old man and the narrator; no sustained attempt is made to relate the two or to explain why the former fascinates the latter. Benjamin, incidentally, appears to have misread the passage in Le Peintre de la Vie moderne, since he writes in Charles Baudelaire: 'This unknown man is the flâneur. That is how Baudelaire interpreted him',⁷⁸ and again: 'Baudelaire saw fit to equate the man of the crowd ... with the flâneur.'⁷⁹ It is true that the relevant chapter of Baudelaire's text is titled 'L'Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant',⁸⁰ suggesting a parallel between Guys and the man of the crowd, but the textual reference to Poe's tale is quite clearly to the narrator. Nonetheless, Benjamin's confusion here (partly excused by the incoherence between Baudelaire's text and title) suggests the extent to which the narrator and protagonist of Poe's text are interchangeable - an impression reinforced by the lexical parallels ('délices' in both; 'se plonge' in the first, 'se précipite' in the second) between Baudelaire's accounts of both. Baudelaire's readings thus suggest, already, that in some sense the narrator 'becomes' the man of the crowd.

Another early reading of the text, that of the anonymous review of Poe's 1845 Tales in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1847),⁸¹ emphasises its non-realist dimension. The reviewer shows that the text is not a realist description of London - but makes no claim to be, and therefore should not be judged as such:

In this description it would be difficult to recognise the topography of London, or the manners of its inhabitants. That Square brilliantly illuminated and thronged with promenaders, the oldest inhabitant would scarcely find. He (i.e. Poe) closes his gin-palace at the hour when, we believe, it would be about to re-open; and ejects his multitude from the bazaar and the theatre about the same time.... This is a matter hardly worth remarking; to his American readers an ideal topography is as good as any other; we ourselves should be very little disturbed by a novel which, laying its scene in New York, should misname half the streets of that city.⁸²

Similarly, the presentation of both narrator and old man is seen as pertaining to a non-realist, symbolic mode of representation:

Still less should we raise an objection on the manifest improbability of this vigilant observer, a convalescent too, being able to keep upon his legs, running or walking, the whole of the night and of the next day, (to say nothing of the pedestrian powers of the old man.) In a picture of this kind, a moral idea is sought to be conveyed by imaginary incidents purposely exaggerated. The mind passing immediately from these incidents to the idea they convey, regards them as little more than a mode of expression of the moral truth.⁸³

The writer does not, however, suggest what the 'moral idea' is that is symbolised by the narrator's pursuit; nonetheless, his emphasis on the 'purposely exaggerated' character of the writing points forward, as will be seen, to Benjamin's reading.

A possible symbolic interpretation of the text is proposed by Marie Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933). Reading the tale in terms of Oedipal rivalry, she sees the old man as a symbolic father, whose age, poverty and wanderings are punishments for the "crime" of possessing the

mother.⁸⁴ Her reading is entirely biographical, with Poe, rather than the narrator, in the place of the "son"; indeed, the narrator's role is not considered. It may be suggested that this Oedipal reading fails to account for the intersubjective relation constituted in the text; the narrator is surely activated, not by the desire to punish the old man, but by the tendency to imitate him. It is a question of duplication of one subject by another, not substitution of father by son. In contrast to, say, 'The Tell-Tale Heart',⁸⁵ in this tale the old-man figure is not, at least on the textual level, usefully read as being primarily the Oedipal father (and, as will be shown, his alleged criminality may originate as much in the narrator as in himself).

Other critics have seen the tale as essentially ironic. Thus G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973) rather summarily dismisses it as a spoof on Romantic notions of profundity, little more than 'the deluded romanticizing of the tipsy narrator, who perversely attributes a Romantic significance to an old drunk who wanders from bistro to bistro'.⁸⁶ Certainly the significance of the old man does not necessarily lie in the dark criminal attributes that the narrator projects on to him; but to reduce the text to a simple account of alcoholism is to ignore its third element, the crowd, whose description provides the social context for a fuller explanation of the two individuals' actions (in any case, neither narrator nor old man touches a drop in the whole text; the old man enters a gin-palace, but does not consume anything). Thompson's failure to engage seriously with this text points to a major lacuna in his theory - its exclusion of the historical perspective. For J. G. Kennedy ('The Limits of Reason: Poe's Deluded Detectives', 1975),⁸⁷ the tale is an instance of failed detection; the narrator's Dupin-like pretensions are undermined by

his tendency to romantic speculation, and the old man's mysterious history may be purely the invention of his deluded pursuer.⁸⁸

Kennedy implies that the old man may even be perfectly "normal", the innocent victim of the narrator's obsessive pursuit.⁸⁹ This reading is illuminative in its emphasis on the element of projection in the narrator's perception of the old man; but to propose a simple reversal of the "normal"/"abnormal" polarity in the text is to ignore the factor of continuity between old man and narrator provided by the crowd - that crucial element which, like Thompson, Kennedy does not take into account.

In contrast to the above "ironic" readings, the tale has also been seen as a disturbing record of alienation. Ray Mazurek, in 'Art, Ambiguity, and the Artist in Poe's "The Man of the Crowd"' (1979),⁹⁰ sees the narrator as paradigmatic of the Romantic and modernist artist, alienated from his public (the crowd); his analysis also stresses the continuities between narrator and old man, and the narrator's refusal to recognise this doubling, while pointing out how both share in the characteristics of the crowd. The narrator, he concludes, 'is himself implicated as part of that which he describes'.⁹¹ Mazurek's analysis has the merit of referring both narrator and old man back to the crowd, and to the social world of 'fragmentation, class division, and human isolation' that it symbolises;⁹² a few of its insights will be adopted in the present reading. Louis Harap, in 'Poe and Dostoevsky' (1976), reads the tale as a 'parable of alienation';⁹³ the old man is seen as an 'alienated man' similar to Dostoyevsky's Underground Man, 'incapable of establishing contact with his fellow beings'.⁹⁴ Harap does not, however, consider the problematic status of the narrator, or examine the specificities of the crowd.

The one reading which does concentrate on the crowd is that of Walter Benjamin, in Charles Baudelaire (1935-39) - a reading which exists in two versions, in the second section of 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' (1938)⁹⁵ and the revised text of that section (re-written in response to Theodor Adorno's critique), 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939).⁹⁶ In both versions, Benjamin stresses the non-realist dimension of the tale, its elements of distortion and exaggeration, thus continuing the vein opened by the Blackwood's reviewer: 'In his description Poe did not aim at any direct observation. The uniformities to which the petty bourgeoisie are subjected by virtue of being part of the crowd are exaggerated';⁹⁷ 'Poe's manner of presentation cannot be called realism. It shows a purposely distorting imagination at work, one that removes the text far from what is commonly advocated as the model of social realism.'⁹⁸ For Benjamin, the distortions of the text signify not, as in the Blackwood's review, some abstract 'moral truth',⁹⁹ but, rather, certain concrete social determinants; Poe's non-realist presentation succeeds in articulating some of the underlying structures of social behaviour under early capitalism. The tale is thus seen as 'marked by certain peculiarities which, upon closer inspection, reveal aspects of social forces of such power and hidden depth that we may count them among those which alone are capable of exerting both a subtle and a profound effect on artistic production'.¹⁰⁰

As mentioned above, Benjamin compares Poe's account of atomisation and isolation in the crowd with Engels' in The Condition of the Working Class,¹⁰¹ and, further, sees the speed of Poe's pedestrians as corresponding to the 'feverish' pace of material production which Marx saw as characterising U.S. society in the period.¹⁰² The 'social forces'

that underlie 'The Man of the Crowd' are essentially those of alienation and reification; the movements and gestures of the crowd, in their repetitive, stereotyped character, are seen as a displaced expression of the rhythms of capitalist mass production (as shown above, it was in the U.S. that the assembly-line was invented).¹⁰³ Benjamin's analysis of the account of the crowd thus stresses the element of uniformity; in the first version, he writes: '(Poe's) masterly stroke in this description is that he does not show the hopeless isolation of men (sic) in their private interests through the variety of their behaviour, ... but expresses this isolation in absurd uniformities of dress or conduct.... The people in his story behave as if they could no longer express themselves through anything but a reflex action.'¹⁰⁴ Alienation is thus a question not only of people's isolation in 'private interests' (the reference here is to Engels' text),¹⁰⁵ but of the stereotyping of social behaviour. In the second version, Benjamin clarifies the relation between the capitalist mode of production and social stereotyping, by reference to Marx's Capital:

In working with machines, workers learn to coordinate their own 'movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton'. Those words shed a peculiar light on the absurd kind of uniformity with which Poe wants to saddle the crowd - uniformities of attire and behaviour, but also a uniformity of facial expression¹⁰⁶ His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to the machines and could express themselves only automatically. Their behaviour is a reaction to shocks. 'If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers.'¹⁰⁷

The shock experience, whether felt by those in the crowd or by the observer, is thus seen as ultimately deriving from the rhythms of mass production: 'The shock experience which the passer-by has in the crowd corresponds to what the worker "experiences" at his machine.'¹⁰⁸

Benjamin here enters a caveat: 'This does not entitle us to the assumption that Poe knew anything about industrial work processes.'¹⁰⁹

The point is, rather, that the organisation of industrial production exerts an influence on the structure of social behaviour, and that this relation is implicitly signified, in its results, in the literary text. Alienation, which at base is - as in assembly-line production - estrangement of the worker from control over the product, is also a syndrome of isolation, fragmentation and stereotyped behaviour which affects the whole of society, rulers as well as ruled. Benjamin's analysis of Poe's account of the crowd thus reads the text as presenting an image, superficially distorted but structurally accurate, of alienated humanity.

Benjamin's reading of the text focusses largely on the crowd, with only fragmentary reference to the old man and the narrator. In the first version, the old man is seen as a flâneur figure: 'This unknown man is the flâneur';¹¹⁰ Benjamin erroneously goes on, as seen above,¹¹¹ to invoke Baudelaire's comments in Le Peintre de la Vie moderne in support of this reading. In the second version, however, while still ascribing this reading to Baudelaire,¹¹² Benjamin dissents from it: 'It is hard to accept this view. The man of the crowd is no flâneur. In him, composure has given way to manic behaviour.'¹¹³ This revised opinion may derive from the realisation that the old man's relation to the crowd lacks the detachment that characterises the flâneur.¹¹⁴ In fact, Benjamin's second text implies that that role may be more correctly attributed to the narrator, as 'observer' - although he too is seen as potentially losing that detachment in his surrender to the crowd: 'Poe's observer succumbs to the fascination of the scene, which lures him outside into the whirl of the crowd.'¹¹⁵ Benjamin's reading is also important for the connections it makes with the detective tales. 'The Man of the Crowd' is read as 'the X-ray picture of

a detective story'; as there is no identifiable crime, 'the mere armature has remained: the pursuer, the crowd, and an unknown man'.¹¹⁶ These comments may be compared to Kennedy's reading of the tale as a detective story manqué.¹¹⁷

Benjamin's comments on the tale - though not entirely coherent in relation to the old man - are crucial to the understanding of the text as a whole, especially for the crowd and its social determinants. In the analysis which follows, the attempt will be made to extend his reading of the crowd and its movements to the old man and the narrator, who themselves are, or become, components of the crowd. The factor of repetition will not only be read in the context of mass production, but also related to Freud's notion of the compulsion to repeat. Adorno, in his critique of 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' (letter to Benjamin, 10 November 1938),¹¹⁸ accused Benjamin's overall method of being insufficiently mediated: 'Your dialectic lacks one thing; mediation.... there is a tendency to relate the pragmatic contents of Baudelaire's work directly to adjacent features in the social history of his time, preferably economic features'.¹¹⁹ Benjamin's re-writing of part of the essay, as 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire',¹²⁰ was aimed at meeting Adorno's critique; the section on Poe, however, actually amplifies the element of economic determination without suggesting further mediations. In the present analysis, it will be suggested that a possible mediation between economic structures and text may lie in the psychic structuring of the subject, in the specific form of the compulsion to repeat - a concept explicated in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, the Freudian text which Benjamin used, in his re-written text, to support his notion of consciousness as protection against shocks¹²¹ - but which he curiously neglected to invoke for 'The Man of the Crowd'.

In spite of Benjamin's major contribution, the critical literature on 'The Man of the Crowd' has tended to offer only partial perspectives on the tale. The various readings concentrate in turn on the crowd (Benjamin), the old man (Baudelaire (1852), Bonaparte, Harap), the narrator (Baudelaire (1863)), or the relation between old man and narrator (Thompson, Kennedy); only Mazurek tries to consider the complex of relations in the text as a whole, although his account of the crowd is still rather brief and impressionistic. The analysis that follows aims to remedy this gap, confronting the text as a triadic system of relations. The tale will be considered in detail, with some brief intertextual reference to the parallel urban writings cited earlier, and certain other texts (e.g. by De Quincey, Dickens, Hawthorne) which may be considered sources or analogues.

For the purposes of close analysis, the text will be divided into paragraphs; for the rest of this chapter-part, paragraph references will therefore replace the usual page references. The table that follows lists the numbered paragraphs, with their opening lines and their location in Mabbott's edition:

<u>Number</u>	<u>First Words</u>	<u>Page Numbers in Mabbott. II</u>
1	'It was well said...'	506-507
2	'Not long ago...'	507
3	'This latter is...'	507
4	'At first my observations...'	507-508
5	'By far the greater number...'	508
6	'The tribe of clerks...'	508
7	'The division...'	508-509
8	'There were many individuals...'	509
9	'The gamblers...'	509
10	'Descending in the scale...'	509-10
11	'As the night deepened...'	510-11

12	'The wild effects...'	511
13	'With my brow...'	511
14	'I had now good opportunity...'	511-12
15	'It was now fully night-fall...'	512-13
16	'In this exercise...'	513
17	'During the hour and a half...'	513
18	'A loud-toned clock...'	513-14
19	'As he proceeded...'	514-15
20	'It was now nearly day-break...'	515

The tale is located in contemporary London ('Not long ago' - 2); the "modernity" of the setting is established through explicit reference to the social universe of expanding capitalism, with its businessmen (5), its factory-girls (10), its 'advertisements' (2) and its 'bazaars' filled with commodities (16-17).¹²² It is clear from the title that the city will be the privileged - indeed, the only - physical space of the tale; private spaces are rigorously excluded, and only public localities - streets, cafés, bars, shops - referred to. The tale was written and first published (Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, December 1840)¹²³ in Philadelphia, itself the second city of the U.S. (its population in the year of writing was 220,000).¹²⁴ New York, in the same year, had a population of 312,000;¹²⁵ London, in contrast, had just over two million inhabitants in 1841.¹²⁶ The location of the tale in London, rather than in a city in the U.S., emphasises the centrality of its urban dimension; the metropolis of the world's most advanced capitalist power appears as metonym for the newly dominant economic system as a whole. The text makes specific reference to the contrast between New York and London: 'the passengers had gradually diminished to about that number which is ordinarily seen at noon in Broadway near the Park - so vast a difference is there between a London populace and that of the most frequented American city' (15). The

reference to New York serves not only to differentiate but to connect; in objective historical terms, what London and Britain were in 1840, New York and the U.S. were to become.

Poe's version of London, no doubt, partly derives from his childhood perceptions of the city from 1817 to 1820;¹²⁷ but literary antecedents exercised a greater determining force. The vastness of London is signified in various early nineteenth-century texts, British and U.S., which were known to Poe. The text contains the arresting phrase: 'the heart of the mighty London' (20), which immediately recalls Wordsworth's 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' (1807)¹²⁸ ('And all that mighty heart is lying still!');¹²⁹ further, a tale by Washington Irving, 'Buckthorne, or the Young Man of Great Expectations' (in Tales of a Traveller (1824)),¹³⁰ a collection mentioned by Poe in his 1847 Hawthorne review (H.XIII, 153-54), contains a similar reference: 'all these insignia announced that the mighty London was at hand. The hurry, and the crowd, and the bustle, and the noise, and the dust increased as we proceeded'.¹³¹ In the Wordsworth and Irving texts, 'mighty' connotes the vastness and power of the city, seen as an animate organism in its own right; the word acquires a more disturbing connotation in De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821), where the city is seen as a disorienting space whose vastness separates people from one another. The narrator describes how he lost track of the prostitute Ann:

If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other - a barrier no wider in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!¹³²

The phrase 'mighty labyrinths' emphasises the city's sinister potential

for bewilderment. In 'The Man of the Crowd', the word 'labyrinth' does not actually occur, but the old man is seen to run through 'many crooked...lanes' (18), and his movements are themselves labyrinthine, circling in on themselves. Baudelaire's translation ('L'Homme des Foules', 1855)¹³³ introduces the signifier 'labyrinthe': 'a great variety of devious ways' (18) becomes 'un labyrinthe de chemins détournés'.¹³⁴ Poe's text, as appropriated by his translator, thus anticipates the latter's prose-poem 'Le Crépuscule du Soir' (Le Spleen de Paris (1855, revised version 1864)),¹³⁵ with its reference to 'les labyrinthes pierreux d'une capitale'.¹³⁶ Poe's text may thus be inserted into a continuing literary tradition which would see the city as a labyrinth, an alienating, bewildering space which distorts and dominates the lives of its inhabitants.

On a more specific level, Poe's account of the physiognomy of London derives in some particulars - as Mabbott (1978) has noted,¹³⁷ - from Dickens' Sketches by Boz (1836), the first series of which Poe reviewed in the year of their appearance ('Watkins Tottle, and Other Sketches, Illustrative of Every-Day Life, and Every-Day People. By Boz' - H IX, 45-48). As noted above,¹³⁸ the sketch 'The Streets - Morning' contains an account of the crowd, with its 'middle-aged men ... with no object in view but the counting-house'.¹³⁹ This perspective reappears in Poe's description of the group of pedestrians with a 'business-like demeanor', who 'seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press' (5). Dickens' clerks are seen as 'speaking to no one';¹⁴⁰ one group in Poe's crowd 'talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around' (5). The connexion is evident, but Poe's writing contains an element of distortion which distances

his text from the realist area occupied by Sketches by Boz.

As Mabbott points out,¹⁴¹ another of Dickens' sketches, 'Gin-Shops',¹⁴² - which Poe thought highly enough of to reproduce in full in his review (H IX, 48) - underlies the gin-palace episode in the tale (19-20). Dickens' text points up the shock effect of the contrast between the miserable appearance of Drury Lane and the dazzling gimcrack luxury of the gin-shops:

You turn the corner. What a change! All is light and brilliancy the gay building with the fantastically ornamented parapet, the illuminated clock, the plate-glass windows surrounded by stucco rosettes, and its profusion of gas-lights in richly-gilt burners, is perfectly dazzling when contrasted with the darkness and dirt we have just left.¹⁴³

Poe's text reproduces the shock effect induced by suddenly coming upon such a 'flaunting entrance' (20), and increases the degree of abruptness: 'Suddenly a corner was turned, a blaze of light burst upon our sight, and we stood before one of the huge suburban temples of Intemperance - one of the palaces of the fiend, Gin.' (19) In both texts, perception is determined by that shock factor which Benjamin sees as increasingly dominant in the nineteenth century;¹⁴⁴ in 'The Man of the Crowd', the old man similarly enters the narrator's field of vision in the shock of an instant: 'suddenly there came into view a countenance . . . which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention' (13).

Further, 'The Man of the Crowd' contains an account of the outlying slums - 'the most noisome quarter of London, where every thing wore the worst impress of the most deplorable poverty' (19) - which derives in part from the account of the suburb of Walworth in 'The Black Veil',¹⁴⁵ - a sketch which, in his review, Poe praised as an instance

of Dickens' 'lofty powers' (H IX, 47). In the sketch, a doctor makes his way through the 'mud and mire' of the 'stragglng miserable place': 'his way lay across a marshy common, through irregular lanes, with here and there a ruinous and dismantled cottage fast falling to pieces with decay and neglect'.¹⁴⁶ Poe's narrator follows a 'narrow and gloomy lane' to the 'verge of the city', a quarter where 'tall, antique, worm-eaten, wooden tenements were seen tottering to their fall.... The paving-stones lay at random, displaced from their beds by the rankly-growing grass. Horrible filth festered in the dammed-up gutters. The whole atmosphere teemed with desolation.' (19) Poe's text reproduces from Dickens' sketch the elements of dirt, decay and desolation. There is, however, an element of distortion not present in the earlier text; the collapsing houses lean 'in directions so many and capricious that scarce the semblance of a passage was discernible between them' (19). The slums thus come to participate in the labyrinthine character of the city, perceived as alienating space.

The figure of the man of the crowd also has its Dickensian antecedent, in the sketch 'Thoughts about People'.¹⁴⁷ Here, Dickens refers to the phenomenon of emigration to the cities, and the consequent risks of isolation and loss of roots:

It is strange with how little notice, good, bad, or indifferent, a man may live and die in London. He awakes no sympathy in the breast of any single person; his existence is a matter of interest to no one save himself; he cannot be said to be forgotten when he dies, for no one remembered him when he was alive.... Old country friends have died or emigrated; former correspondents have become lost, like themselves, in the crowd and turmoil of some busy city; and they have gradually settled down into mere passive creatures of habit and endurance.¹⁴⁸

The notion of the subject 'lost ... in the crowd and turmoil' already points forward to Poe's tale; later in the sketch the narrator describes

the movements of a solitary clerk in St James' Park on a public holiday, in terms which, as Mabbott points out,¹⁴⁹ anticipate Poe's description of the old man:

He walked up and down ... not as if he were doing it for pleasure or recreation, but as if it were a matter of compulsion, just as he would walk to the office every day from the back settlements of Islington.... The man walked steadily up and down, unheeding and unheeded, his spare pale face looking as if it were incapable of bearing the expression of curiosity or interest.¹⁵⁰

In Dickens' text, the clerk's movements appear to be determined by the compulsion to repeat; he walks 'up and down', repeating the same movements 'as if it were a matter of compulsion'. Poe's old man, as will be seen, is characterised by similar automatic movements ('as usual, he walked to and fro' - 20). The movements of Dickens' clerk are also specifically related to the world of work, since they are said to repeat those of his daily walk to the office; a connexion is thus made with 'The Streets - Morning', where the clerks 'plod steadily along' to work.¹⁵¹ The germ of Poe's tale lies, it may be, in Dickens' sketch, although 'The Man of the Crowd' goes far beyond the journalistic impressions of 'Thoughts about People' in its probing of the relations between the crowd and the subjects lost in it.

'Thoughts about People' is also important for its reference to the theme of disappearance; the clerk is an example of the many who have effectively disappeared into London, and become estranged from almost all social relations outside work. In Poe's tale, both the old man and the narrator can be read as victims of that process, as alienated from their own social nature by the impersonal forces symbolised in the crowd. The metropolis, in its vastness and complexity, facilitates

disappearance, whether the unwished-for vanishing of the solitary or the criminal's calculated covering of tracks. This aspect of the city, as will be shown in relation to the Dupin stories,¹⁵² is crucial to the development of the detective story, and is specifically commented on by Poe in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' (M III, 749-50).¹⁵³ The relation between disappearance, isolation and the crowd is focussed in De Quincey's Confessions, where, as seen above, the urban labyrinth separates the narrator and Ann.¹⁵⁴ It is also crucial to Hawthorne's tale 'Wakefield' (1835),¹⁵⁵ a text which critics - e.g. David Galloway ('Introduction' to Poe, Selected Writings, 1967)¹⁵⁶ and G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973)¹⁵⁷ - have placed in connection with 'The Man of the Crowd'. In Hawthorne's narrative, the disappearance is deliberate. The tale, set in London and based on a story found 'in some old magazine or newspaper',¹⁵⁸ presents a man who actively chooses to lose himself in the metropolis. Poe described it, in his 1842 Hawthorne review, as 'a sketch of singular power' (H XI, 111); as a U.S. text which fictionalises London, 'Wakefield' may be seen as a clear antecedent of 'The Man of the Crowd'.

Wakefield is a middle-class Londoner who suddenly, without rational motivation, throws up his established social identity and role of husband, and wilfully disappears: 'The man, under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years.'¹⁵⁹ He denies his given social role without creating any alternative, and thus consents in his own alienation: 'We must hurry after him along the street, ere he lose his individuality, and melt into the great mass of London life.'¹⁶⁰ Once he has disguised himself and

effected his disappearing act, Wakefield is totally alone in the crowd: 'He was in the bustle of the city as of old; but the crowd swept by and saw him not'.¹⁶¹ Isolated from human contact and estranged from himself as social being, he becomes 'the Outcast of the Universe'.¹⁶² As in De Quincey, the city converts proximity into distance; like the narrator of the Confessions, separated from Ann by the width of a street, Wakefield is 'conscious that an almost impassable gulf divides his hired apartment from his former home. "It is but in the next street!" he sometimes says. Fool! it is in another world.'¹⁶³ The metropolis produces a state of contiguity without contact. Wakefield's situation - isolated in the crowd, estranged from human relations - is parallel to that of Poe's man of the crowd (and narrator); he can be seen as activated by a self-destructive tendency ('self-banishment') similar to that present in the repetitive movements of Poe's protagonist. Hawthorne's tale, however, concludes with Wakefield's return to his wife (although with a clear hint that she may have ceased to love him), whereas Poe's narrative suggests no possible way out for the man of the crowd; nor is 'Wakefield' a text that problematises its narrator, since the narrating voice is that of someone reconstructing an old story at a distance, without direct involvement. 'The Man of the Crowd' is a more disturbing text than Hawthorne's tale, since it questions the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" that remains intact in the narrative of Wakefield's 'freak'.¹⁶⁴

The London of 'The Man of the Crowd' is, as the foregoing comparisons have shown, above all a literary London, its characteristics deriving from texts by De Quincey, Dickens and - at a further remove from British reality - Hawthorne. This, however, does not undermine the

tale's value as a highly mediated representation of real social processes; the perceptions about early capitalism present in the British literary sources are modified by the context of the U.S. industrial revolution, and Poe's text becomes a record of the alienating pressures at work in both societies. The characteristics of the crowd in the tale will now be considered in more detail. The narrator's perceptions of the 'tides of population' (3) are, it must be stressed, marked by ambivalence. The experience of the crowd is not entirely unpleasant or alienating. Rather, it is marked by the duality which Berman sees as central to the modern.¹⁶⁵ At first, the crowd induces a sensation of pleasure; the narrator is convalescing from a long illness, and, as with the recluse Ordinov in 'The Landlady',¹⁶⁶ the experience is new to him: 'At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion.' (3) In Poe's text as in Dostoyevsky's, the conjunctural 'novelty' points to a greater novelty, the historically unprecedented character of the nineteenth-century metropolis. But the element of pleasure is later undermined by a sensation of bewilderment and disorientation; the crowd has 'a noisy and inordinate vivacity which jarred discordantly upon the ear, and gave an aching sensation to the eye' (10). Here, - as, again, in 'The Landlady' - modernity is perceived simultaneously as a novel challenge and a destructive threat.

The narrator's analytic breakdown of the crowd (4-11) may be seen as an attempt at self-defence against the threat that it poses; it also articulates the social structure that underlies the crowd. He breaks it down, not into individuals, but into groups - defined by the specific class or occupational identity deduced from their appearance,

clothes and mannerisms; the 'innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage and expression of countenance' (4) which he observes and classifies are specified as group, not as individual 'varieties'. Until just before the man of the crowd is sighted, the individual is perceived solely as part of the particular group whose defining characteristics his/her behaviour reproduces in a stereotyped form. The social group thus precedes, defines and standardises the individual; the text accumulates a series of plural (i.e. collective) subjects that together make up the larger collective subject, the crowd.

The groups into which the crowd is subdivided correspond largely to identifiable classes or sectors of classes. They are introduced in roughly the order appropriate to their ranking in the accepted class structure - or, as the text puts it, 'descending in the scale of what is called gentility' (10). Broadly, the class groupings fall into four categories:

- i) the ruling classes - 'noblemen', businessmen, professionals (5);
- ii) clerical employees (6-7);
- iii) a marginal group of indeterminate class position - adventurers, gamblers (8-9);
- iv) the proletariat - 'artizans', 'laborers', working girls - and the destitute or rejected - prostitutes, drunks (10).

This subdivision of the crowd reproduces in general terms the broad outlines of the social structure corresponding to the developing capitalist mode of production. It is noteworthy that in this respect the text negates a central element in Poe's political ideology; despite his identification with the Old World (and Southern) concept of aristocracy, as evidenced in his comments in the essay 'Philosophy

of Furniture' (1840) on the desirability of an 'aristocracy of blood' (M II, 496),¹⁶⁷ in practice the text refuses to make the conventional separation between "upper" and "middle" classes. Rather, it subsumes 'nobleman' into the same group as 'merchants' and 'stock-jobbers' (5); 'men of leisure' (possessors of hereditary wealth) are thrown in together with 'men ... conducting business upon their own responsibility' (possessors of accumulated wealth) (ibid.). The businessmen are, besides, the dominant element, whose mode of self-projection ('a satisfied business-like demeanor') is that of the majority. The text here reflects the social reality of mid-nineteenth-century Britain, where the landed class was, in practice, a fraction within the dominant capitalist power-bloc.

The crowd is firmly located within the production relations of capitalism, by various textual indications. The reference to 'stock-jobbers', i.e. speculators, points to finance capital; more important, industrial capital is identified by its complement, wage-labour. The description of working girls 'returning from long and late labor to a cheerless home' (5) implies the factory system, rather than domestic industry; the 'artizans' and 'laborers' may still be the independent craftsmen of pre-capitalist days, but their 'ragged' and 'exhausted' condition suggests they are victims of intensive exploitation.

Within the crowd, individual subjects are isolated, yet the forms their isolation takes are endlessly reproduced by other subjects. The 'dissolution of mankind into monads', the 'isolation of each in his private interest'¹⁶⁸ which Engels saw in the London crowd are clearly present in Poe's tale. The narrator's reference to the 'candid reason of Leibnitz (sic)' (2) suggests the philosophy of monads, or atomisation;

while one 'restless' group of businessmen, like the clerks in 'The Streets - Morning',¹⁶⁹ is seen as isolated within the crowd, unable to communicate: 'Others ... talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around.' (5) Poe's text here articulates the social paradox which Dickens identified, in Barnaby Rudge, as 'the solitude in crowds'.¹⁷⁰

As Benjamin shows,¹⁷¹ the crowd is marked by the stereotyping of movement as well as gesture. Its movement is double and paradoxical in character. It combines: i) a dynamic forward impetus; ii) a tendency to repetition. The dynamic, purposeful aspect of the crowd's movements is signalled in the account of the businessmen: 'By far the greater number ... seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press.... when pushed against ... they hurried on' (5). This forward movement signifies metonymically, as Benjamin suggests, what Marx called the 'feverish ... movement' of material production,¹⁷² or what Poe, in the 'Marginalia' (1846), called 'the rush of the age' (H XVI, 118).¹⁷³ The crowd as a whole is seen as moving forward with resolute speed: 'two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door' (3); 'the rapidity with which the world of light flitted before the window' (12). As shown in an earlier chapter,¹⁷⁴ there is a railroad suggestion in the verb 'flit'; the crowd can be read as symbolising a society on the move, going places.

At the same time, other aspects of the crowd's behaviour reflect the disintegrative effect of that expansive dynamic on the subject. The three groups described in most detail (businessmen, clerks and gamblers) are all seen as standardised in their movements and gestures. Besides, the text implies an interconnection in the various movements and

gestures of the three groups: the businessmen (the 'redoubled' gesticulations, the 'absent and overdone smile' (5)); the clerks: 'they always removed or settled their hats with both hands' (7); and the gamblers: 'I could always detect them (by) a more than ordinary extension of the thumb at right angles with the fingers' (9). In all three cases, the repetitive, stereotyped character of the movements is signified in the vocabulary: 'redoubled' (5), 'they always...' (7), 'I could always detect them' (9). There is the further implication of an irrational, compulsive and ultimately self-destructive tendency behind these movements, as in the 'up and down' walk of the clerk in 'Thoughts about People';¹⁷⁵ the term 'redoubled' places the businessmen under the control of the compulsion to repeat. Indeed, the feverish movement of the crowd, in all its sectors, takes on the character of a collective neurosis; the 'restless' section of the businessmen resembles the 'ghastly invalids ... who sidled and tottered through the mob' and the 'reeling' drunkards who 'clutched with quivering fingers, as they strode through the crowd, at every object which came within their reach' (10).

The crowd as a whole presents an ambivalent image of a dynamic yet alienated society. The dual character of its movements can be seen as corresponding to the contradictory logic of capitalist production - the speed corresponds to the rapid expansion of productive forces, the repetition to the oppressive and stereotyping effects of the new relations of production. The connexion made by Benjamin between the automatic movements of the crowd and the rhythms of mass production is highly apposite here;¹⁷⁶ Poe's tale may be read as symbolically bearing out Marx's concept ('Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper', 1856)¹⁷⁷ of the 'antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations of our epoch'.¹⁷⁸ The crowd, as symbol of that

antagonism, carries both the challenge and the threat of capitalist modernity.

The characteristics of the crowd having been established, the figure of the narrator will now be examined more closely. He may be variously characterised as a solitary, a flâneur, a (self-conceived) "normal" citizen, and a would-be detective. The text is placed under the sign of solitude by the epigraph, from La Bruyère:

Ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul.

'Ne pouvoir être seul' should be interpreted as referring less to someone who is unable to be alone physically, than to someone who is unable to look his own solitude in the face; in this sense, as the narrator concludes, the man of the crowd 'refuses to be alone' (20). However, the epigraph may equally well be read as referring to the narrator himself, who is objectively alone yet refuses to define himself as such. From the second paragraph, he appears as a solitary: 'I sat at the large bow window of the D- Coffee-House' (2); at no point does he refer to any social or affective relations, nor does he talk to or make contact with anyone during the narrative. Indeed, the narrator may be read sociologically as an instance of the type described by Dickens in 'Thoughts about People', who have left their native region, to become deracinated and isolated in London;¹⁷⁹ or even as a Wakefield figure, a city-dweller deliberately self-estranged from human relations.

One mode of defence against solitude in the metropolis was to become a flâneur; and the narrator, who seems to have the opportunity for the first time, surrenders to the 'novelty' (3) of the crowd, observing his surroundings with 'a calm but inquisitive interest' (2). At first,

his observations are marked by the fascinated yet detached curiosity of the classical flâneur, as in the passages from Baudelaire and Nerval quoted above:¹⁸⁰ 'I ... became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without.' (3); 'At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn.' (4); 'I was ... occupied in scrutinizing the mob' (13). The lexis of 'observation' and 'contemplation' corresponds to the accounts of flânerie found in 'Les Nuits d'Octobre', Le Peintre de la Vie moderne, or, indeed, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'.¹⁸¹ The crowd offers material to be scrutinised and analysed, and 'themes for speculation' (10); the narrator's observing and analytic activity can be seen as a means of self-protection, against both his own solitude and the interminable barrage of fresh perceptions forced on him by the crowd. As in The Old Curiosity Shop, 'Les Fenêtres' or 'The Landlady',¹⁸² the observer tries to leap the self-other divide by "reading" and interpreting the faces in the crowd: 'it seemed that ... I could frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years' (12). However, at this point in the tale, this appropriation of other by self, of 'non-moi' by 'moi',¹⁸³ takes place within the terms laid down by the observing self. The narrator-flâneur multiplies himself through absorbing the imagined subjectivities of others, but continues to perceive those others as alien to himself, without any relation of continuity or similarity. The faces in the crowd are 'they' ('I ... thought of them' - 4), innocent of any necessary link with 'I'. His relation to the crowd will, however, change on the appearance of the old man (13), which marks a point of rupture in the narrative.

The rigid self-other division which structures the narrator's perception of the crowd is reinforced by his evident conception of himself as a "normal", "respectable" citizen. Commenting on the clerks, he

says: 'Theirs was the affectation of respectability; - if indeed, there be an affectation so honorable.' (7); 'respectability' is seen as a quality almost too sacrosanct to be associated with a negative concept like 'affectation'. Similarly, he says of the pickpockets: 'I ... found it difficult to imagine how they should ever be mistaken for gentlemen by gentlemen themselves.' (8); the authenticity of the "gentleman" is seen as beyond question, something which is (or should be) impossible to counterfeit. Nonetheless, he simultaneously betrays a fascination with crime and anti-social behaviour, admitting the seductive appeal of 'infamy': 'As the night deepened, so deepened to me the interest of the scene ... as the late hour brought forth every species of infamy from its den' (11). The pickpockets, gamblers and prostitutes, whom he ostensibly condemns, correspond, it may be, to his own hidden anti-social self; it is in this context that his later reading of the old man as 'the type and the genius of deep crime' (20) should be considered.

The narrator also has certain pretensions to the role of detective, or decoder of enigmas. The detective figure in nineteenth-century fiction will be considered below, in the analysis of the Dupin stories;¹⁸⁴ it may be noted here that, as Kennedy points out,¹⁸⁵ 'The Man of the Crowd' is, on one level, a detective story manqu e, containing an enigma whose resolution is continually promised and indefinitely deferred. The first paragraph introduces the themes of enigmas, secrets and interpretation - but in the context of incommunicability; the tale opens as follows: 'It was well said of a certain German book that "er lasst sich nicht lesen" - it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told.' (1) The possibility is thus raised that the man of the crowd will prove to be a similarly unreadable text, that the narrator's project of exposing

his secret will fail. Nonetheless, the narrator establishes himself early on as a would-be detective. Benjamin articulates the connexion between flânerie and detection, expressed in the popular mid-century texts called "physiologies":¹⁸⁶ 'They assured people that everyone was, unencumbered by any factual knowledge, able to make out the profession, the character, the background, and the life-style of passers-by.'¹⁸⁷ Poe's narrator contrives to "place" his passers-by through precisely such a detective activity. He identifies the pick-pockets by specific, visible signs: 'Their voluminousness of wristband, with an air of excessive frankness, should betray them at once.' (8) Physical signs also permit him to detect the gamblers in the crowd: 'There were two other traits, moreover, by which I could always detect them' (9). The narrator thus constitutes himself as would-be infallible interpreter of signs.

There follows his attempt, discussed above,¹⁸⁸ to construct 'histories' for individual passers-by. The appearance of the man of the crowd provokes in the narrator the desire to create a similar history for this enigmatic stranger: "'How wild a history", I said to myself, "is written within that bosom!"' (13) The man is from that moment seen as an enigma - a question crying out for an answer - a coded text that demands to be decoded. The narrator immediately wants to uncover the signification of the man's facial 'expression', which has arrested him by its 'absolute idiosyncrasy': 'I endeavored ... to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed' (13).

The man's 'expression' becomes an empty space to be filled by a 'meaning' - a signifier in search of a signified. In 'Ligeia', similarly, the narrator struggles to fathom the meaning of the 'expression' of Ligeia's eyes (M II, 312-14), with only partial success; in both texts, the

failure to penetrate the expression of the other may be attributed to repressions within the observing subject.¹⁸⁹ In the 'brief minute' (13) of his first encounter with the man, the narrator accumulates a whole series of possible significations for that expression: 'There arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense - of supreme despair' (ibid.). Taken in sequence, the list of abstract nouns suggests a tale of calculated murder, something on the lines of 'The Tell-Tale Heart' or 'The Imp of the Perverse'. The narrator feels the urge to verify these speculations by closer knowledge of the man: 'Then came a craving desire ... to know more of him.' (ibid.). The desire to 'know more' shapes the relation between narrator and old man that dominates the rest of the text.

The text thus activates what Roland Barthes, in S/Z (1970), calls the "hermeneutic code": 'Décidons d'appeler code herméneutique ... l'ensemble des unités qui ont pour fonction d'articuler, de diverses manières, une question, sa réponse et les accidents variés qui peuvent ou préparer la question ou retarder la réponse; ou encore: de formuler une énigme et d'amener son déchiffrement.'¹⁹⁰ In a text dominated by the hermeneutic code (the classic example is the detective story), the narrative is organised around an enigma - its constitution and development, and its solution, repeatedly delayed, but - usually - finally offered up to the satisfied reader. Specifically, 'The Man of the Crowd' may be read as belonging to a convention of 'mysterious stranger' stories - or, at least, starting out from that convention. The formula operates as follows: an individual is introduced, whose behaviour is in some way strange or enigmatic, and whose name, precise

social situation, antecedents, etc., are unknown to the narrator and/or the other characters (and so to the reader). The enigma is deepened by the stranger's actions during the course of the narrative, and various possible identities and/or motivations may be suggested. Eventually, the stranger is named, and his actions motivated.

Examples of this convention include Balzac's story 'Un Episode sous la Terreur' (1831),¹⁹¹ where a nun is followed by an 'inconnu',¹⁹² who turns out to be the executioner of Louis XVI; Dickens' Barnaby Rudge (1841), where much of the suspense revolves around the identity of the unknown man who persecutes Mrs Rudge, and who is later revealed as her husband, the murderer of Reuben Haredale (Poe's review of the novel (1842-H XI, 38-64) stresses its construction around a 'mystery' (ibid., 50)); and Thomas Hardy's tale 'The Three Strangers' (1888),¹⁹³ where three unknown men, arriving separately at an inn, are discovered to be an escaped condemned man, the hangman, and the condemned man's brother. A further instance, known to Poe and available before 1840, is Washington Irving's sequence (1824) of interlocking tales: 'The Adventure of the Mysterious Picture'/'The Adventure of the Mysterious Stranger'/'The Story of the Young Italian',¹⁹⁴ (Poe singled out 'The Young Italian', in his 1847 Hawthorne review, as being 'especially good' (H XIII, 154)). In Irving's sequence, a British baronet, while in Venice, meets a young Italian whose behaviour characterises him as an outsider and a recluse; he is marked by a compulsive mannerism, 'a strange and recurring movement of glancing fearfully over the shoulder', and consumed by a 'devouring melancholy'.¹⁹⁵ However, the life-story of this 'mysterious personage',¹⁹⁶ is fully explained in a letter which he leaves the baronet, to be read after his death; his melancholy proves to be a symptom of remorse for a crime of passion, and the strange gesture comes from the delusion of being followed by his victim's ghost.¹⁹⁷

Here again, the mysteries are brought to book.

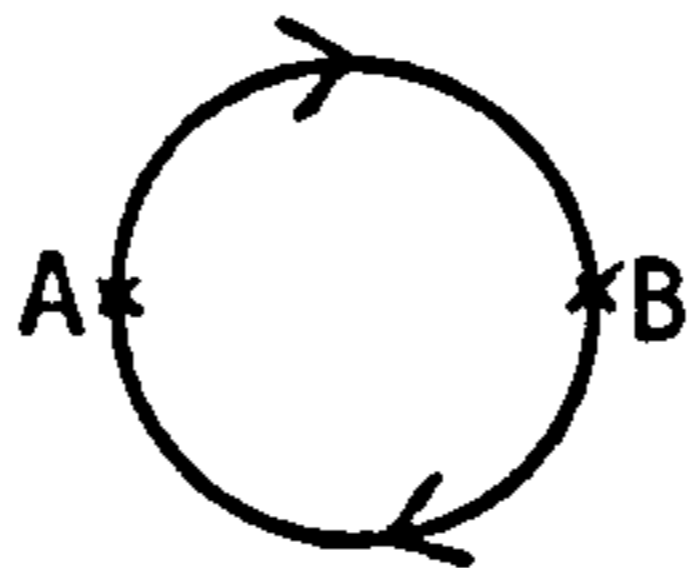
The "mysterious stranger" convention, then, places at the centre of the text a question: "Who is the stranger?", which is finally answered - as in the Balzac tale, "He is the executioner"; and poses subordinate questions, to which answers are also found - as in the Irving text: "Why is the Italian melancholy?" - "Because he has killed someone". In 'The Man of the Crowd', however, the parallel questions are refused any definitive answer. To the questions, "Who is the old man?" and "Why his enigmatic behaviour?", the narrator can only give the vaguest of answers; the onus of interpretation falls to the reader.

Once the narrator decides to follow the old man into the crowd, his own relation to the crowd changes; no longer a detached observer, he becomes a participant in its movements: 'I made my way into the street, and pushed through the crowd' (13). He now begins to flâner (stroll) in the literal sense of the word; but by surrendering to the crowd he will in practice cease to be a flâneur, as the cultivated distinction between observing self and observed others breaks down. The calm, abstracted mask of the observer falls off. From now on, the narrator becomes one term in a triadic system of relations formed by himself, the old man and the crowd. The crowd brings the old man to the narrator; it also determines the movements of the old man, which in turn determine those of the narrator as he follows him. The old man thus mediates between crowd and narrator, serving to expose the latter's complicity in the crowd and the society it symbolises.

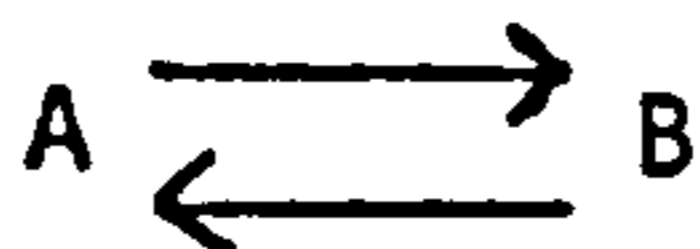
The old man will now be examined in detail. His enigmatic character is above all manifested in his bizarre movements. They oscillate between

the purposeful and the arbitrary, in a similar way to those of the crowd. At first his course resembles that of the businessmen who, moving steadily forward, 'seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press' (5): 'He urged his way steadily and perseveringly.' (15). But this forward movement soon turns into a parody of that businesslike haste, intensified to a pathological degree: 'he rushed with an activity I could not have dreamed of seeing in one so aged ...' (16); he is pictured running across London 'with incredible swiftness' (18), 'with a mad energy' (20). The distorted character of these movements, both in relation to empirical reality and to the already-described movements of the crowd, signifies their parodic function; the text takes observable social processes and exaggerates them so as to bring to the surface their latent self-destructive potential.

In spite of this onrushing energy, the greater part of the man's movements appear gratuitous rather than purposeful. They are characterised by that compulsion to repeat which Dickens noted in the clerk who 'walked up and down ... as if it were a matter of compulsion'.¹⁹⁸ They fall into two stereotyped patterns: the circular and the back-and-forth. Both are forms of repetition by which the man arrives back at his starting-point - either:



or:



The first time the circular movement occurs, the narrator is astonished by its arbitrariness: 'I was surprised, however, to find, upon his having made the circuit of the square, that he turned and retraced his steps. Still more was I astonished to see him repeat the same walk several times' (15). The pattern is repeated when towards midnight the man returns to the D- Hotel, having come round full circle (18). As for the back-and-forth movement, its repetitive character is underlined on its first occurrence: 'He crossed and re-crossed the way repeatedly without apparent aim' (15). By the end, it has become established as a thing of habit: 'as usual, he walked to and fro' (20); the man of the crowd repeats himself indefinitely.

This arbitrary and repetitive character of the bulk of his movements corresponds to, and exaggerates, the standardised, repetitive form assumed by gestures in the crowd. The man's 'repeated' crossings and circuits are paralleled by the businessmen's 'redoubled' gesticulations (5) and the clerks' automatic removal of their hats (7); and, as Mazurek notes,¹⁹⁹ his to-and-fro movements have been anticipated by the 'invalids ... who sidled and tottered through the mob' (10). The compulsion to repeat exhibited by the old man appears not as an isolated symptom of an individual pathology, but as an instance of a collective tendency visibly present outside him in the crowd.

This tendency in turn extends itself to the narrator. The man's repeated and random movements exercise a determining effect on the movements of his pursuer. He is not only drawn into the crowd, and so forced out of his safe role of detached observer; he is forced himself to reproduce the majority of the old man's movements, so as not to lose sight of him. As Kennedy notes,²⁰⁰ the text's use of

personal pronouns is striking in this respect. The narrator begins to follow the man in (13), but it is not till near the end of (15) that the text first combines the two subjects into 'we': 'A second turn brought us into a square'. From then on, the plural subject 'we', or its derivatives 'us/our', reappear at least twice in each paragraph, but always alternating with the differentiated singular subjects 'I' and 'he'. The grammar of the text thus communicates the partial condensation of man and narrator into one subject - the extent to which their experiences fuse into a joint experience that is communicable by the first person plural.

It should be noted that this partial assimilation of the two subjects in terms of movement takes place unaccompanied by any communication between them. The man is completely oblivious to his pursuer; he thus simultaneously has and has not a relation to him. At first the narrator follows with circumspection, assuming that the man will detect him unless he moves cautiously: 'I ... followed him closely, yet cautiously, so as not to attract his attention.' (13) He comes to realise, with growing astonishment, that the man is unaware of his presence: 'Never once turning his head to look back, he did not observe me.' (15); 'At no moment did he see that I watched him.... I was now utterly amazed at his behaviour.' (17). Finally he decides that neither contact nor communication is possible: 'And, as the shades of the second evening came on, I grew wearied unto death, and, stopping fully in front of the wanderer, gazed at him steadfastly in the face. He noticed me not, but resumed his solemn walk' (20). Contiguity without contact - this paradoxical situation had already been found in the crowd considered en masse. The one (accidental) occasion on which the man is subjected to direct, physical human

contact induces only a nervous revulsion: 'A shop-keeper, in putting up a shutter, jostled the old man, and at the instant I saw a strong shudder come over his frame.' (18)

The man's movements and reactions may be considered neurotic in character; the text repeatedly underlines his anxiety and nervous restlessness: 'He looked ... anxiously around him ... The stranger grew pale.... the intense agony of his countenance' (18); 'his old uneasiness and vacillation ... every mark of agitation' (19). His panic reaction to empty spaces appears psychosomatic; his anxiety is translated into physical symptoms - the 'shudder' when the shopkeeper jostles him, the pallor induced by the thinning of the crowd, and, later, breathlessness: 'I saw the old man gasp as if for breath while he threw himself amid the crowd' (18). The seeming arbitrariness and redundancy of his actions - 'without apparent aim' (15), 'without apparent object' (20) - as well as their repetitive tendency, give them the character of neurotic symptoms. The old man may be read as activating the psychic mechanism of self-destruction, through the compulsion to repeat.²⁰¹

It is equally no accident that the narrator should, in following the man, reproduce certain of his symptoms - if not the pallor and the shuddering, certainly the repetitive movements. By following the man he unconsciously demonstrates his implication in the general social condition signified by the crowd. It is probably not gratuitous that the text should present the narrator's health as being less than perfect; introduced as 'convalescent' (2), he later refers to 'the lurking of an old fever in my system' (15). The signs of physical disease constitute a conceptual link with the signs of mental dysfunctioning exhibited by

the man - and so a further link between the two subjects.

Finally, the narrator gives up his detective quest, 'ceasing to follow' (20). He comes to two conclusions about the old man: "'This old man ... is the type and the genius of deep crime.... He is the man of the crowd."' At the same time, he decides he has reached the limits of possible knowledge of him: "'It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds.'" (ibid.) These conclusions are reached without external corroboration, whether from the man himself or from any third party. The notion that the old man is an actual or potential criminal lacks substantiation, since it derives from the most fragmentary of circumstantial evidence; he frequents, among other zones of London, the slums which shelter 'the most desperate crime' (19), and the narrator thinks he may have seen 'a diamond and ... a dagger' (signs of robbery and murder?) on his person, but admits that his vision may have 'deceived' him (14). On the other hand, he is not seen to commit any criminal act across the narrative, and his alleged criminality may be a matter of projection, the product of the narrator's imagination. The narrator's perception of the old man as 'the man of the crowd' may be considered as more accurate, since it locates him as a product of the crowd, an instance of a collective social phenomenon. What the narrator cannot, or will not do, however, is recognise himself as another product of the crowd.

The enigma is, then, unresolved; the text thus interrogates the "mysterious stranger" genre, refusing the customary definitive disclosure. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the text must be read in terms of indeterminacy, or the permanent deferment of all and any "meaning" (Mazurek implies such a reading, in his view of the tale

as 'an elaborate but "unreadable" text', which exposes the 'unreliability of narrative').²⁰² Rather, a materialist reading may seek to answer the question why the mystery remains unsolved, why the narrator is unable to define the old man more specifically. The text certainly refuses - as Kennedy shows²⁰³ - to gratify the reader with the factual, empirical solution offered as "meaning" by the detective genre; it does not follow, however, that it therefore refuses "meaning" tout court.

The repeated textual link between the narrator and the old man has already been noted. Their relation may be considered one of doubling; the old man is the narrator's "other" counterpart, externalising certain tendencies in himself which he refuses to recognise. At the end of the last paragraph, the narrator has come full circle; the last sentence of the text returns to the German quotation of the first: "'The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the 'Hortulus Animae', and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that 'er lasst sich nicht lesen.'" (20) As the text closes in on itself, the narrator further displays his similarity to the man of the crowd, since the circular repetition of the quotation parallels the old man's repetitive, circular movements. It may be, indeed, that the 'worst heart of the world' which the narrator thankfully decides is unreadable is less the old man's than his own; the tale may here be connected to the 'unwritable' book of the 'Marginalia', 'My Heart Laid Bare' (H XVI, 128).²⁰⁴ What the narrator shrinks from in the old man may be the image, in the other, of his own heart laid bare. The man of the crowd externalises his own isolation, and his own unadmitted tendencies to criminal and antisocial behaviour, and to mental disintegration. His fascination with crime has been amply demonstrated, in spite of his

official rigid separation of 'respectability' (7) from 'infamy' (11);²⁰⁵ the alleged criminality of the old man may be no more than a projection of the narrator's own repressed, latent tendencies. Besides, by repeating the old man's movements he has demonstrated his own complicity with the crowd; the alienation he observes and fears in the other is his own, and it is in this sense that his final reaction is what Mazurek calls a 'failure to recognize himself'.²⁰⁶ By denying the readability of the man of the crowd, the narrator is refusing to recognise his own alienation.

The relation of doubling threatens the narrator's coherence as subject. If his activity as flâneur - the analysis of the crowd, the construction of "histories", the desire to penetrate the old man's enigma - may be considered a mode of self-defence, an attempt to protect his subjectivity against the barrage of shocks from the crowd, then this attempt at forming a shock-proof consciousness fails; to enter the crowd is to admit one's implication in it. The dividing-line between "normal" and "abnormal", "respectable" and "criminal", which underlies the conventions of both flânerie and detection, is undermined by the manifest parallels between the narrator and his double. Further, as in 'Tarr and Fether',²⁰⁷ the antithesis between "sane" and "insane" is called in question, as both narrator and old man act under the compulsion to repeat; both are trapped in repetition, just as the inmates of the asylum endlessly repeat their symptoms.²⁰⁸ It is true that the narrator, unlike the old man, is eventually able to resume some kind of rapport with his culture; he disengages himself from the old man's repeated circlings, and leaves him with his symptoms. But this return to "normality" is achieved only at the price of a blind disavowal of continuity with the old man; "normality" is exposed as

being constructed out of a massive repression.

The relation of this tale to Poe's detective stories should be considered in the light of its interrogation of "normality". As will be shown below,²⁰⁹ the Dupin trilogy is founded on a rigid distinction between the "normal/respectable" and the "abnormal/criminal"; for instance, in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' the characterisation of the working-class marginals as 'ruffians', in contrast to the "respectable" Dupin, implies the kind of polarity invoked in 'The Man of the Crowd' in the description of the pickpockets and the gamblers. It will be argued²¹⁰ that across the detective trilogy this polarity is effectively subverted, until by 'The Purloined Letter' it has broken down altogether, as Dupin and his adversary become interchangeable. 'The Man of the Crowd', written shortly before 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), anticipates the disintegrative logic of the Dupin cycle; the narrator's abandonment of his quest, from fear of discovering his own continuity with the "abnormal", amounts to a questioning of the detective genre and its assumptions, even before Poe had ever written a detective story. If, as Kennedy suggests,²¹¹ 'The Man of the Crowd' is a case of failed detection, that failure itself calls in question the genre that Poe was to inaugurate with the Dupin tales.

A few further conclusions about the tale as a whole will now be put forward. 'The Man of the Crowd' is notable for its obsessional insistence on repetition. The people in the crowd repeat the same gestures endlessly; individuals in a group repeat the gestures of the others; the old man repeats the crowd's movements, and is repeated by the narrator - who repeats himself as the tale comes full circle. Repetition is written into the letter of the text as well as its content,

appearing in signifiers like 'redoubled' (5), 'repeatedly' (15), 'resumed' (20). The present analysis has suggested that this syndrome of repetition can be analysed from two perspectives - on the one hand, the stereotyped gestures and movements of the crowd (and therefore of the narrator and old man) can be seen, following Benjamin, as forms of social behaviour corresponding to the rhythms of machine production; on the other, following Freud, they can be read as "uncanny" manifestations of the compulsion to repeat and, therefore, of the death-drive. These two perspectives are not necessarily incompatible. If, as Adorno argued,²¹² Benjamin's exposition of a formal correspondence between social behaviour (and text) and the production process is insufficiently mediated, a possible mediating factor may be located in the structures of the unconscious. The capitalist mode of production involves stereotyping at the base, on the factory floor; to perpetuate itself, it tends to demand and encourage a similar stereotyping of behaviour and attitude in daily life. This kind of regimentation, however, requires a high degree of consent; the psychic mechanism which facilitates such consent at the individual level may be identified as the compulsion to repeat, operating as a manifestation of the self-destructive, self-punishing tendency in the subject (the death-drive; and its relation to patriarchal culture, will be considered in detail in the next section).²¹³ In 'The Man of the Crowd', the compulsion to repeat tends to reinforce the alienation of the collective and individual subjects in the text, fixing their symptoms and estranging them from any possibility of critical transformation.

Both narrator and old man may be read as prisoners of their own alienation - the old man endlessly repeats the same symptoms, the narrator refuses to look himself in the face. The impossibility, within this

text, of solidarity or communication is graphically signified by the total absence of verbal dialogue - both narrator and old man are silent over the whole narrative, apart from the old man's (non-verbal?) 'half shriek of joy' (20). Both subjects can be seen as victims of an iron social and psychological determinism. This element of determinism differentiates 'The Man of the Crowd' from certain other nineteenth-century representations of urban alienation and isolation, which it otherwise resembles. In Baudelaire's 'Tableaux parisiens', the "je" tends to be a flâneur who resembles Poe's narrator in his isolation, his speculative curiosity and his following of strangers through the streets - an old man in 'Les sept Vieillards' (1859),²¹⁴ old women in 'Les petites Vieilles' (1859)²¹⁵ ('Ah! que j'en ai suivi de ces petites vieilles!'),²¹⁶ However, even though direct communication is not established, there is frequently a degree of imaginative solidarity that is conspicuous by its absence from Poe's text. The Baudelairean flâneur recognises his own continuity with the isolation and alienation of others, his own participation in a collective malaise - as in 'Les petites vieilles' ('Ruines! ma famille! ô cerveaux congénères!'),²¹⁷ or 'Le Cygne' (1860),²¹⁸ where the speaker offers solidarity 'A quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve/Jamais, jamais!'.²¹⁹ This making of connexions is precisely what Poe's narrator refuses to do.

A further dimension absent from 'The Man of the Crowd' is that of protest - and here the tale may be contrasted with two other narratives of alienation, Dostoyevsky's Notes from the Underground (1864) and Melville's 'Bartleby' (1856).²²⁰ In Dostoyevsky's text, the Underground Man's arbitrary, to-and-fro movements at Zvierkov's dinner, as quoted above,²²¹ clearly recall those of Poe's old man; besides, he resembles both the old man and the narrator in his isolation, his street-wanderings, and

his rejection of relationships (the parallel with the old man has been noted by Harap).²²² However, there is another dimension, that of revolt, present in some of the Underground Man's acts - especially in the episode where he jostles an unnamed army officer on Nevsky Prospect, in revenge for the humiliations he has suffered at the hands of power:

Suddenly, when my foe was within three paces of me, I came to a sudden decision, put on a ferocious scowl, and - and came into violent collision with his shoulder! ... I had upheld my dignity, I had not yielded to him an inch, and I had publicly placed myself on an equality with him in the eyes of society.²²³

Jostling in 'The Man of the Crowd' is part of the stereotyped behaviour of the crowd, and elicits equally stereotyped, passive reactions: 'If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers' (5). In Notes from the Underground, however, the narrator, who has frequently been jostled by the officer, now jostles him, in a gesture of democratic protest against power; as Berman suggests in his discussion of the episode,²²⁴ this 'one-man demonstration'²²⁵ is in potential a political act, a 'demand for equality in the street'²²⁶ and a moment of resistance against alienating social forces. Melville's clerk Bartleby is, like the Underground Man, virtually estranged from social relations, 'alone in the universe';²²⁷ once he begins to withdraw from his working responsibilities, having no other ties with society, he enters a process of accelerated disintegration leading to imprisonment and death. However, the refusal to work ('"I would prefer not to"')²²⁸ of this 'silent man'²²⁹ may be read - as H. Bruce Franklin ('Herman Melville: Artist of the Worker's World' (1976))²³⁰ points out - as another quasi-political protest, a 'strike' and 'mute sit-in',²³¹ directed against his repetitive and stereotyped copying work and the alienating society it symbolises. If the Underground Man and Bartleby resemble Poe's old man (and

narrator) in their estrangement from social relations and retreat into incommunicative isolation, their anomalous behaviour contains an element of chosen revolt which is strikingly absent from Poe's tale.

'The Man of the Crowd' admits neither the path of solidarity (Baudelaire) nor that of protest (Dostoyevsky, Melville), in its relentless social and psychological determinism.

At all events, 'The Man of the Crowd' is a text of crucial importance in the Poe canon, since it supplies the social dimension for the phenomena of repetition and self-destruction which operate in many of the other tales. It should be considered in close relation to the detective stories, whose underlying assumptions it calls in question; to 'Usher', where the "normal/abnormal" distinction is again undermined; and, in its insistence on psychological determinism, to the three "urban murder tales", which will be analysed in the next section.

2. THE URBAN MURDER TALES: 'HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE

i. The Concept of Perverseness

In 'The Man of the Crowd', the modern city is seen as an alienating space which produces isolated and (perhaps) criminal subjects; the link between the city, criminality and alienation is further explored in the three tales which may be grouped together under the heading of "urban murder tales" - i.e. 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843), 'The Black Cat' (1843) and 'The Imp of the Perverse' (1845) (for the sake of convenience, the titles will be abbreviated as follows: TTH, BC, IP). Where 'The Man of the Crowd' focusses on the the crowd as potential space of crime, and the Dupin stories on the detective as investigator of crime, the three murder tales privilege the criminal himself; no

detective is required, since in each case it is the criminal who gives himself up to the law.

The group exhibits a common pattern of murder and self-betrayal. The common elements include: 1) a male first-person narrator; 2) the murder, by the narrator, of a person to whom he stands in close relationship - domestic (TTH) or familial (BC, IP); 3) a "perfect" concealment of the evidence; 4) his eventual self-betrayal, whether through a verbal confession (TTH, IP) or self-destructive acts (BC); 5) his removal from the cultural order, through sentence of death (BC, IP) or madness (TTH); 6) his narration, whether "written" (BC) or "oral" (TTH, IP); 7) a visibly urban, "modern" setting.

In all three tales, destruction of the other is intimately linked to the destruction of self. Murder becomes a staging-post on the road to suicide; crime leads to punishment through the operations of a punitive sense of guilt. In each case, the narrating/murdering subject is characterised by a self-destructive tendency which precedes the murder - that is, self-destruction is signified as primary. This tendency is, further, theorised in two of the texts - BC, IP - as 'perversity' or 'perverseness' - a concept, which, while not named in TTH, can equally well be applied to that text. This concept will be examined in detail below, and it will be suggested that it can be approximated to the Freudian concept of Thanatos, or the death-drive - while that concept itself requires a certain re-problematisation in cultural, rather than purely biological, terms. The murderers of the tales will be seen as the victims of a (possibly) innate self-destructive tendency whose determining insistence is reinforced by the operations of a sadistic superego.

The shared urban context of the tales further suggests that the tendency to rupture in their fictional subjects may not be unrelated to the alienating and atomising tendencies of industrial capitalism. All three are located in what is clearly a city - in all cases unnamed, neither the London of 'The Man of the Crowd' nor the Paris of the Dupin tales, but possibly New York, Philadelphia or Baltimore. The splits and contradictions in the subjects of the "murder tales" may be seen as deriving, at least in part, from both the repressive structures of patriarchal culture and the alienating pressures of the newly dominant capitalist mode of production.

As with 'The Man of the Crowd', reference to the tales will be made by paragraph numbers rather than by page numbers; the numbering scheme will therefore now be set out.

'THE TELL - TALE HEART'.

<u>Number</u>	<u>First Words</u>	<u>Page Numbers in Mabbott, III</u>
1	'True! - nervous ...'	792
2	'It is impossible ...'	792
3	'Now this is the point ...'	792-93
4	'Upon the eighth night ...'	793
5	'I had my head in ...'	793
6	'I kept quite still ...'	794
7	'Presently I heard ...'	794
8	'When I had waited ...'	794
9	'It was open ...'	795
10	'And now - have I not told you ...'	795
11	'But even yet I refrained ...'	795-96
12	'If still you think me mad ...'	796
13	'I then took up ...'	796
14	'When I had made an end ...'	796
15	'I smiled ...'	796
16	'The officers were satisfied....'	796-97

17	'No doubt I now grew <u>very</u> pale ...'	797
18	'"Villains!" I shrieked ...'	797

'THE BLACK CAT'

<u>Number</u>	<u>First Words</u>	<u>Page Numbers in Mabbott, III</u>
1	'For the most wild ...'	849-50
2	'From my infancy ...'	850
3	'I married early ...'	850
4	'This latter ...'	850
5	'Pluto ...'	850-51
6	'Our friendship ...'	851
7	'One night, returning home ...'	851
8	'When reason returned ...'	851
9	'In the meantime ...'	851-52
10	'On the night of the day ...'	852
11	'I am above the weakness ...'	853
12	'When I first beheld ...'	853
13	'Although I thus readily ...'	853-54
14	'One night as I sat ...'	854
15	'Upon my touching him ...'	854
16	'I continued my caresses ...'	854
17	'For my own part ...'	854
18	'What added ...'	854-55
19	'With my aversion ...'	855
20	'This dread ...'	855
21	'And now was I indeed wretched ...'	855-56
22	'Beneath the pressure ...'	856
23	'One day she accompanied me ...'	856
24	'This hideous murder ...'	856-57
25	'For a purpose such as this ...'	857
26	'And in this calculation ...'	857
27	'My next step ...'	857
28	'The second and third day ...'	858
29	'Upon the fourth day ...'	858
30	'"Gentlemen," I said ...'	858
31	'But may God shield and deliver me ...'	858-59
32	'Of my own thoughts ...'	859

'THE IMP OF THE PERVERSE'

<u>Number</u>	<u>First Words</u>	<u>Page Numbers in Mabbott, III</u>
1	'In the consideration ...'	1219-20
2	'It would have been wiser ...'	1220
3	'Induction, <u>ā posteriori</u> ...'	1220-21
4	'An appeal to one's own heart ...'	1221-22
5	'We have a task ...'	1222
6	'We stand upon the brink ...'	1222-23
7	'Examine these ...'	1223
8	'I have said thus much ...'	1223-24
9	'It is impossible ...'	1224
10	'Having inherited ...'	1224-25
11	'One day, whilst sauntering ...'	1225
12	'No sooner had I spoken ...'	1225
13	'At first, I made an effort ...'	1225-26
14	'They say that I spoke ...'	1226
15	'Having related ...'	1226
16	'But why shall I say more?'	1226

The concept of 'perverseness' is introduced in BC (paragraph 9), as being 'one of the primitive impulses of the human heart', and further developed in IP, as an 'innate and primitive principle of human action' (3). In BC, its main function is to explain the hanging of the first cat, but it can be extended to cover the narrator's actions in general; in IP, it is overtly offered as a theoretical concept that explains large areas of human behaviour. The second text gives four examples of 'perverse' actions - three general (circumlocution; procrastination; the suicidal impulse), and one specific (the narrator's confession). Before Poe's texts are examined in detail, it will be useful to look more closely at the group of signifiers: 'perverse'/'perversity'/'perverseness', and some of their nineteenth-century uses (Poe's

texts employ 'perverseness' and 'perversity' interchangeably - BC contains only the first, while IP has both (3; 12), with no difference in meaning).

The O.E.D. offers the following definitions of 'perverse':

- 1) 'Turned away from the right way or from what is right or good; perverted; wicked.'
- 2) 'Not in accordance with the accepted standard or practice; incorrect; wrong.'
- 3) 'Obstinate or persistent in what is wrong; selfwilled or stubborn (in error).'
- 4) 'Untoward, froward; disposed to go counter to what is reasonable or required ...'.

It defines 'perverseness' (with 'perversity' given as a synonym) as follows: 'The quality of being perverse; the disposition or tendency to act in a manner contrary to what is right or reasonable; obstinate wrong-headedness; refractoriness; corruption, wickedness.'¹ Poe's use of the terms is not totally coherent with the O.E.D. definitions (it may be noted that no examples are given from Poe in the dictionary!). Indeed, in IP the term 'perverse' is offered as (in practice) historically new; an old signifier is made to correspond to a newly identified psychological signified - 'a paradoxical something, which we may call perverseness, for want of a more characteristic term' (3). At all events, it may be noted that the standard definitions contain the connotations of: deviation from cultural and ideological norms; irrationality (action against one's objective interests); and obstinacy (a tendency to repeat unacceptable actions). All these connotations are present some, though not all of the time, in Poe's use, but with the added, and crucial, element of self-destruction, and in the context,

not of traditional moralism, but of a discourse of psychological determinism.

Thomas Carlyle's essay on Hoffmann ('E. T. W. Hoffmann', in German Romance (1827))² contains a use of 'perversities' in the sense of irrational actions: 'Otto had no insight into the endowments or perversities of his nephew';³ further, the young Hoffmann is, interestingly enough, described as 'the little imp who had played him (Otto) so many sorry tricks'.⁴ Carlyle's use of 'perversities' is clearly psychological in emphasis, given the reference to Hoffmann's 'endowments', but it is essentially descriptive; the term serves as a convenient label for the actions of a particular individual, seen as anomalous, and there is no question of a generally constitutive principle. Poe's use of 'perverse' is anticipated more closely in the writings of Byron. In a letter to Lady Melbourne (25 November 1813),⁵ Byron refers to his incestuous desire for Augusta Leigh as 'that perverse passion';⁶ while in Lara (1814),⁷ the protagonist is seen as actuated by:

... some strange perversity of thought,
That sway'd him onward with a secret pride,
To do what few or none would do beside ...⁸

'Perversity' is, in both Byron texts, a means of self-definition, outside the dominant cultural framework; it is, not, however, so clearly self-destructive as in Poe.

If Carlyle's and Byron's texts partly anticipate Poe's use of 'perverse' on the level of the signifier, foreshadowings on the level of the signified may be found in two texts already mentioned in this study - De Quincey's 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (1835) and Hawthorne's 'Wakefield'

(1835). De Quincey's reading of Coleridge's life - quoted above in the discussion of 'William Wilson'⁹ - in terms of 'the conspiracy ... of himself against himself'¹⁰ implies a self-destructive tendency written into the subject, and the concept of 'a mind ... overthrown or threatened with overthrow'¹¹ has its parallel in BC, where the narrator refers to his 'final and irrevocable overthrow' by the perverse tendency (9). 'Wakefield' may be seen as anticipating not only the isolation of 'The Man of the Crowd'¹² but also the self-destruction of the murder tales; the protagonist's 'strangeness' of character is seen as an 'indefinable' quality,¹³ as the perverse is presented in IP as a 'paradoxical something' (3), an 'indefinite' phenomenon (5). Wakefield's 'freak' is seen as occurring 'without the shadow of a reason',¹⁴ that is, without any motive identifiable in terms of rational self-interest; the narrator claims that the tale demonstrates how 'an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do'.¹⁵ IP may be read as continuing the line of psychological investigation initiated by 'Wakefield' - as an attempt to name and define the irrational 'influence' that motivates self-destructive acts.

The concept of perversity may also be traced across Poe's work. On the level of the signified, cases of self-destructive behaviour are legion, 'The Man of the Crowd' providing an obvious instance; in 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846), Poe reads his own 'Raven' as exemplifying 'the human thirst for self-torture' (H XIV, 207). On the level of the signifier, the term 'perverse' or its derivatives appear at least seven times in Poe's writings outside BC and IP, five of them before the appearance of BC in 1843 - in 'A Decided Loss' (1832), and the rewritten version of the same tale, 'Loss of Breath' (1835); Arthur Gordon Pym (1837); the review of de la Motte Fouqué's

Undine (1839— H X, 30-39); 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head' (1841); 'Marginalia' (1844— H XVI, 63), and a rewritten version of the same passage in a later series of 'Marginalia' (1849— H XVI, 140-41).

The earliest use, occurring in a satiric tale, is relatively superficial. The narrator of 'A Decided Loss', having discovered his loss of breath, considers and rejects suicide: 'Then the phantom suicide flitted across my imagination, but it is a trait in the perversity of human nature to reject the obvious, and the ready for the far-distant and equivocal; and, with one foot in the grave, I shuddered at self-murder as the most flagrant of enormities.' (M II, 54).

'Loss of Breath' reproduces the passage with a few emendations, retaining the phrase 'the perversity of human nature' (M II, 63).

Here, 'perversity' is already presented as a general human characteristic, while the rejection of the 'obvious' for the 'equivocal' points towards the association of perversity with circumlocution to be made in IP.¹⁶

In both the Undine review and the tale 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head', the sense of the references to perversity is more in line with the "traditional" definitions of the O.E.D. The siren Undine is described as being of an 'extravagantly wild and perverse ... temperament' (H X, 31), with connotations similar to those present in the Carlyle passage discussed above. In 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head', the narrator refers to Toby Dammit's 'perversity of disposition', as exemplified in his betting habit, which is condemned as a 'gross impropriety' (M II, 624); the usage seems consistent with the O.E.D.'s sense 2), given above. Here as in the Undine review, the perverse is seen essentially as a characteristic of anomalous and deviant individuals.

Pym, in contrast to the above instances, offers some powerful lexical and conceptual anticipations of IP. As has been shown above,¹⁷ there are two passages which already adumbrate the theory of perversity; the peach-liqueur episode in chapter 3, where Pym is actuated by a 'fit of perverseness' (Beaver, Pym, pp. 78-79), and the precipice episode in chapter 24 (*ibid.*, pp. 228-29). In the first episode, Pym compares his self-destructive act to that of a 'spoiled child' (78), linking perverseness with childhood, and therefore with the subject's problematic insertion into culture. The second passage, though not actually using the term 'perverseness', exhibits a striking convergence with the suicide sequence in IP;¹⁸ in both cases, the suicidal impulse operates against the rational interest and self-preservation of the subjects. Pain combines with a masochistic pleasure; Pym feels 'the irrepressible desire of looking below', 'a passion utterly uncontrollable' (229), while the subject in IP feels 'delight' and a 'passion ... demoniacally impatient', at the prospect of throwing himself over a similar precipice. In both texts, the subject is dominated by the desire for death, to the point where survival is only made possible by outside intervention. Pym plunges into the protecting 'arms' of Peters (229); in IP, 'if there be no friendly arm to check us', destruction looms. The text of Pym clearly anticipates the notion presented in IP of perverseness as an internal destructive force (indeed, Beaver ('Commentary' to Pym, 1975) even argues that 'Pym' may be an anagram of 'Imp' ('Ymp!')).¹⁹

If Pym thus anticipates the "suicide" sequence of IP, the "circumlocution" sequence also has its antecedent, in the 'Marginalia'. In the December 1844 series, Poe criticises the style of Thomas C. Grattan (1792-1864), writer of High-ways and By-ways (1823):²⁰

'Mr. Grattan, who, in general, writes well, has a bad habit of

loitering - of toying with his subject ... He has never done with his introductions.... He is afflicted with a perversity common enough even among otherwise good talkers - an irrepressible desire of tantalizing by circumlocution.' (H XVI, 63). Much the same criticism is made in the 'Marginalia' of April 1849, with an added reference to 'that curious yet common perversity observed in garrulous old women' (H XVI, 140-41). 'Perversity' here signifies a specific use of language; the subject speaks (the 'talkers', the 'garrulous old women') or writes (Grattan) against her/his own interest. Instead of communicating his/her message clearly and economically, the addresser provokes and estranges the addressee by circumlocution. The phrase 'irrepressible desire' points back to Pym (chapter 24), while the two passages as a whole point forward to IP (4): 'There lives no man who at some period has not been tormented ... by an earnest desire to tantalize a listener by circumlocution.' Indeed, that whole sequence in IP may be seen as an expansion of the critique of Grattan.

The occurrences of 'perverse' and its derivatives elsewhere in Poe's writings, then, vary from the relatively superficial to cases which anticipate or parallel passages in IP. It may be noted, in particular, that perversity is several times associated with women ('garrulous old women'), children (Pym, chapter 3), or both (the child-woman Undine); that is, with subjects excluded from full participation in the male-dominated cultural order. Perversity thus tends to imply, for the male subject' (Pym, Grattan), a tendency to exclude himself from that cultural order.

The critical reaction to the theme of perversity will now be examined. In spite of the visible recurrence of the term across the canon, some

critics have tried to minimise the importance of the concept for BC, or IP, or both. Thus G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973) claims that the narrator of IP only succeeds in convincing the reader of his 'irrationality' rather than his 'rationality'²¹ - without considering the possibility that he may be simultaneously rational and irrational, able to explain the psychological forces underlying his actions, yet powerless to counteract them. Julian Symons (The Tell-Tale Heart, 1978)²² argues: 'The story does not in fact prove the principle, because the wrongdoing was rational (the murderer killed for an inheritance) and the "perversity" caused him to admit the truth.'²³ This claim rests on a moralistic reading of 'perversity' as necessarily equivalent to irrational 'wrongdoing' (i.e. negation of the cultural law); if perversity is viewed as a psychological, self-destructive process, then the confession becomes a clear instance of its operations, against the subject's own interest, while the murder can be seen as a means to the end of self-annihilation. Allan Smith ('The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe', 1973),²⁴ writing on BC, sees perversity as a 'spurious' motive offered by the narrator,²⁵ and prefers to read the text as exemplifying a different psychological principle, i.e. the "association of ideas" (between cat and wife).²⁶ He does not explain why the two concepts should be mutually incompatible, or why association of ideas (or symbolisation) should not be appropriated by the self-destructive drive.

The most thoroughgoing attempt to reject the concept of the perverse is that of James W. Gargano, in two discussions of BC ('"The Black Cat": Perverseness Reconsidered', 1960;²⁷ 'The Question of Poe's Narrators', 1963).²⁸ Gargano argues in both articles that the concept is no more than the narrator's rationalisation, and is not the point of the text;²⁹ the narrator is seen as 'incapable of locating the

origin of his evil and damnation within himself',³⁰ preferring to lay the blame on a generalised 'impulse within the human soul'.³¹ For Gargano, it would seem, individuals are totally responsible for their own actions, and any attempt by the subject to place his/her acts in the context of larger psychological structures is invalid. Hence, in practice, his reading replaces the narrator's psychological discourse with a conventional "moral" discourse - the 1960 essay is replete with self-validating phrases such as 'the moral nature of life'.³² Against this type of reading, it may be pointed out that to affirm the primacy of an abstracted "moral" essence tends to isolate the individual subject from all determining structures and contexts, not only psychological but also social and familial; and, further, that the reader who adopts (and amplifies) the narrator's own psychological discourse is not thereby precluded from making value-judgments in relation to the culture that makes his sadistic actions possible (it may be added that Gargano makes no reference whatever to IP - a silence which tends to undermine his argument against "perverseness").

On the other hand, those critics who do accept the centrality of 'perversity' to BC and IP have read the concept variously, in theological, sociological and psychological terms. Baudelaire's readings (1852, 1857) combine theological and psychological perspectives. The concept is seen as central to Poe's work as a whole; in 'Edgar Allan Poe, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages' (1852), Baudelaire quotes BC (9) entire (in Isabelle Meunier's 1847 translation),³³ with the laconic remark: 'Ce passage mérite d'être cité',³⁴ while in Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires (1857), IP is given pride of place as first tale in the volume (with BC following on its heels). 'Notes nouvelles sur

Edgar Poe' (1857) contains an extended discussion of perversity, with a paraphrase of the main argument of IP. Perversity is seen, on the one hand, in theological terms, as synonymous with original sin ('la méchanceté naturelle de l'homme');³⁵ and, on the other, as a psychological tendency equivalent to sado-masochism: 'la Perversité naturelle, qui fait que l'homme est sans cesse et à la fois homicide et suicide'.³⁶ The perverse is, in terms that repeat those of IP itself, viewed as a 'penchant primordial', a 'force primitive, irrésistible'; Baudelaire concludes that Poe has rediscovered a 'grande vérité oubliée' - 'la perversité primordiale de l'homme'.³⁷ Poe's text is thus appropriated to reaffirm original sin against the followers of Rousseau or Fourier,³⁸ the 'égalitaires à contre sens' who, Baudelaire claims, declare "Je suis né bon", forgetting that 'nous sommes tous nés marqués pour le mal!'.³⁹

The psychological dimension of this analysis is clear; perversity is seen as the tendency to act against one's rational interest, and as self-destruction: 'Ces actions n'ont d'attrait que parce que elles sont mauvaises, dangereuses; elles possèdent l'attraction du gouffre.'⁴⁰ The gulf image recalls both Pym (chapter 24) and IP (6), and suggests the subject's tendency to self-annihilation; while the notion of the convergence of the personae of 'homicide' and 'suicide' in the same subject may be taken as a commentary on all three protagonists of the murder tales, each of them a 'homicide-suicide'. Nonetheless, the primary emphasis of Baudelaire's analysis is theological; the human subject is seen as innately, "naturally" (self-)destructive, thanks to an external "divine" agency independent of all societies and cultures. This emphasis is confirmed by examination of Baudelaire's translation, 'Le Démon de la Perversité' (1854).⁴¹ Not only does the translation of 'imp' as 'démon' add a more pronounced theological

dimension, but in (3) 'wrong' is translated first as 'péchē', then as 'mal'.⁴²

It may be doubted, however, whether this religious emphasis is so strong in the original texts, even on the surface. References to 'sin' (BC (9); IP (10)) are indeed present, but may be read, like the diabolic imagery, as signifying exclusion from, or revolt against the cultural order. The creator god invoked in IP ('Jehovah', 'the Deity' - 1), author of the 'visible works' and 'objective creatures' of the universe, seems to bear more resemblance to Plato's demiurge⁴³ or Newton's great watchmaker than to the Old Testament god. It may be deduced from IP that this divinity created humanity, endowed it with certain psychological characteristics (including perversity) and then left it to its own devices. The religious lexis of the texts may thus, for the purposes of materialist analysis, be legitimately re-written in psychological and sociological terms. For Baudelaire, the self-destructive tendency identified in these texts is 'primordial' and 'natural'; it may, however, equally be interpreted as heavily dependent on determinate cultural structures.

In contrast to Baudelaire, Louis Harap ('Foe and Dostoevsky', 1976) offers a primarily sociological view of the perverse, in a discussion of BC and IP; as with 'The Man of the Crowd',⁴⁴ the two tales are compared with Dostoyevsky's Notes from the Underground (1864).

Analysing BC (9), he sees perversity as an anti-social impulse in the subject: 'The Imp impels men (sic) to act contrary to accepted judgment and standards of behavior.';⁴⁵ and as an irrational tendency: 'The man ridden by the Imp acts irrationally in the sense that he does what he knows he should not'.⁴⁶ For Harap, the irrationality and the anti-social element are linked, since ultimately perversity

is a mode of protest against the pseudo-rationality of emergent capitalism, 'the impersonal rationalization and mechanization of life that industry and social relations enforced'⁴⁷ - that is, 'the alienating conditions of modern society'.⁴⁸ Harap's argument will be considered again below;⁴⁹ it has, at least, the advantage of placing the texts firmly in their historical context. Perversity is thus seen not as a timeless human trait, but as both product of, and reaction against, a specific socio-economic system.

Psychological interpretations of the perverse have been various. The 1847 Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine review (already quoted on 'The Man of the Crowd')⁵⁰ sees perversity as an anti-social tendency of psychological origin, located 'in men's (sic) minds'; commenting on BC, he states: 'The wild and horrible invention ... is strictly in the service of an abstract idea which it is there to illustrate. His (Poe's) analytic observation has led him, he thinks, to detect in men's minds an absolute spirit of "perversity", prompting them to do the very opposite of what reason and mankind pronounce to be right'.⁵¹ The text is thus seen as a commentary on a general psychological principle derived from 'analytic observation', and an instance of revolt against the cultural law, the dictates of 'reason and mankind'. J.-K. Huysmans (A rebours, 1884), in his discussion, already cited in Chapter 2,⁵² of Poe's exploration of 'la psychologie morbide',⁵³ reads the concept of the perverse as a psychological innovation: 'En littérature, il avait, le premier, sous ce titre emblématique: "Le démon de la Perversité", épié ces impulsions irrésistibles que la volonté subit sans les connaître'.⁵⁴ Tzvetan Todorov ('Préface' to Poe, Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires, 1974) goes further than Huysmans, with the advantage of hindsight, seeing Poe's 'perverse' as anticipating the discovery of the unconscious; he refers to 'la

découverte, par Poe, du "démon de la perversité", declaring: 'Cet état d'esprit particulier consiste à agir "par la raison que nous ne le devrions pas" ... Poe construit une faculté de l'esprit humain dont le propre est de déterminer de tels actes. Ainsi le geste le plus absurde en apparence n'est pas laissé inexpliqué, il participe aussi du déterminisme général ... Poe découvre le rôle de certaines motivations inconscientes'.⁵⁵

But if Todorov's analysis is right, those 'motivations inconscientes' have to be identified more specifically. Other critics have read the perverse as a manifestation of sado-masochism and/or the confessional urge - or, going further, as a direct expression of the death-drive. For Marie Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933), perversity includes both sadistic and anti-social impulses - 'our instinctual urges towards criminal activities',⁵⁶ and 'the exhibitionist and self-punishing confessional urge'.⁵⁷ In BC (she says little about IP), its workings signify 'the counter-compulsions of instinct to the compulsions of morality',⁵⁸ seen, in her view correctly, as 'one of our prime, basic human endowments'.⁵⁹ Perversity is thus seen as: a) an instinctual phenomenon, identified with sado-masochism ('erotised aggression'); and b) a manifestation of the superego, of 'the pressure of conscience which demands punishment for our sins'.⁶⁰ For Bonaparte, then, perversity includes an erotic, an aggressive and a self-punishing component; the implied link between self-destruction and the superego should be particularly noted. Mario Praz (The Romantic Agony, 1930),⁶¹ following Baudelaire, quotes BC (9) entire (in the Meunier translation), with the comment: 'It is Poe speaking, but it might equally well be Baudelaire ... or Dostoievsky; or ... the Marquis de Sade.'⁶² For Praz, perversity is essentially either sadism (thus he quotes a

letter from Baudelaire to his mother: 'Crois-tu donc que, si je le voulais, je ne pourrais pas te ruiner et jeter ta vieillesse dans la misère?',⁶³ with the comment: 'It was evidently the same "imp of the perverse" that dictated to the poet these lines',⁶⁴ or masochism (again on Baudelaire, he comments: 'His soul feels an indomitable desire to afflict and torture itself.')⁶⁵ A tradition of perverse or sado-masochistic literature is thus constructed, running from Poe to Baudelaire and Dostoyevsky. Julio Cortázar ('El poeta, el narrador y el crítico', 1956; 'Préface' to Poe, Histoires extraordinaires, 1973)⁶⁶ stresses psychological determinism in the context of sado-masochism. Thus he reads IP in terms of the confessional urge: 'Un hombre cede a la necesidad de confesar su crimen, y confiesa' ('a man surrenders to the need to confess his crime, and confesses');⁶⁷ and finds in BC a 'fatalité ... intérieure'⁶⁸ which he identifies as 'le sadisme'.⁶⁹

The above interpretations, however, tend to leave two questions unanswered: 1) how far is the perverse, in fact, an erotic phenomenon?; and 2) what is the exact relation between the sadistic tendencies and the self-punishing confessional urge? It may be argued that Praz's and Bonaparte's emphasis on sexual sadism is not totally appropriate to the texts; if the narrator's cruelty in BC is clearly a distorted expression of his sexuality,⁷⁰ the same is not obvious for IP. The aggression of both fictional subjects should be considered in its own terms, and not as a purely erotic phenomenon. The second question suggests that a link should be sought between the destruction of the other (negating the cultural order) and the acts of self-betrayal which, while destroying the subject, tend to reaffirm the cultural order. The answer to these questions may be found if the texts are read in terms of the Freudian concept of Thanatos, or the death-drive.

Indeed, some critics have gone beyond Bonaparte, unequivocally identifying Poe's perverse with Thanatos. For Daniel Hoffman (Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, 1972), the perverse is 'the death-wish' (by which he obviously means the death-drive), operating against Eros.⁷¹ In a similar (and better-informed) vein, H el ene Cixous ('Poe re-lu', 1972), after quoting the "procrastination" passage from IP (5), defines the perverse as the 'pulsion de mort';⁷² and, further, quoting the "suicide" passage (IP (6)), comments: 'Le r ecit ne (pouvait) parvenir que d'un au-del a du principe de plaisir. Imaginer le discours de la pulsion de mort ... Puis  crire cela.'⁷³ Here we are already on the territory of Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle; a critical examination of the concept of the death-drive now becomes imperative.

The hypothesis of the death-drive (or death instinct, or Thanatos) belongs to Freud's later, "structural" model of the mind;⁷⁴ it is first put forward in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), and further explicated in the New Introductory Lectures (1933).⁷⁵ Laplanche and Pontalis (The Language of Psycho-Analysis, 1967) define 'death instincts' (in the plural) as instincts which 'strive towards the reduction of tension to zero-point', and therefore to 'bring the living being back to the inorganic state'; they are 'to begin with directed inwards and tend to self-destruction, but they are subsequently turned towards the outside world in the form of the aggressive or destructive instinct'.⁷⁶ The term "Thanatos", according to Laplanche and Pontalis, is 'not to be found in Freud's writings', although 'he occasionally used it in conversation';⁷⁷ it is, however, frequently used in psychoanalytic literature, as a synonym for the death-drive, and as opposite to "Eros", or the life instinct (the latter term is employed in Beyond the Pleasure Principle).⁷⁸ In Freud's later model, the death-drive is seen as a primary intrapsychic force, manifesting itself in aggression and in

self-destruction; the direction of aggression against the subject itself suggests that there is a tendency in the mind which 'over-rides the pleasure principle',⁷⁹ a 'trend that has self-destruction as its aim'.⁸⁰ Aggression against the other is a secondary formation, 'the destructive instinct directed outwards'.⁸¹ Thanatos may, then, be defined, in the formula of Hanna Segal (Klein, 1979), as 'self-destruction and destruction',⁸² with self-destruction as primary.

The concept of the death-drive should be distinguished from that of sadism. The later Freudian model allows for the possibility of instinctual "fusion"; in the phenomena of sadism and masochism, the erotic and aggressive drives are fused into a kind of 'alloy'.⁸³ Sadism is erotised aggression, masochism erotised self-destruction; these terms should therefore only be used where an erotic component is present alongside aggression.

The notion of the death instinct is still, as Laplanche and Pontalis point out, 'one of the most controversial of psycho-analytic concepts',⁸⁴ and its reception by analysts and commentators has varied from total acceptance (Klein) to total rejection (Reich). On the one hand, the concept was systematically extended and developed by Klein who, according to Segal, was 'the only major follower of Freud to adopt fully his theory of the death instinct';⁸⁵ while Juliet Mitchell incorporates it into her materialist reading of Freud (Psychoanalysis and Feminism, 1974).⁸⁶ On the other, Reich argues in The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1933) that the death instinct does not belong to the 'primary' domain of 'biological facts',⁸⁷ and further implies, in his 'Preface' to the third edition (1942), that it is a purely 'secondary' drive, specific to patriarchal culture.⁸⁸ Freud's own justification of the concept is expressed in biological terms; he follows certain biologists of

his time in positing the existence, in all living organisms, of 'internal processes ... leading to death', which tend in the contrary direction to that of the self-preservative and sexual/reproductive instincts.⁸⁹ Biological arguments have, equally, been adduced by those who wish to refute the concept - not only Reich, but also Charles Rycroft (A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, 1968),⁹⁰ who quotes Ernest Jones (1957): 'No biological observation can be found to support the idea of a death instinct, one which contradicts all biological principles',⁹¹ Octave Mannoni (Freud, 1968),⁹² without actually rejecting the hypothesis, sees it as 'paradoxale ou arbitraire' in biological terms;⁹³ Richard Wollheim (Freud, 1971), however, suggests that in fact the hypothesis cannot be 'faulted on any obvious evolutionary grounds', since the operations of a death instinct in the individual do not in themselves endanger the 'supreme biological value' of the survival of the species.⁹⁴ It may be tentatively suggested that the Freudian concept is not actually incompatible with the instinct theories of modern biology.⁹⁵

In any case, Freud's exposition of the concept invokes, in practice, not only theoretical (biological) postulates, but also empirical, clinical evidence. As has already been pointed out in relation to 'The Man of the Crowd',⁹⁶ Beyond the Pleasure Principle contains an extended discussion of the compulsion to repeat,⁹⁷ a concept which had been introduced in 'The "Uncanny"' (1919).⁹⁸ The compulsion to repeat is seen as a manifestation of the death-drive, since death is itself the restoration of an earlier state of things, of the zero tension of the inorganic.⁹⁹ Freud's evidence for the existence of this compulsion in the unconscious includes: "war neuroses" (characterised by dreams in which the "shell-shocked" ex-combatant relives the traumatic explosion); children's games (the child repeats a distressing experience - e.g. the mother's absence - as a game); repetition, in

the analysand/analyst relationship, of past unpleasurable experiences or fantasies; and the pattern, observed in the life-histories of certain subjects, of repeating unpleasurable experiences in successive contexts (repeated situations of betrayal, failure in love, etc.).¹⁰⁰ These diverse cases - all deriving from the lived social experiences of real historical subjects - induced Freud to postulate a compulsion to repeat in the unconscious that 'recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure'.¹⁰¹

The evidence Freud adduces for the compulsion to repeat is, thus, entirely derived from human culture, not from biology. Since the compulsion to repeat is a manifestation of the death instinct, it may be concluded that, irrespective of the biological arguments, the existence of Thanatos may also be defended on cultural grounds. If this is the case, it is no longer necessary to postulate Thanatos as an "external" or "immutable" given; rather, it is a tendency which, even if it does form part of the biological basis of human nature, operates within a determinate cultural order.

It should also be stressed that, as shown above with reference to 'William Wilson',¹⁰² the death-drive is implicated in the formation and workings of the superego, that is, the agency of the cultural law within the subject. Freud describes in The Ego and the Id (1923) how the child internalises the paternal image with the aid of the death instinct; that is, the destructive tendencies present in the id are, to some extent, appropriated by the superego, which turns them against the ego in the exercise of its critical and punitive functions. The superego is thus not only the heir to the Oedipus complex, but a manifestation of Thanatos; its characteristic sadism derives from

both external and internal sources - the objectively authoritarian father and the death instinct within.¹⁰³ In Freud's words, the 'destructive component' in the unconscious has 'entrenched itself in the super-ego'.¹⁰⁴ For Mitchell, as the ego 'overcomes the libidinous demands by the processes of identification and sublimation (the formation of the superego), it helps the aggressive urges of the id - but by so doing it becomes, itself, vulnerable to them'.¹⁰⁵ Given all this, it may be contended that Thanatos should not be conceived in purely biological terms; the institution of the superego not only appropriates the death-drive, it strengthens it, and thus intensifies the tendency to splitting within the subject. Whether the death-drive is in reality a biological "instinct" or only a cultural precipitate, the Freudian model leaves little doubt that its operations in the individual subject are reinforced in the present culture.

For the analysis of Poe's three "murder tales", it may be suggested that an unconscious process of self-destruction is at work in their fictional subjects, and is a crucial determinant of their actions. The texts are constructs within patriarchal culture and therefore can legitimately present simulacra of the workings of subjectivity within that culture; whether self-destruction or "perversity" is, as both Freud and Poe would have it, a biological given or a purely cultural characteristic, it is a process at work in the narrators of these tales. To refer to "Thanatos" or "the death-drive", in this context, is not necessarily to lapse into biologism or metaphysics. As with the Oedipus complex, it is one thing to determine whether self-destruction is "natural" or "eternal", and another to demonstrate its workings within the existing culture.¹⁰⁶ The use of the terms in the analysis that follows should therefore be taken as essentially descriptive, and not as implying any quasi-Jungian hypostatisation of "eternal" unconscious

forces.

Octave Mannoni (Freud, 1968) has declared that 'personne jusqu'ici n'a osé écrire les "trois essais sur la pulsion de mort", qui dépasseraient les descriptions de la criminologie, comme les Trois Essais sur la sexualité ont rendu la sexologie caduque'.¹⁰⁷ It may be argued, however, that Poe's three murder tales can be read as precisely three such "essays on the death instinct", or, at least, an important contribution in that direction. The tales will be analysed individually in this context; before moving to IP, however, it will be useful to examine the ninth paragraph of BC in detail, since this constitutes the first theorisation of the perverse, and contains the germ of the later text.

In BC (9), the narrator introduces 'the spirit of PERVERSENESS' to explain the hanging of the first cat: 'And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS.... It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself - to offer violence to its own nature - to do wrong for the wrong's sake only - that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute.' Perverseness is here seen as a tendency in the mind to aggressive and anti-social actions (destruction of the other - here, the cat); but, also, to aggression against oneself, to the subject's own destruction or 'overthrow'. It is, further, a 'primary' impulse, constitutive and determinant of the subject to whom it gives 'direction': 'one of the primitive impulses of the human heart - one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man'. At the same time, it is irrational, in the sense that it endangers the subject's objective

and subjective social integration, and, ultimately, his physical self-preservation; it is 'a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law'. The narrator places himself outside the cultural Law, by hanging the cat 'because I felt it had given me no reason of offence; ... because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin'. Perverseness is thus seen as operating against dominant values and practices ('our best judgment', 'Law'), .. and towards the commission of socially unacceptable acts ('wrong', 'sin').

This anti-social character of the perverse is certainly dominant at this stage in BC; one may read in these terms, not only the hanging of the cat, but many of the crucial events before and after - the wife-beating, the maltreatment of the pets (6), the excision of the cat's eye (7), and, later, the murder (23). Nonetheless, a further dimension of the perverse is implicit in the notion of the 'longing of the soul to vex itself'; this tendency may be read as also determinant of the final self-betrayal, in which the narrator paradoxically reintegrates himself into the Law at the cost of his physical survival. The perverse can, then, operate in favour of, as well as against, the cultural order. The evidence of the tale as a whole thus suggests that the perverse should be read less as an irrational and anti-social tendency than as primarily a self-destructive drive, whose main goal is the elimination of the "perverse" subject him/herself. In fact, here in BC the concept remains incompletely theorised; in spite of the importance of this passage, as signalled by Baudelaire and Praz,¹⁰⁸ it is essentially a prelude to IP, where the self-destructive character of the perverse is brought more clearly into relief, and its problematic relation to the Law is emphasised in the admission that it can

'occasionally ... operate in furtherance of good' (7). The concept of the perverse in IP will now be considered in detail, in the context of a global analysis of the text; following which, BC will be examined as a whole.

ii. 'The Imp of the Perverse'

The title of this tale (1845) marks a lexical break with BC; the 'spirit of PERVERSENESS' (BC (9)) has now become 'The Imp of the Perverse', a formulation to be repeated once in the text (8) (the repetition only occurs from the second version of the tale,¹⁰⁹ the textual change serving to underscore the centrality of title to text). The title 'The Imp of the Perverse' recalls an earlier Poe title, 'The Angel of the Odd' (1844) (a tale to be discussed at the end of this chapter);¹¹⁰ but in the earlier (comic) tale, the Angel of the Odd is (or appears to be) an autonomous "character", who speaks and intervenes directly, whereas the Imp has not even a nominal external existence, its seemingly demonic workings taking place entirely within the narrating subject. The signifier "imp" requires particular attention. According to the O.E.D., its basic sense is "child"; by extension it comes to mean 'a "child" of the devil, or of hell', and is therefore applied to 'petty fiends or evil spirits'.¹¹¹ It occurs in this second sense in, for instance, Shelley's 'The Devil's Walk' (1812)¹¹² ('With a favourite imp he began to chat');¹¹³ and, in Poe's own work, in 'King Pest' (1835): 'Pest-spirits, plague-goblins, and fever-demons, were the popular imps of mischief' (M II, 243) and 'The Angel of the Odd': 'te imp ab de wing, und te head-teuffel ab de wing' (M III, 1103). In IP, however, 'imp' has lost any literal diabolic connotations.

The Imp of the Perverse should be distinguished, not only from the Angel of the Odd, but also from certain superficially similar formulations in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) and E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'Mademoiselle de Scudery' (1819).¹¹⁴ Victor Frankenstein, narrating his arrival at the University of Ingolstadt, refers to 'the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me'.¹¹⁵ This passage is seen by Mario Praz ('Introductory Essay' to Three Gothic Novels, 1968)¹¹⁶ as containing 'anticipations of Poe's Imp of the Perverse';¹¹⁷ it implies, however, a certain degree of externalisation of the self-destructive impulse that is not present in Poe's tale. Similarly, in 'Mademoiselle de Scudery', Cardillac, the artist-murderer, narrating his first murder, sees himself as the victim of an external destructive force: 'the spirit dogged my footsteps - the whispering Satan was at my ear! - ... Now I knew what my evil star desired: I had to give in to it or be destroyed!'¹¹⁸ In both cases, the destructive agency, though perceived as external by the protagonists, can be read as objectively internal - Frankenstein is destroyed by his own will to knowledge, the 'resistless ... impulse' that leads to the creation of the monster;¹¹⁹ Cardillac admits he is impelled by an 'inexpressible hatred ... deep inside of me'.¹²⁰ The phrases 'Angel of Destruction', 'whispering Satan', 'evil star' can be seen as deriving from the attempt to externalise, and therefore disavow, internal psychic forces (similarly, Poe's Angel of the Odd can be read as objectively an alcohol-induced hallucination, and so as internal in origin).¹²¹

In the case of IP, the title on its own might imply a similar externalisation; but the text as a whole supplies a context which defines the Imp as an unequivocally intrapsychic force. The imp or demon metaphor

is therefore best read as here signifying, not the attempt to externalise destructive mental forces, but the perception of those forces as relatively autonomous, as capable of swamping and dominating the ego. The perverse is thus that which is admitted to be internal, yet perceived as if it were external, other; the perverse I is another.

This quasi-externalisation is reinforced by the presence of a secondary, connoted sense of "imp"; the verb "to imp" means to graft, and an imp is also 'a shoot or slip used in grafting' (O.E.D.).¹²² Walter Scott ('On the Fairies of Popular Superstition', 1803)¹²³ refers to a passage in the anonymous medieval romance Orfeo and Heurodis, where a character rests 'under the shade of an ymp tree'. He comments: 'Ymp tree. - According to the general acceptation, this only signifies a grafted tree; whether it should be here understood to mean a tree consecrated to the imps, or fairies, is left to the reader.'¹²⁴ If "imp" is synonymous with "fairy", it should be added that, as Scott points out, the Celtic fairies were often identified with the devils of Christian demonology: 'the Fairies ... were deemed to be of infernal origin'.¹²⁵ The signifier "imp" can thus simultaneously connote the two ideas of grafting and of an alien demonic agency. In Poe's text, the narrator's use of the term may be read as reflecting his perception of the perverse as a quasi-external force - known to be internal, yet felt as something alien which has "grafted" itself on to his subjectivity. The two senses of "imp" thus come together, through a process of condensation. The perverse, an "alien" and "demonic" force at work in the mind, corresponds to the unconscious, in certain of its manifestations - to that within the self which is experienced as Other.

If the title of the tale requires close attention, the same may be said of its generic status. In this sense, IP is visibly problematic. It begins as a philosophical or psychological essay (1-7), offering a series of general statements about the human mind, with the present tense of "universal" statement dominant, and 'we' as the dominant pronoun, with 'I' intervening only to denote an "impersonal", "objective" writer-as-theorist; then, abruptly, (8) introduces a specific present moment, revealing that all along the reader has been "listening" to one side of a ("real" or "imaginary") prison conversation between the narrator (a condemned murderer) and an unspecified narrataire.¹²⁶ The narrator is thus seen to be presenting his own story as a specific instance of a collective principle; (9) to (15) narrate the story of the murder and self-betrayal, until (16) returns the reader to the present and the prison-cell. The contrast between the two halves of the text may be schematically expressed as follows:

	1-7	8	9-15	16
TYPE OF DISCOURSE	ESSAY		F I C T I O N	
DOMINANT TENSE	PRESENT (general)	PRESENT (specific)	PAST	PRESENT (specific)
DOMINANT PERSON	WE	I	I	I

This textual split is not unique to IP; - 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' and 'The Premature Burial' also begin as "essays" before mutating into "tales". However, the split in IP is far more acute than in the other instances, given that the narrator appears at first as a "disinterested" analyst and then proves to be a murderer - rather than the detective's companion of 'Rue Morgue' or the recovered ex-neurotic of 'The Premature Burial'. The radical character of the split has been noted by Todorov ('Préface' to Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires,

1974), who comments: 'pendant les deux premiers tiers du texte nous croyions avoir affaire à une "étude théorique", à un exposé des idées de Poe; puis soudain le récit fait son entrée, en transformant du coup profondément tout ce qui précède, en nous amenant à corriger notre réaction première ... La limite entre fiction et non-fiction est ainsi mise en lumière - et pulvérisée.'¹²⁷ Similar remarks are made by Harap ('Poe and Dostoevsky', 1976): 'the piece is more nearly an essay than a story',¹²⁸ and Symons (The Tell-Tale Heart, 1978), who sees the text as an 'essay with a fragment of fiction tagged on at the end'.¹²⁹ These comments, especially Todorov's, bring into relief the genre-problematic character of the text, its status as simultaneously a contribution to psychological science and a fictional confession - 'étude théorique' and 'récit'. The possible implications of this formal split in the text for the model of the subject constituted in it will be considered below.¹³⁰

This metamorphosis of essay into narrative, as Todorov points out, forces the reader to re-examine 'tout ce qui précède'. The narrator, who has up to (7), appeared to belong to the "respectable" category of philosophers, now reveals himself as a social pariah, a murderer. He is thus no longer "one of us", but one of "them", alien, other - on the same side of the fence as the gang in 'Marie Rogêt', or even the ape in 'Rue Morgue',¹³¹ and yet the first-time reader has accepted him as speaking for "us". The murderer-philosopher is also signified in BC, although there the convergence is less striking, since the narrator's marginal status, as alcoholic and sadist, has already been established before his philosophising in (9). A relation between philosophy and murder had already been constructed by De Quincey in 'On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts' (first part, 1827),¹³²

where an extended joke is made on the idea of philosophers as victims of murder.¹³³ In IP, however, it is the murderer and the philosopher who are one and the same; the dividing-line between the "respectable" and the "criminal" is thus blurred - as in 'The Purloined Letter', where Dupin and D- become virtually interchangeable.¹³⁴ This confusion of categories has the effect of forcing the reader to interrogate her/his received notions of "normality", and, further, anticipates the theme of the murderer-philosopher in Dostoyevsky.¹³⁵

It is through the discourse of this problematic narrator that 'perversity' is defined as constitutive of the subject. The concept is introduced in general terms over the first three paragraphs. The narrator invokes the discourse of phrenology,¹³⁶ at the time an influential current in psychology, but at the same time distances himself from it (a reference to phrenology was removed from the second (1845) text of BC).¹³⁷ Here, while phrenological terminology is used, the "science" is rebuked for failing to take account of perversity. The phrenological model of the mind, as devised by F. J. Gall (1758-1828) and J. C. Spurzheim (1776-1832) and popularised in the U.S. by G. Coombe from 1838, divided the brain into 35 'organs', corresponding to various 'propensities', 'faculties' and 'sentiments'. Among the 'propensities' were two relating to aggressiveness: 'combateness' (in Gall's terms, 'instinct de la défense') and 'destructiveness' ('instinct carnassier'). The first was found by Gall to be prominent in 'quarrelsome' persons; the second was located in a student fond of torturing animals.¹³⁸ Neither can be identified with 'perverseness' in the sense used by Poe; the first is essentially self-preservative, the second aggressive. 'Destructiveness' is certainly a characteristic of the narrators of the three murder tales, but it cannot be equated

with perverseness; the classic phrenological model has no place for the self-destructive tendencies they exhibit. Indeed, in IP (3), the narrator rejects the idea that perverseness is simply a variant of 'the combativeness of phrenology', since that propensity 'has for its essence, the necessity of self-defence' (cf. Gall above) and excites 'the desire to be well'. Perverseness is, then, distinguished from "combativeness" since it tends, not towards, but against the subject's well-being. The innovatory character of the concept is thus stressed through the demonstration of its absence from the phrenological model. Further, if the perverse is to be identified with Thanatos, it may be pointed out that the text firmly dissociates it from the self-preservative tendency which, for Freud, is a manifestation of Eros; the phrenological 'destructiveness', which Poe's text does not mention, could be redefined as a transform of perverseness - as the death-drive directed outwards.

Perverseness is defined both negatively (it is not "combativeness") and positively. The following may be identified as key components of the positive definition:

- 1) It is a primary mental tendency: 'a radical, primitive, irreducible sentiment' (1), 'an innate and primitive principle of human action' (3).
- 2) Its existence is justified 'ā posteriori' (3), on empirical grounds, whereas the phrenological model, it is claimed, has been 'concocted ā priori'; the 'understanding or observant man' (1) is thus considered to be able to deduce the existence of perversity from his experience of himself ('an appeal to one's own heart' (4)) or of others ('what man usually or occasionally did' (2)).
- 3) Perversity implies a tendency to act against one's rational

interest - either to transgress social prohibitions, in such a way as to undermine one's continuing integration into culture ('we act, for the reason that we should not'; 'to do wrong for the wrong's sake' (3)); or to endanger one's own well-being and, eventually, one's physical survival: 'the desire to be well is not only not aroused, but a strongly antagonistical sentiment exists' (3).

4) Its operations are characterised by a high level of intrapsychic determinism; it is seen, at least 'with certain minds, under certain conditions', as 'absolutely irresistible', as an 'unconquerable force which impels us' (3). The perverse is a determining force within the mind, which is always operative and, in certain subjects, may become dominant.

These characteristics are, so far, much the same as those already identified in BC (9), above. In IP, however, the element of self-destruction is given greater emphasis, less through the preliminary definition than in the examples which follow. In BC, after all, the one example given (the hanging of the cat) is an act of aggression against other as well as self. Here, the three "general" examples are purely self-destructive; they precede a fourth example which is also the narrator's personal story.

The three examples which follow on the definition are: 1) self-destruction through language (4); 2) self-destruction through procrastination (5); 3) suicide (6). The first and the third are paralleled elsewhere in Poe's writings, in the Grattan passages of 'Marginalia' and Pym (chapter 24) respectively (as shown above).¹³⁹ In the first two, the subject's social integration is endangered; in the third, his physical survival. In all cases, the subject in question is a

generalised or impersonal one ('the speaker', 'he' (4); 'we' (5, 6)); perversity is thus presented as constitutive of the "normal" subject. These three examples will now be considered one by one.

The first instance (4) is concerned with the subject's self-destruction through language - through the estrangement of language from its communicative and socialising functions. The case in question is of a 'speaker' who, although 'usually curt, precise, and clear', is perversely impelled to 'tantalize a listener by circumlocution' - to provoke his anger 'by certain involutions and parentheses', that is, by a lexical and syntactic selection inappropriate to the situation. The counter-perverse impulse to self-preservation is also at work; the subject wants to find language that will fit the context: 'the most laconic and luminous language is struggling for utterance upon his tongue' - but the perverse impulse prevails.

The text here offers a high incidence of metalingual lexis, signifying the addresser ('speaker'), the addressee ('listener'), and the physicality of the speech-act ('utterance upon his tongue'); and, at the same time, contains specific characterisation of the potential message as appropriate ('laconic and luminous') or inappropriate ('involutions and parentheses') to the situation in which A 'addresses' B. In the actual speech-act as reported, the message itself (never specified) is subordinated to its (inappropriate) mode of expression; through circumlocution, the speaker fails to communicate his message adequately. He thus uses the wrong register; or, to use Jakobson's terms, he commits an abuse of the poetic function,¹⁴⁰ in the sense that the shape of the message obscures its content - language, rather than being 'luminous' as required, becomes opaque and murky.

The perverse impulse thus has the effect of disturbing the speaker's relation to his addressee. Its workings are signified in the language of psychic determinism, of insistent desire: 'The impulse increases to a wish, the wish to a desire, the desire to an uncontrollable longing'. This 'longing' for self-destruction triumphs over the self-preservative impulse, dominates the subject 'tormented' by it, and finally leads to his 'mortification', which implies social death. Thus the unspecified message, whatever it may denote, connotes only the discourse of Thanatos; indeed, a deleted phrase (A text only) makes this connotation clear, adding: 'a shadow seems to flit across the brain'.¹⁴¹ Language thus serves not to facilitate communication but to impede it; not to confirm the subject's insertion into culture, but to isolate him in 'mortification'. This self-destructive appropriation of language by the perverse will recur in the narrator's confession (11-16), to be discussed below.¹⁴²

The second example (5) is constituted by the procrastination of a vital task until it is 'too late!'. Here too the subject ('we') acts against his objective interest and his social integration; not to perform the 'duty' in question will be 'ruinous' - again, social death. The discourse of the perverse triumphs over the discourse of social rationality. It is, again, signified in terms of desire - 'a nameless ... craving for delay', which tends against the contrary desire ('eagerness', 'anxiety') to maintain social integration; and in terms of death: 'The clock strikes, and is the knell of our welfare.' The 'conflict within us' is between 'substance' and 'shadow'; the perverse is symbolised as 'the ghost that has so long overawed us', and is signified in the third person, as an alien thing ('it flies - it disappears'). The Gothic imagery of shadows and ghosts points to

the presence of the unconscious, of the other ('it') within that is not 'us', and, specifically, to the workings of Thanatos, of that which is both Desire and Death.

At the same time, however, one should note the forcible presence of the contrary impulse to self-preservation, which exerts maximum resistance against the perverse tendency. The subject is 'consumed with eagerness to commence the work', is 'on fire' with the anticipation of its 'glorious result'; this counter-perverse 'energy' is placed in opposition to the 'strength' of the perverse. The fire imagery suggests that the counter-perverse impulse speaks the discourse of Eros (self-preservation); while the military connotations of its 'trumpet-tongued' call point to the desire for social integration. In the internal 'contest' that takes place, the conflicting forces are presented as equal antagonists: 'We tremble with the violence of the conflict within us - of the definite with the indefinite - of the substance with the shadow.' Finally, however, the perverse (the unknown or 'indefinite', the 'shadow' of death) defeats the 'definite', socially acceptable self. The unconscious invades the ego, the death instinct prevails over both pleasure and reality principles; the subject is impelled closer to the brink of social and material death.

The three examples form a crescendo, culminating in (6) with the third, the impulse to suicide. Here, the discourse of Thanatos speaks itself without disguise; it is not here figurative or social death, but physical elimination that the perverse tends towards: 'rushing annihilation ... death and suffering ... we plunge, and are destroyed'. Again, the perverse also speaks the language of desire: 'the fierceness of the delight of its horror ... we now most vividly

desire it ... there is no passion in nature so demoniacally impatient'; at the same time, supernatural and diabolic images again signify the perverse as the other within - the idea of suicide is imaged as 'a shape, far more terrible than any genius, or any demon of a tale', and the 'demoniacal' passion for suicide shows the Imp at work, internal yet perceived as if it were external.

Here too, the contrary impulse to self-preservation exerts all its force: 'Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger ... our reason violently deters us from the brink'; and, at the eleventh hour, dictates a last-ditch resistance: 'a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss'. This 'sudden effort' may avert the suicide; or else an external intervention, as in Pym,¹⁴³ may 'check us' in the form of a 'friendly arm'. The conflict within, between Eros and Thanatos, self-preservation and self-destruction, remains finely balanced; but if suicide is not yet inevitable here, it will become so in the fourth and last example, the narrator's story.

In relation to these three examples, certain characteristics may be noted. First, in all three cases the perverse is associated with death, figurative (social) or actual; the terms 'mortification' (4) and 'ruinous' (5) anticipate the 'we ... are destroyed' of (6). Second, the perverse is, at the same time, signified in the lexis of desire: 'desire (noun)/wish/longing' (4), 'craving' (5), 'delight/desire (verb)/passion' (6). Thanatos speaks the language of desire; not the desire of Eros, but desire as an intrapsychic compulsion leading towards a determinate goal - here, death. Third, the contrary tendency - the ego's struggle for self-preservation - is simultaneously and insistently signified: in (4), the subject 'has every intention to please', in

(5) he is 'consumed with eagerness to commence the work', in (6) his 'first impulse is to shrink from the danger'; yet in (4) and (5) certainly, and in (6) probably, the 'conflict within us' (5), between self-destructive and self-preservative drives, is won by the former. Fourth and last, the perverse is, as in (3), paradoxically signified as that which cannot be signified, as that for which no adequate discourse exists. The perverse impulse is called 'incomprehensible' (4), 'nameless', 'unfathomable', 'indefinite' (5), 'unnameable' (6); for the narrator, it cannot be satisfactorily defined or explained. The negative adjectives ('in-', 'un-', '-less') signify the unnamed and yet recognised area of the mind that is the unconscious (although, at the same time, the textual attempt at defining the indefinable, attaching new signifieds to the old signifier 'perverse', may be read as a milestone on the road to the discovery of the unconscious).

The text now brings its "objective", "analytic" first half to a close; in (7), the attempt is made to define more clearly the relation of the perverse to the existing cultural order ('good'). It might appear superficially that the perverse is always and inevitably 'a direct instigation of the arch-fiend', i.e. inherently anti-social - in the first two examples obviously, and in the third in the sense that suicide is disapproved of in the existing culture. However, the narrator affirms that the perverse can, in certain circumstances, operate in favour of the dominant cultural norms; it is 'occasionally known to operate in furtherance of good'. This point is an important clarification, added in the B text;¹⁴⁴ it is thus stressed that the perverse is not necessarily or inevitably anti-social or "irrational". In psychoanalytic terms, it is, however, always self-destructive;

but this self-destruction may operate in the interest of the cultural order, at the expense of the physical survival of the perverse subject. This apparent contradiction may be explained in terms of the relation between Thanatos and the superego; the sadistic superego appropriates the death-drive in order to punish, and finally eliminate, the deviant subject.¹⁴⁵

The second half of the text, the narrator's story, begins in (8), where he identifies himself as a condemned murderer, and as 'one of the many uncounted victims of the Imp of the Perverse'; the latter phrase (added in the B text)¹⁴⁶ clarifies his self-presentation as one who is able to understand his situation, to 'explain ... why I am here' and give a 'cause for my wearing these fetters'. It may be added that the perverse is adduced to explain, not the murder, but the confession. At the same time, the narrator defines himself as standing outside the cultural order; the reader now realises that the narrative is not being delivered by a philosopher writing calmly at his desk, but by a condemned criminal speaking to an unspecified 'you'. This narrataire may be the chaplain, or may be purely imaginary; at all events, he may be read as representing the social "normality" from which the narrator is now estranged. The "normal" narrataire is, however, being asked to understand the "abnormal" narrator - not to condemn or reject him along with the uninformed 'rabble' who '[fancy him] mad'. The possibility of a certain continuity between "normal" and "abnormal" subjects is thus established.

The murder is not, as an isolated fact, determined by the perverse, although it is part of a larger chain of actions in which the perverse intervenes. The aggression is directed against another - a rich,

male, older relation - and the crime, which is carefully covered up, has the material result of increasing the narrator's wealth and strengthening his external insertion into the social order; 'worldly advantages [accrue]' from his 'sin' (10). Further, both murder and cover-up are the product of hyper-rational calculation: 'It is impossible that any deed could have been wrought with a more thorough deliberation.... I rejected a thousand schemes, because their accomplishment involved a chance of detection.' (9); 'I had left no shadow of a clue by which it would be possible to convict, or even to suspect me of the crime.' (10). He is, thus, a rational criminal, and in this resembles less the narrators of TTH and BC than the Minister D-;¹⁴⁷ and there is no Dupin to expose him. The self-preserved and self-aggrandising tendency is in control, determining (on one level) both murder and concealment. The aesthetic sense is also in operation, producing what De Quincey would have called a 'masterpiece of excellence';¹⁴⁸ the successful crime leaves the murderer with a 'rich ... sentiment of satisfaction' (10).

Nonetheless, subjectively the murder can only have the effect of placing the narrator outside the cultural law; external respectability is bought at the price of guilt. The crime is committed for an inheritance; the victim thus becomes a symbolic father, and in killing him the narrator re-enacts the Oedipal crime. Temporarily, he substitutes himself for the father; the coroner's verdict, "'Death by the visitation of God'" (9), places the murderer in the position of God (the Father), while the instrument of the murder, the poisoned candle, points symbolically to his usurpation of phallic power. However, the act of quasi-parricide generates a complex unconscious process which will eventually lead to confession. The presence of a

Dupin proves to be unnecessary, for the murderer betrays himself. The external "father" is easier to kill than the father within; under the pressure of the superego, which appropriates the self-destructive drive, he comes to be dominated by a powerful unconscious sense of guilt, which will sooner or later demand satisfaction.

At first, he seems not to feel any conscious guilt; the reference to 'sin' (10) may be read as a retrospective comment of the narrator, not the protagonist. Rather, he enters - for a while - a universe of pleasure; the 'rich ... sentiment of satisfaction' brings him 'delight' in which he 'revel(s)' (10). But this interlude has to be paid for; eventually, the patriarchal law reasserts itself within the subject. Thus, 'the pleasurable feeling grew, by scarcely perceptible gradations, into a haunting and harassing thought' (ibid.); pleasure is turned into pain, under the pressure of the unconscious sense of guilt. The comforting sense of security becomes a disturbing obsession, like the repeated memory of a song or 'opera air' by which one may be 'annoyed' and 'tormented' (10). Repetition ('I would perpetually catch myself ... repeating ... the phrase, "I am safe"' (ibid.)) transforms pleasure into unpleasure; that is, the compulsion to repeat comes into operation, working beyond the pleasure principle. Repetition, whether of a tune or of a sentence, undermines the subject's well-being; the theme is intensified in the example of the 'burthen', or refrain - precisely the element that is repeated within a song. The compulsion to repeat is thus activated in the service of the death-drive.

The process of self-destruction, thus initiated, now begins to work inexorably; already in (10), the text contains a submerged prolepsis of the dénouement, in the phrase 'I would perpetually catch myself

pondering ...', with its implicit pun on 'catch' (= find/arrest). The narrator will soon, in reality, "catch" or "arrest" himself by making himself liable to arrest. A similar pun occurs in (11): 'I arrested myself in the act of murmuring ...'; the very repetition of what is effectively the same pun serves to emphasise the workings of the compulsion to repeat, while the repeated reflexive construction ('catch myself/arrest myself') emphasises the self-directed (self-destructive) character of the narrator's utterances and actions. Further, these passages set in motion, once again, the mechanism of self-destruction through language mounted in (4); the narrator takes the first step to self-betrayal through the repetition of the phrase "'I am safe'" to the point where, in practice, its meaning is reversed into "I am unsafe". This process is emphasised through a lexis of metalanguage: 'the phrase' (10), 'these customary syllables' (11), 'these words' (12); textual reference to the phonological and syntactic materiality of the speaker's discourse indicates that it is his very discursive practice that will destroy him.

Once the idea of confession occurs to him, his death is only a matter of time. Signifiers of death invade his mind: 'I felt an icy chill creep to my heart' (freezing = death); 'my own casual self-suggestion ... confronted me, as if the very ghost of him whom I had murdered - and beckoned me on to death' (12). The image here recalls (5), where the 'ghost' of procrastination beckoned to social death. In the A text, the presence of death is further signified by the image of the shadow: 'I saw - or fancied that I saw - a vast and formless shadow that seemed to dog my footsteps ... with a cat-like and stealthy pace';¹⁴⁹ here, as in the deleted passage of (4) ('a shadow seems to flit across the brain'),¹⁵⁰ the shadow image signifies the invasion of the subject

by Thanatos, and connects obviously with the end of 'The Raven' (M; lines 106-108). Against the pressure of the death-drive, the self-preservative tendency makes a last-ditch resistance: 'I made an effort to shake off this nightmare of the soul.... Could I have torn out my tongue, I would have done it' (13); at this extreme juncture, the loss of his tongue (= silence) seems preferable to death, of which, nonetheless, it remains a metonym. But he knows in advance that 'in no instance' has he 'successfully resisted' the perverse urge to self-destruction (12), which, in this instance, will lead him all the way to death.

The confessional urge, and the resistance to it, together serve to disturb the narrator's visible, public behaviour: 'I bounded like a madman through the crowded thoroughfares.' (13). His actions appear mad and anti-social, recalling those of the man of the crowd.¹⁵¹ Finally they provoke the 'populace' to pursue him as an unacceptable, alien element. When he is caught, his reactions, once again, anticipate death: 'I experienced all the pains of suffocation: I became blind, and deaf'; and diabolic imagery again intervenes to signify the operations of Thanatos: 'some invisible fiend, I thought, struck me with his broad palm upon the back' (13). The perverse is here externalised as a 'fiend', but he does not fail to recognise that in reality the confession was determined from within ('I spoke ...'); the force that induces it is 'invisible' because it is unconscious. This point is clarified in the B text; A has: 'it was no mortal hand, I knew, that struck me violently'.¹⁵² The change from 'knew' to 'thought' suggests, in the second version, that what for the protagonist is an objective 'fiend' is for the narrator simply a metaphor for the perverse. At all events, in the confession it is another that speaks;

the narrator reports it as the summarised transcript of the discourse of others ('They say that I spoke ...' (14)), thus reducing himself to the object of an alien discourse. But what speaks him is less the onlookers than the unconscious.

Finally, he undoes himself through language: 'They say that I spoke with a distinct enunciation, but with marked emphasis and passionate hurry ..., before concluding the brief but pregnant sentences that consigned me to the hangman and to hell.' (14). Ironically, whereas in (4) it was the speaker's prolixity that destroyed him, here brevity is enlisted in the service of the perverse; the self-destructive potential of language is, it seems, endlessly flexible. The pun on 'sentences' ('sentence' may be taken both in its metalingual and in its juridical sense) further signifies his discourse as self-destructive, self-annihilating; it is, besides, the third occurrence in the text of a pun where the concealed sense of the word points towards destruction ('catch' (10); 'arrested' (11); 'sentences' (14)). Once again, the compulsion to repeat operates through language. The adjective 'pregnant' is charged with irony, since the narrator's discourse is - like Sin in Milton's Paradise Lost (1667)¹⁵³ - pregnant only with Death;¹⁵⁴ the wages of 'sin' (10), or contestation of the patriarchal law, are death. The pregnancy image serves, further, to "feminise" the narrator and thus "castrate" him, in subordination to the Law. Besides, the text once again draws attention to the materiality of language, stressing the characteristics of his speech-act ('distinct enunciation', 'marked emphasis'), and its syntactic components ('sentences'); while the status of the confession as a piece of discourse is emphasised through its narration as a message within a message within a message (the protagonist's discourse is transmitted

through the onlookers' report and recoded in the narrator's discourse). This emphasis on metalanguage and relays of discourse, however, only serves to suggest that the narrator's language is, in the end, determined by another, overriding language - that of the unconscious. At this point, he may well declare, in the face of death: 'But why shall I say more?' (16). There is nothing more for him to speak, for the unconscious has spoken him to the end.

In the narrator's death and exile from culture, both Thanatos and the superego attain their goals. The destructive impulse has led to the elimination of the subject, to his social and physical death; the murder may thus, in the context of the whole chain of events, be seen as the first step on the road to suicide (murder - reinforced sense of guilt - confession - execution). At the same time, the superego, as internalised agency of the patriarchal law, has exacted its revenge on the deviant subject; by the law of talion, the death of the "father" requires the death of the rebellious "son". The superego has appropriated the destructive tendencies of Thanatos, in the interest of the cultural order. Negation of the Law is punished with death; the remarkable pressure exerted in this tale by the self-destructive tendency does not seem to be altogether innocent of connexion with the authoritarian structures of patriarchal culture.

In the end, the reader of IP may legitimately ask: what was it that motivated the murder, and therefore set in motion the whole process of self-destruction? The desire for money is clearly not a sufficient motive, since the whole text is based on the thesis that the subject tends to act against its rational interest. It may be suggested, tentatively, that the last-instance determinant of the murder is not

the perverse but the superego. If the narrator suffers from an unusually severe superego, then the whole murder-to-confession sequence may be seen as a re-run of the original Oedipal drama of "crime" and "punishment" - only this time, the crime is a real murder, and its punishment, not symbolic castration, but real death. It may be, then, that the narrator committed the crime at the behest of the superego, in order to provide an external justification for, and reinforcement of, an existing unconscious sense of guilt - to give the superego something to work on to ensure his self-destruction. He may thus be an example of the "criminal from a sense of guilt", as described by Freud in 'Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work' (1916)¹⁵⁵ and 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928).¹⁵⁶ The criminal from a sense of guilt commits a crime so as to give a concrete justification to an unconscious guilt-feeling of Oedipal origin. In the 1928 paper, Freud writes: 'It is a fact that large groups of criminals want to be punished. Their super-ego demands it and so saves itself the necessity for inflicting the punishment itself.'¹⁵⁷ Dostoyevsky's involvement in illegal political activities is thus linked to the need to be punished for his death-wish against his father.¹⁵⁸ In the case of Poe's narrator, the perverse can be seen as facilitating the work of the superego; the murder and confession are both part of the grand unconscious scheme of self-punishment.

But if the narrator's perverseness is not unrelated to the patriarchal law, nor is it free of connexion with the alienating effects of early capitalism. The text signifies itself as unequivocally "modern", with its metropolitan setting ('the streets' (11), 'the crowded thoroughfares' (13)), which suggests not a small town, but, rather, the world of 'The Man of the Crowd', and with its references to the masses

('the rabble' (8), 'the populace' (13)), and to the contemporary legal apparatus (the coroner (9), 'the fullest judicial conviction' (14)) - not to mention the "topical" discussion of phrenology. The narrator is, then, signified as a nineteenth-century city-dweller, and as such, liable to the alienating pressures of capitalism. Indeed, as pointed out above,¹⁵⁹ there is one moment when, as he 'bounded like a madman' through the streets (13), he almost seems to be the alienated protagonist of 'The Man of the Crowd'. It is true that he seems to be more integrated into society than the man of the crowd, or the narrator of that tale; before the murder, he was inserted in some way into his culture's kinship structures, and after, the wealth deriving from the crime no doubt bought him a certain respectability. On the other hand, he seems to have no affectively significant object-relations, and dies alone, explaining himself to a stranger (or to no-one). It may be concluded, then, that the determining instance of Thanatos is reinforced by the isolating and atomising pressures of the developing mode of production.

To conclude the analysis of this text, it may be interesting to return to the formal question of its generically "split" character.¹⁶⁰ It has been established that not only is the text split ("essay"/"tale"), but so too is the narrator, divided between "rational" and "irrational", self-preservative and self-destructive tendencies, Eros and Thanatos, ego and id, ego and superego. The splitting on the level of the signified is thus reinforced by the splitting of the text on the level of the signifying chain. There are, of course, obvious continuities between the two halves of the text, notably the various prolepses of the "tale" in the "essay" (self-destruction through language, suicide, etc.); but the stubborn refusal of this text to constitute

a formal "unity" serves to undermine any notion of the "full" text or subject. At the same time, the repeated textual emphasis on the destructive role of language explodes the myth of the "full" subject constituted by an unproblematic, unitary discourse. IP is a divided text that signifies a divided subject, under the sign of Thanatos and the shadow of the Law.

iii. 'The Black Cat'

'The Black Cat' (1843) exhibits obvious continuities with IP; not only the concept of 'perverseness' expounded in the ninth paragraph and analysed above,¹⁶¹ but also the prison-confession format, the urban setting, and the murder/self-betrayal sequence. However, there is a vital difference, in that the victim is female; Eros is at work as well as Thanatos, and the narrator's destructiveness fuses with his sexuality in his sadistic relationship with his wife. Indeed, it may be claimed that the text is less about his relations with his two cats than his relations with his wife. The analysis that follows will lay special stress on this sexual-political dimension, and on the element of domestic violence.

Readings of this tale are multiple. Certain traditional critics (Gayle D. Anderson, 'Demonology in "The Black Cat"', 1977;¹⁶² Mabbott, 1978)¹⁶³ insist on a supernatural reading, in terms of reincarnation, demonology or witchcraft. The two cats would then be one and the same, the second a reincarnation of the first, the first a witch or demon in disguise; and the narrator would be a victim of diabolic possession. Traditional moralistic readings are also found. Thus James W. Gargano, in the two essays ('"The Black Cat": Perverseness Reconsidered', 1960;¹⁶⁴ 'The Question of Poe's Narrators', 1963)¹⁶⁵

discussed earlier in this chapter,¹⁶⁶ employs a self-validating discourse of "morality"; while R. C. Frushell ("An Incarnate Nightmare": Moral Grotesquerie in "The Black Cat", 1972)¹⁶⁷ sees both cats as signifying the narrator's 'conscience',¹⁶⁸ with the first cat also representing his 'affections' and the second cat his 'amoral self'.¹⁶⁹

Most critics, however, have read the tale as primarily a psychological and criminological document, thus following Baudelaire ('Edgar Allan Poe, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages', 1852) for whom the tale was 'ce terrible poëme du crime'.¹⁷⁰ Baudelaire's analysis stresses the narrator's psychological isolation, his 'humeur taciturne et solitaire',¹⁷¹ his alcoholism ('la rêverie noire de la taverne'),¹⁷² and, as seen above,¹⁷³ his 'perversity'—all, presumably, determinants of his criminality. For Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933), as noted above,¹⁷⁴ the narrator's perverse actions are determined by unconscious 'sadistic impulses',¹⁷⁵ and by the 'self-punishing confessional urge';¹⁷⁶ the cats are totemic mother-symbols, and his hatred of them derives from unconscious 'hatred ... of the castrated and castrating mother'.¹⁷⁷ Thus, 'the castration fear ... lies at the core of the tale'.¹⁷⁸ The narrator's destructive tendencies are, then, related to the problematic of female sexuality, to the fear of "feminisation" and the active woman. It may be noted in this context that Bonaparte's analysis of BC includes a reference to her discussion of the tale with Freud (and, thus, the only specific comment made by the founder of psychoanalysis on any of Poe's texts); the hanging of the first cat is seen by both Bonaparte and Freud as a symbolic rephallisation of the dead mother, and therefore as illuminating a detail in the Oedipus story - Jocasta's death. Bonaparte comments: 'The tale of "The Black Cat" may serve as exegesis on the venerable myth of Oedipus, King of Thebes.... Freud

himself, in discussing "The Black Cat" with me, has thus completed the interpretation of the Oedipus myth by providing the explanation for one feature which remained obscure: Jocasta's hanging.¹⁷⁹ This connexion will be returned to below.¹⁸⁰

Other psychoanalytic-oriented readings include those of Daniel Hoffman (Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, 1972), and Roberta Reeder ('"The Black Cat" as a Study in Repression', 1974).¹⁸¹ Hoffman, expanding on Bonaparte, sees the two cats as 'a displacement of the wife'.¹⁸² Reeder, in a Jungian analysis, claims that the narrator's repressed 'instinctual psychic energy' returns in a destructive form; the two cats are both symbols of these 'repressed instinctual forces', of the 'subconscious' [sic] and of the 'anima', or female principle. The narrator is seen as projecting his destructive impulses on to the second cat, while both the hanging of the first cat and the murder of the wife are read as attempts to destroy the 'anima'.¹⁸³ Without accepting all of Reeder's Jungian discourse, a materialist analysis of the text may accept the emphasis on projection and, once again, the cat-woman equation.

More empirical psychological readings, in the context of nineteenth-century theories, are offered by Allan Smith ('The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe', 1973), and Elizabeth Phillips (Edgar Allan Poe - An American Imagination, 1979).¹⁸⁴ For Smith, as seen above,¹⁸⁵ the cats symbolise the wife, and the text is an instance of a specific psychological process, the "association of ideas";¹⁸⁶ the narrator, through a process of symbolisation, comes to make an 'association in his mind between the cat (i.e. the second cat) and his wife', and his hatred of the cat is a displaced expression of

his 'concealed animosity' to her.¹⁸⁷ Once again, the cat appears as a female symbol; Smith does not, however, consider the origins of the hatred of the wife, nor what might motivate the choice of the cat as symbol. He adds a criminological dimension, observing that the text exemplifies the 'murdering impulse' as identified by Benjamin Rush (Sixteen Introductory Lectures, 1811).¹⁸⁸ For Phillips, the narrator suffers from what Isaac Ray (A Treatise on the Mental Jurisprudence of Insanity, 1838) called 'moral mania' - disturbance of social and familial relations, with tendencies to hallucination and domestic violence.¹⁸⁹ To the above may be added the psychological/ criminological comments of Vincent Buranelli (Edgar Allan Poe, 1961), who sees the text as a realist study in the psychopathology of crime, narrating a murder 'committed under ... abnormal psychological pressures';¹⁹⁰ and Cortázar's reading ('Préface' to Poe, Histoires extraordinaires, 1973), as mentioned above, of the narrator as a sadistic criminal.¹⁹¹

But if BC is to be read as a psychological and criminological study, it is one narrated by the "mad" criminal himself. The reader has, therefore, to establish the degree of reliability of the narrator in order to determine what model of madness and of crime is being presented. The narrator of BC is visibly less reliable than that of IP, given that BC contains apparently supernatural events, whereas in IP the supernatural appears only as a source of metaphors. For BC the reader clearly has, at the end, to opt between "étrange" and "merveilleux" explanations; indeed, for Todorov (Introduction à la littérature fantastique, 1968), the tale is one of the few examples in Poe's work of the fantastic 'au sens strict', forcing the reader to opt, at the end, for one reading to the exclusion of the other.¹⁹²

Of the possible supernatural elements in the narrative, the most prominent is the question of the identity of the second cat; other events which "may" have a supernatural origin are the gallows-mark on the second cat's breast (20), and the figure of a cat that appears on the wall after the fire (11-12). The second cat appears in the tavern as if from nowhere, with the landlord as witness (14-15), but it must be remembered that the narrator is 'half-stupified' (14) and his perceptions are therefore unreliable; the gallows-mark, equally, may be a hallucination or misperception, and is interpreted as such by both Phillips and Smith.¹⁹³ There is no reason why the reader should be forced to see the second cat as a reincarnation of the first. As for the plaster cat on the wall, the narrator himself offers an "étrange" explanation (12); while Smith, unconvinced, prefers to see the whole thing as a hallucination.¹⁹⁴ The problem here is that the cat-figure is also "seen" (?) by a 'dense crowd' of onlookers (11); therefore either the hallucination has to be collective, or else the narrator's perceptions at this point are so disturbed that he has to be considered totally unreliable for the whole incident (11-12). Alternatively, as narrating subject he may be read, like William Wilson, as suffering from paramnesias.¹⁹⁵ At all events, in spite of the complexities that any "étrange" explanation will run into, there are no unequivocally supernatural events in the text, and the narrative may legitimately be read as a collage of accurate memories, remembered hallucinations and paramnesias. The narrator's admitted alcoholism (which would have produced delirium tremens) and psychological disturbance (while denying madness ('mad am I not'), he admits to obsession with a 'phantasm' (1)) make it perfectly permissible for the reader to give no more credence to his delusions and hallucinations than to Pap Finn's 'snakes' and 'Angel of Death' in Twain's Huckleberry Finn

In spite of his relative unreliability, the narrator does make some attempt to understand his situation, through his exposition of the perverse in (9); further, at the beginning, he raises the possibility that the future development of psychology will provide a discourse that will make sense of his 'wild ... narrative': 'Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place - some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.' (1) He affirms, then, the possibility of a 'natural' (i.e. non-supernatural) and 'logical' explanation of his history; this is coherent with the overall depth-psychological project observed above to be present in Poe's work.¹⁹⁷

The textual evidence, then, favours an "étrange" reading. The "étrange" option must, however, take account of the title. Superficially, the title - 'The Black Cat', not 'The Black Cats' - would seem to favour a "merveilleux" reading, implying that the cats are one and the same. However, it may also be read as indicating: 1) that the important cat is not the first but the second - the one which the narrator sees as responsible for his death; or 2) that the symbolic value of the two cats is essentially the same, and that the text is less about one, or two, particular black cats than "the black cat", as generalised signifier of woman.

In the light of the above comments, the text will now be analysed in detail. The narrative may be divided into two parts: the first

(1-13) is dominated by the first cat, Pluto, and climaxes in the hanging scene; the second (14-32) is dominated by the second cat, and culminates in the murder and self-betrayal. In each part, then, there is a progressive escalation of violence; part 2 repeats the movement of part 1 on a "higher" level (violence against animals is replaced by murder). The text will now be analysed in linear sequence; Pluto will, on occasion, be referred to as C1, and the second cat as C2. Analysis will centre on the narrator's relations with both cats and with his wife.

The tale is, it must be stressed, essentially one of domestic violence, of cruelty and murder within the family. This point is made clearly in the first sentence: 'For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen ...' (1). On the one hand, then, the fictional events are 'wild', that is, anomalous; on the other, they are 'homely', that is, they take place within the "normal" environment of home and family - a point emphasised further in Baudelaire's translation ('Le Chat Noir', 1853),¹⁹⁸ which reads: 'la très-étrange et pourtant très-familière histoire', so that 'homely' becomes 'familière', with connotations, through lexical proximity, of 'familial'.¹⁹⁹ The 'homely' character of the tale is reiterated later in (1), in the phrase 'mere household events' and in the reference in (3) to 'domestic pets'; later in the narrative, C2 is described as rapidly 'domesticated' (16), and the wife goes into the cellar 'upon some household errand' (23). The text contains, then, a plethora of terms signifying the homely/domestic/familial/familiar/known. Within the "natural", "familiar", "known" environment of the couple's household, strange,

disturbing events occur that will finally tear that household apart. And, beside, those events will be bizarre, fear-producing - in short, uncanny. The tale provides, in fact - as noted above²⁰⁰ - a paradigmatic instance of Freud's unheimlich; the narrative is simultaneously heimlich (homely) and unheimlich (wild, uncanny). The family becomes the site of disturbing events; and the disturbing events, in their turn, can be shown to have their origins in the family. Heimlich and unheimlich thus exist in a dialectical relation, here as in 'Usher', where objects 'familiar' from 'infancy' stir up 'unfamiliar' fancies in the narrator (M II, 400-401).²⁰¹ Heimlich/homely/familiar; unheimlich/wild/unfamiliar - the antithesis is resolved, in BC as in 'Usher', by reference to the narrator's 'infancy' ('From my infancy I was noted ...' (2)). The familial, once-familiar origins of the unfamiliar lie in the Oedipal (and pre-Oedipal) past.

In (2), the narrator describes his childhood. It should be noted at once that his insertion into the power-structures of patriarchy is problematic; he is not maximally socialised into the "male" role laid down by his culture. He exhibits such qualities as 'tenderness of heart' and 'docility' which make him 'the jest of my companions', and mark him as "feminised" and only marginally integrated into male circles. Thus his reference, a few sentences later, to his 'manhood' (= adulthood, but also = maleness) may be seen as a defensive reaffirmation of a "masculinity" that he feels is permanently under threat. He is thus an anomalous subject within his own culture, "guilty" of transgressing role-stereotype norms. If, as will be argued below, he suffers from a pathological fear of female sexuality and from an exceptionally punitive superego, it may be that both these characteristics are not unrelated to his "deviant" position in relation to

gender norms.

At all events, his lack of social integration is made clear by his expressed fondness for animals, and his preference of the 'love of a brute' over the 'paltry friendship ... of mere Man' (2); affectively charged relations with animals become a substitute for human object-relations (Reeder notes his avoidance of 'normal human relationships').²⁰² His libidinal desires are sublimated into love of animals; hence the affective intensity of his discourse, in the phrases 'never was so happy as when ... caressing them' and 'the intensity of the gratification' (2). This necessity of sublimation points to a high degree of repression; his parents' 'indulg[ing]' of his love for animals (ibid.) does not necessarily mean they were "liberal" in relation to his infant sexuality! What is repressed, at this stage, is both sexuality and aggressiveness. The latter will surface unmistakably later; the former will only emerge in the distorted form of sadism.

His marriage no doubt represents an attempt to reaffirm his "masculinity" and enter the Law of the Father in a position of power; whether it is sexually fulfilling may be doubted, given his continuing need of animals. At first there appears to be a certain coherence in the marriage, as implied by the pronoun 'we' (3); but by (6), violence has already intruded. The narrator attributes his first outbursts of violence to his drinking ('the Fiend Intemperance'), but 'intemperance' itself may be a means of compensation for the lack of gratification in his marriage (given his alienation from his own sexuality); it may also be a means of affirming his threatened "masculinity", in the all-male environment of the tavern. Soon, the narrator becomes - to

put it bluntly - a wife-beater: 'At length, I even offered her personal violence.' (6) His repressed aggressiveness thus surfaces, directed against the other, and fusing with his sexual desires in the distorted form of sadism. At the same time, his "male" status is reiterated by the reduction of his wife to the passive object of violence. Meanwhile, his aggressiveness is directed not only outward - against wife and pets - but also against himself, as through drinking he enters a long process of self-destruction. The diabolic imagery ('the Fiend Intemperance') suggests, here as in IP, the operations of the unconscious; alcohol speaks the language of Thanatos.

As the narrator's relation with his wife degenerates, so does that with his first cat, Pluto. This cat dominates the text from (4) to (13); its symbolic role has been variously interpreted, and requires redefinition. As shown above,²⁰³ the first cat has been read as signifying: 1) the female in general, and the narrator's wife in particular; 2) the narrator's repressed affectivity; 3) "conscience", or the workings of the superego. Not all critics differentiate clearly between the two cats (e.g. Frushell does,²⁰⁴ but Smith does not);²⁰⁵ their symbolic function is best considered separately, since, while both are objects of the narrator's sadism, it is at different stages of his career, and with different results.

C1 is named Pluto (in contrast to its nameless replacement). The name is obviously symbolic, connoting the infernal,²⁰⁶ and, therefore, the unconscious.²⁰⁷ In the act of naming the cat, then, the narrator projects - and thus tries to exorcise - his own "infernal" (culturally unacceptable) tendencies, both sexual and aggressive. The destructive element is, however, at this stage present only in potential in his

relation to the cat. The cat's signification is, for the moment, primarily sexual.

Reeder notes 'the general psychological association of cats and females';²⁰⁸ and, indeed, C1 is several times associated with female figures. The narrator's wife 'made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise' (4); the cat is thus doubly associated with women, by incorporation as object into the wife's discourse, and by the witch comparison, which connotes it with femaleness in its prohibited (active, destructive) aspect.²⁰⁹ Later, the narrator's affection for the cat, like his affection for animals in general, can be seen as a displacement of the desire he cannot, or will not, feel for his wife; while his subsequent hatred for it is a partial displacement of his hatred for her (5-9). Once he has reached the stage of battering her, his hatred is clearly conscious, but he is, at this stage, not fully aware of his hatred of the female in its full extent; hence the partial displacement on to the cat.

The narrator's antagonism to his wife is heavily overdetermined. On the one hand, it is a distorted expression of his repressed sexuality; on the other, it derives from the unconscious fear of female sexuality and its possible active emergence to threaten male power (hence the reference to witches). This fear - which will later be shown to underlie such tales as 'Morella' and 'Ligeia'²¹⁰ - is acute in the narrator, given his 'docility' (2) and his consequent problematic grip on his male role. Woman is here seen unconsciously as a "castrated" being (excluded from power) now; yet as potentially "castrating" (capable of assuming power and overturning the patriarchal law). The fear of woman no doubt

derives in part from memories of the active pre-Oedipal mother, but also points to unconscious collective male fears of a non-patriarchal future. Bonaparte's view that the narrator's fear of the cat derives from 'hatred ... of the castrated and castrating mother'²¹¹ is thus essentially correct, but requires reformulation in the context of sexual politics.

This hatred of the female is discharged, in its full extent, on to the cat as symbolic representative of woman. Hence the two sadistic attacks of it - the excision of the eye (7), followed by the hanging (9). In both cases, the sexual symbolism is evident; Bonaparte suggests that the excision of the eye signifies castration of the mother (or wife), and, as mentioned above,²¹² that the hanging constitutes a symbolic rephallisation of the woman.²¹³ The relation of the fictional events to the Oedipal drama is unusually direct; the Freud-Bonaparte reading links the excision of the eye to the blinding of Oedipus, and the hanging to the death of Jocasta. Male fear of castration is accompanied by fear of the active, "phallic" woman.

A brief digression is here in order; it may be asked why femaleness should be symbolised, in this tale, by a male cat. In contrast, elsewhere in Poe's work, female cats appear with characteristics similar to those of the cats of BC. In 'Instinct Versus Reason' (1840; M II, 477-79), a female cat is described, with 'not a white hair about her', and reference is made to the belief that 'black cats are all of them witches' (479); while 'Desultory Notes on Cats' (1844; M II, 1095-97) contains the phrase: 'We apply the feminine gender and pronoun to cats, because all cats are she' (1096). The cat in 'Hans Pfaall' (1835) is also female (Beaver, Science Fiction, p. 41). But if 'all

cats are she', then why a male cat in BC? It may be suggested that the cat's biological maleness has the function of concealing its symbolic role from the narrator (and from the naïve reader); it may be seen, further, as signifying the female-become-"male", the possibility of active female sexuality symbolically realised.

Pluto does not remain in the role of the narrator's passive victim. In (7), just before the excision, he bites his drunken owner, in self-defence: 'in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth'. The effect on the narrator is traumatising; the bite symbolises castration, and the threatening teeth may be compared to those of Berenice, which terrorise Egaeus.²¹⁴ Indeed, the bite signifies, not only woman-as-castrator, but also, given that it is in self-defence, the possibility of female revenge on the male oppressor; the cat may be compared with Berenice, in her dying act of vengeance, when she attacks her violator with her nails.²¹⁵ In the context of BC, the cat's action symbolises the possibility of revenge and rebellion on the part of the narrator's principal victim, his wife. Hence the extremity of his reaction; his response to this attack on his "masculinity" is to "castrate" the offending creature, excising its eye. The 'damnable atrocity' (7) is thus an attempt at destroying, or at least reducing, female sexuality.

However, the excision does not satisfy him; the 'frightful appearance' (9) of the empty socket disturbs him, haunting him with the continuing possibility of his own castration. The cat is now the castrated being which he fears he may become.²¹⁶ He comes to feel the need to take the cat's life - 'to continue and finally consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute' (9). He hangs it, in an over-

determined act that derives from the following motivations: 1) the 'perverse' self-destructive tendency which he identifies at this point, and which has been discussed above;²¹⁷ 2) the sadism (erotised aggression) that characterises his relation to his wife, displaced on to the cat (the sexual element in the hanging is implied in the double sense of 'consummate'); and 3) the unconscious desire to destroy female sexuality, which can now be satisfied only by the physical elimination of the offending female symbol. However, the choice of hanging as a method of execution is ironic, since, as already noted, this constitutes a symbolic rephallisation of the "castrated" cat/woman. That is to say, female sexuality proves indestructible in spite of the male attempt to destroy it. The dead cat now begins to take its revenge, terrorising the narrator in his imagination.

After the hanging, he becomes obsessed with the cat's image: 'For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat' (13); here, as with the 'phantasma' of Berenice's teeth (M II, 216),²¹⁸ the mental image points to the insistence of the fear of female sexuality in the unconscious. Now, after its death, the symbolic function of C1 becomes more complex; it comes to signify, not only 1) female sexuality, but also 2) the narrator's own (self-)destructive tendencies, which it externalises through projection. At this stage, he admits to his own 'violence' (7) and to his self-destructive 'perverseness' (9); but, at the same time, to some extent externalises these tendencies, by presenting himself as victim of the cat. The incident of the cat-figure in the wall, which, as shown above, may be hallucinatory,²¹⁹ implies that he now sees himself as persecuted by the cat; that is, he is projecting his own death-drive on to it. The figure fills him with 'terror'

(12), for the cat is now in a dominant position; its swollen, 'gigantic' size gives it phallic connotations. The cat here represents the possibility of the accession of woman to phallic power.

In life, the cat had connotations of destructiveness only in the name Pluto; but now, in the persecutory figure on the wall, there arises the germ of the narrator's later paranoid relation to C2. Unable to forget the cat, he looks for a substitute - 'another pet of the same species ..., with which to supply its place' (13). He thus reveals himself to be in the grip of an unconscious determinism which will oblige him to repeat, with another cat, the same pattern of sadism and paranoia; he is acting, in short, under the compulsion to repeat.

The second cat (C2), as pointed out above, is not identical to C1 in its symbolic function. While it too signifies the female sexuality that the narrator fears, and therefore symbolises his wife, it functions, far more markedly than its predecessor, as an externalisation of his (self-)destructive drive. He constantly sees it as a persecutor, from (17) up to the end. At the same time, since the cat is the instrument of his arrest, it may also be seen as representing the cultural law which he transgresses through murder. It seems clear, then, that the two cats should be differentiated.

The role of C2 as signifier of the female is made clear from the moment when the narrator approaches it: 'Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand ...' (15). His 'caresses' in (16) constitute it as sexual object, but its sensual response in (15) suggests active potential. At the same time, its namelessness (in contrast to Pluto) implies that, on the one hand, it

will come to signify, more forcefully than the earlier cat, the silenced discourse of female sexuality; and, on the other hand, it corresponds to the 'nameless' destructive energies of IP.²²⁰ That the narrator cannot give a name to the second cat suggests that this time round, under the grip of the compulsion to repeat, he is being spoken, more insistently than before, by mental forces that he cannot himself name.

The cat/wife association is once again constituted when he brings C2 home: 'it ... became immediately a great favourite with my wife' (16). Its one-eyed (castrated) status 'only endeared it to my wife' (18), no doubt because, accepting passively her own role as "castrated" being, she was able to accept the equally "castrated" cat.²²¹ It is, besides, she who calls her husband's attention to the gallows-mark on the cat (20).²²²

The narrator soon comes to detest the cat, with violent and increasing intensity: 'dislike' becomes 'hatred', then 'unutterable loathing' (17). This 'loathing' is clearly related to the cat/wife association, and may be seen as having two determinants: 1) his hatred of woman as "castrated" being: 'What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery ... that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes.' (18);²²³ 2) its physically active, demonstrative character, which suggests that the "castration" is only incomplete (one eye remains) or deceptive, and that it can still reassert itself as active cat (= woman). The gallows-mark, whether "real" or hallucinatory, represents not only the cultural law but also, as with the hanged Pluto, the possibility of female rephallisation; the cat's 'evident fondness' for him (17) 'disgusted and annoyed'

him, since it symbolises the prohibited sexual demonstrativeness of woman. This 'disgust' at female sexuality accounts for the reference to 'its loathsome caresses' (19), and for the comparison of its 'odious presence' to the 'breath of a pestilence' (17); the 'pestilence' image suggests that what the cat symbolises is a threat to the social fabric (as a plague threatens people's physical survival, so female activity threatens the survival of male power).

Hence his fear of its (castrating) 'long and sharp claws' (19), which recall Pluto's teeth (7); hence its terrifying presence in what is presumably the conjugal bed: 'I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face' (21). The lexis of fear and of silence ('unutterable') makes it clear that the true object of fear here is female sexuality, seen as an alien and unspeakable 'thing'. The cat is, further, compared to 'an incarnate Night-Mare ... incumbent eternally upon my heart!' (21), which suggests that it is seen metaphorically as a succubus, or female demon;²²⁴ while the 'heart' that is threatened is clearly what, in Balzac's 'Sarrasine' (1830),²²⁵ is referred to as 'ce que nous nommons le coeur, faute de mot!'.²²⁶ As Barthes points out in his commentary in S/Z (1970), in Balzac's text 'le "coeur" ne peut désigner que le sexe';²²⁷ similarly, in this passage of BC, the narrator's 'absolute dread of the beast' (19) is the dread of castration (at the hands of the active woman).

The narrator's hatred and fear of the cat, as castrated and castrating being, is clearly a displaced expression of his antagonism to his wife. This, too, intensifies in the second part, to the point of habitual sadism; 'my uncomplaining wife, alas!', was the most usual

and the most patient of sufferers' at the hands of his 'ungovernable outbursts of ... fury' (22). This element of sadism is further intensified in Baudelaire's translation, where the wife becomes 'mon souffre-douleur ordinaire, la plus patiente victime'.²²⁸ Violence becomes 'usual', installs itself in the household, with the woman as victim. The narrator admits the existence of his sadism, but not its extent; he refuses to see himself as capable, without provocation, of pushing his sadism to its logical conclusion and killing his wife. Nor is he able to locate the origins of his antagonism to her, in his fear of female sexuality. His wife, on her part, passively accepts the situation, allowing herself to be battered, as the painter's wife in 'The Oval Portrait' allows her husband to destroy her health; the one is 'uncomplaining', the other 'smiled on ... uncomplainingly' (M II, 665).²²⁹ In each case, the woman consents in her own oppression, reducing herself to a mere object. Another passive Rowena, the wife in BC shows no signs of activity or resistance, no signs of metamorphosing into a Ligeia.²³⁰

The d enouement occurs in (23); the narrator's antagonism to the cat reaches the point of no return, under what he interprets as a provocation: 'The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness.' However, his wife intervenes, in her one and only act of resistance while alive: 'this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife'. He interprets this as an 'interference', a disturbance of the structures of male power; this act of female rebellion, like the first cat's bite in (7), provokes a violent reaction. The cycle of violence repeats itself in an ascending spiral; the punishment for insubordination is this time not mutilation but death. At last his aggressiveness is

directed fully against its true object; what was intended unconsciously as a symbolic attack on the female (the attempted killing of the cat) becomes an actual uxoricide: 'I ... buried the axe in her brain'. Woman's capacity for independent thought, for self-definition, is thus symbolically destroyed as the murder re-establishes male power.

The cat/wife symbolism thus culminates in the murder; the axe-blow reaches its unconscious goal, the woman. The cat, in this section, has a further symbolic value; it also signifies, at certain points, the narrator's (self-)destructive tendencies. He sees himself as persecuted by the animal: 'It followed my footsteps with ... pertinacity ... it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down' (19); 'the creature left me no moment alone' (21). In thus seeing the cat as a consciously malevolent persecutor, the narrator is projecting on to it his own 'perverse' tendencies. For the cat/perverse identification, one may compare the deleted passage of IP where the narrator imagines himself persecuted by a 'vast and formless shadow' that follows him 'with a cat-like and stealthy pace';²³¹ this cat-like shadow is clearly the perverse. Thus, in longing to 'rid myself of the monster' (20), the narrator of BC is longing to rid himself of a part of himself; by externalising his perverse tendencies in the cat and then killing it, he aims to preserve himself from them. However, the cat (the perverse) will 'overthrow' him, both literally and metaphorically; the cat 'nearly [throws him] down' (19) and, in the cellar, 'nearly [throws him] headlong' (23), thus corresponding to the perverse tendency which leads him to his 'final and irrevocable overthrow' (9). In the cat's actions, the idea of 'overthrowing' is taken to the letter; but what really overthrows him is an internal force. His pathological

hatred of the cat, expressed in terms like 'monster' (20) and 'thing' (21), suggests that it signifies the 'monster' or 'thing' within, the destructive unconscious impulses that he refuses to recognise in their full force.

The murder having been accomplished, the narrator at first seems to be reinserted into the structures of male power; the threat posed by female sexuality has been removed by the physical elimination of the woman. Thus, for the moment, his actions are no longer marked by 'madness' and 'rage' (23), but by rationality, by calculated 'deliberation' (24); by crediting himself with "male" rationality he reaffirms his precarious "masculinity". He considers various means of covering up the crime. One is 'cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire' (24); in this fantasy, the female body is dismembered, reduced to a series of fragments. The woman/object association is continued in his next idea of 'packing it in a box, as if merchandize', where woman is reduced to commodity status. In the end, however, he decides to wall up the corpse in the cellar. This strategy, too, tends symbolically to reduce woman to subordinate status; female sexuality is "walled up", hidden out of sight. Concealment is, however, not destruction, any more than repression is abolition. The corpse is deposited inside the wall, and the wall reconstituted. It appears homogeneous, undisturbed: 'no eye could detect any thing suspicious' (25); ... 'I re-laid the whole structure as it originally stood.... The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed.' (26) The wall now comes to symbolise the apparently coherent social fabric, purged of the least "suspicion" of female insubordination; and, also, the false "unity" of the repressed male subject, undisturbed by conscious

fears of female sexuality. The 'whole structure' of patriarchy - its social structure and its character-structure - seems to have been 're-laid ... as it originally stood'.

The narrator's reaction is euphoric: 'I looked around triumphantly' (26); the triumph is, clearly, that of male power. He is able, temporarily, to see himself as "full", undisturbed subject. The cat has disappeared; but he believes, in his megalomania, that its absence derives from fear of him: 'alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, (it) forebore to present itself in my present mood' (27). He believes he is now sufficiently "male" to terrorise the cat into submission. In its absence (and, of course, his wife's), he 'soundly and tranquilly slept' (27). Free from both woman and the cat that symbolised woman, his male subjectivity sees itself as "sound", unthreatened: 'My happiness was supreme!' (28)

The cat continues to function as a projection of his perverse tendencies; he lays the blame for the murder entirely on 'the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness' (27). He sees the cat as responsible for the crime, through its provocative act in 'exasperat[ing him] to madness' (23). He still sees it, besides, as a persecutor, as 'my tormentor' (28). It follows that he still aims to 'put it to death' (27) - that is, to "kill" female sexuality twice over for greater safety, and to "kill" the symbol of his own perverseness. The irony is, of course, that all the time (26-30), the cat is, unknown to its owner, walled with the corpse; female sexuality, if dead in the wife, lives on in the cat, and his own perversity remains indestructible in the animal's body. The cat seems to have entered the recess in the wall between the phrases 'I propped it in that position' and 'I

re-laid the whole structure' (26). Without noticing, the narrator has imprisoned the living cat in the wall, and thus guaranteed that sooner or later it will cry for attention and betray him. This is clearly a 'bungled action', one of the classes of parapraxes, or unconsciously determined errors, described by Freud in The Psychology of Everyday Life (1901).²³² Freud writes: 'we may admit the possibility of an unconscious intention in mistakes that can cause serious harm ... an impulse to self-punishment ... takes ingenious advantage of an external situation that chance happens to offer'.²³³ In the present case, the 'external situation' is the cat's entry into the improvised tomb, and the narrator's 'mistake' is his failure to notice it; the determining factor is the perverse impulse to 'self-punishment' and self-destruction. His failure to notice is, besides, a symbolic indication of blindness. He has already 'blindly' abandoned himself to rage (22); now, his symbolic blindness is both talion punishment for his taking Pluto's eye, and metaphoric castration. At the very moment when he thinks he has become a "full" male subject, a parapraxis places him under the sign of castration and death. There is no doubt that this error is determined, although Symons (The Tell-Tale Heart, 1978) claims that the walling-up was 'inadvertent', and that the cat is 'indirectly responsible' for the exposure.²³⁴ This type of empiricist reading clearly refuses to look under the textual surface; even the narrator admits some responsibility for the cat's presence, in his last sentence: 'I had walled the monster up within the tomb!' (32), where he sees himself as subject of the walling-up.

The self-destructive momentum behind the parapraxis is reinforced by the fact that, in reaffirming the patriarchal order, the narrator

has simultaneously negated it. He has reconstituted male power by murdering his wife; but in the patriarchal society he lives in, final power over life and death pertains not to the individual, but to the State as last-instance guardian of the Law of the Father. The superego, as internal agency of the Law, will require the elimination of the transgressor. The hitherto closed domestic universe is entered by the police (29), as agents of the State. The narrator presents himself to them as respectable citizen, as "full", unruptured subject. He exhibits perfect self-control, as if contradiction-free: 'I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly' (29). He then affirms the perfect solidity of the house and walls (and therefore of himself as subject and citizen): 'this is ... an excellently well-constructed house. These walls ... are solidly put together' (30). Aiming to show himself as fully possessed of patriarchal power, he raps on the wall with a phallic cane (30), in a display of male 'bravado'.

The rapping is, however, in reality an act of self-destruction;²³⁵ he unconsciously knows what consciously he is blind to - that the cat is behind the wall. The rapping is thus a message to the cat, at once 'answered by a voice from within the tomb' - and a message from his unconscious, in the form of a self-imposed death sentence. The wall, signifier of the "full" subject, is broken down by 'a dozen stout arms' (32), metonyms of male strength: 'It fell bodily.'; the narrator too is riven apart by his internal contradictions. Under the pressure of the superego, the perverse self-destructive drive comes into ascendancy, and he exposes his criminality to the agents of the Law. The lex talionis claims its victim, and thus the demands

of Thanatos, the superego and the Law are satisfied at one and the same time.

The proximity of cat and wife continues to the end; the cat is exposed sitting on the corpse's head. Their joint reappearance signifies the indestructibility of female sexuality. The wife is dead, but her husband's 'propp[ing]' up of the corpse (26) has already suggested a possible rephallisation, and now it stands 'erect', ironically "masculinised" like the hanged Pluto,²³⁶ In death, the woman is rephallised, her active and affirmative potential symbolically realised; here as in 'The Oval Portrait' and 'Usher',²³⁷ a woman, passive in life, has the power to terrify men from beyond the tomb. What is in question is thus both a return of the repressed, and a revenge of the oppressed.

The cat, too, signifies active femaleness; if its 'red extended mouth' (32) symbolises the vagina,²³⁸ the 'solitary eye of fire' has phallic connotations, and points to the indestructibility of female sexuality. The conjuncture of mouth and eye suggests that something other than the "normal" passive model of femininity is being signified. At the same time, the cat continues to symbolise the narrator's self-destructive tendency, and, beyond that, acts as agent of the Law. He continues, however, to see himself as persecuted and betrayed by the cat; he blames it, up to the end, for both the murder and the exposure, calling it 'the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman' (32). But the collapse of the illusory coherence of the subject is brought about by its internal contradictions - it is he, not the cat, who has both committed the murder and betrayed himself. Homicide is,

once again, a step on the road to suicide.

Here as in IP, the murder is one moment in a long process of self-destruction, which expresses itself both in aggression against the other (the two cats, the wife) and against the self (alcoholism, self-betrayal). Chronologically, the narrator's progression towards death develops as follows: alcoholism - wife-battering - excision of C1's eye - hanging of C1 - continued wife-battering - attempted killing of C2 - murder of wife - self-betrayal. His actual or intended victims are either female or female symbols (the cats); the history of his violence is intimately linked to his relations, as male, with the real or symbolic female.

As subject, he is quite evidently split - between self-affirmative and self-destructive tendencies, between Eros and Thanatos. He is alienated from his own unconscious mental life and its erotic and aggressive contents. His sexuality is almost entirely either repressed, sublimated, or fused with aggression into sadism; his aggression is at times part-recognised, at times projected on to the cats. He is further split by the refusal to recognise his own "female" element, his psychic bisexuality, although his relatively marked "femaleness" objectively alienates him from his culture. In addition, he is the victim of a punitive superego which appropriates the death-drive to its own ends and impels him towards exclusion from culture and death.

These multiple divisions within the subject occur in the context of a determinate cultural order - the patriarchal order in which women are seen as castrated beings, domestic violence is legitimated and active female symbols (witches, succubi) have negative connotations.

The Oedipal socialisation process leads to the repression of active sexuality in women, and the fear of its emergence in men; at the same time, it implants a rigid ideology of gender norms, any possible deviance from which induces anxiety in the subject. The corollary of female activity is male passivity, and therefore castration - exclusion from patriarchal power. The perpetuation of the entire system is guaranteed by the internalisation of the authoritarian father in the form of the superego.

Given all this, it may be claimed that the perverse self-destructive drive so visibly at work in the narrator of BC is, to a large extent, the product of cultural forces - of the splits and contradictions induced by the socialisation process. His problematic relation to the female may derive from his tenuous hold on his own "masculinity", from the uncertain insertion into the "male" role that is evident from his docile disposition in childhood. His pathological fear of female sexuality may derive from a sense of already being "castrated" (as non-stereotype male). His punitive superego may take on extra severity from his precarious grasp on his male identity - the superego, as internalised Father, may be punishing him, as deviant male, for the very fact of existing. If there is an innate biological drive towards death, its operations are intensified by the alienating and stereotyping pressures of patriarchal culture.

Further, here as in IP, the specific social conditions of nineteenth-century capitalism are evident in the "modern" urban setting. Again, there are the streets (5), the police, taverns and 'merchandize' (24); the narrator's alienation from social relations, other than those with his parents and wife, here too suggests that his subjectivity is

in part the product of the atomising pressures of the mode of production.

At all events, his history is determined from within, but by internal psychic forces that are the precipitates of external cultural determinants. In appearing to lay responsibility on the cat, the text is making a desperate attempt at preserving the "full" subject; destruction and self-destruction are to be attributed to an alien Other, animal, supernatural, or both. Objectively, however, what this tale signifies is a divided subject.

iv. 'The Tell-Tale Heart'

'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843), though earlier than the other two tales, is here discussed last, since it is best read in the context of the concept of perversity theorised in the later texts (it precedes BC by seven months).²³⁹ The tale exhibits the same basic pattern of homicide/suicide as IP and BC. As in IP, the victim is an older male; as in BC, the narrator projects responsibility for both murder and betrayal on to external factors (eye and heart). The narrator is differentiated from those of the two other tales by his lack of theoretical pretensions; the word 'perverse' does not occur, but the concept can nonetheless be applied in full force to a narrator whose declared aim, in committing murder, is to 'rid myself of the eye forever' (2) - that is, 'to rid myself of the I'.

This is one tale for which almost all critics reject "merveilleux" interpretations; even Mabbott (1978) comments that the narrator 'leaves no doubt that he is mad' - although he still admits the possibility that 'a real Evil Eye' drove him mad.²⁴⁰ That the narrator is mentally disturbed, and therefore not reliable, has been the con-

sensus of readers since Baudelaire, whose translation ('Le Coeur révélateur', 1853)²⁴¹ was originally subtitled 'Plaidoyer d'un Fou'.²⁴² Once the narrator's madness is accepted, the tell-tale heart is generally seen as existing inside himself, and not outside; it is thus he who terrorises, betrays and destroys himself. In the words of Carlos Fuentes ('La última frontera', 1984),²⁴³ 'Poe descubrió que el corazón delator - el corazón del miedo - está en nuestra carne y no en los castillos góticos' ('Poe discovered that the tell-tale heart - the heart of fear - is within our flesh and not in Gothic castles').²⁴⁴

The text has, then, generally been read in an "étrange" sense; the Evil Eye is usually seen as a delusion, while the heart has been variously interpreted. The beating of the dead man's heart is seen by several critics as a misperception of an internal process (the narrator hears his own heartbeat and misattributes its origin); this is the view of Mabbott (1978),²⁴⁵ E. Arthur Robinson ('Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"', 1973),²⁴⁶ Daniel Hoffman (Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, 1972),²⁴⁷ G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973),²⁴⁸ and Claude Richard ('La double voix dans "The Tell-Tale Heart"', 1975),²⁴⁹ though the last-named adds the suggestion that the heartbeat may be that of the narrating, rather than the narrated "I". Alternatively, it has been read as a misperception of external phenomena (what the narrator really hears is the noise of the death-watch beetles in the wall); this possibility is raised by, again, Mabbott²⁵⁰ and Thompson.²⁵¹ Finally, it has been seen as an auditory hallucination, with no existence outside his imagination, by Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933),²⁵² Harry Levin (The Power of Blackness, 1958),²⁵³ Richard again,²⁵⁴ and Elizabeth Phillips (Edgar Allan Poe - An American Imagination, 1979).²⁵⁵ These various readings may not be mutually incompatible, since the status of the heartbeat is not necessarily the same at the various

stages of the narrative. The possibility has even been raised that the narrator is totally unreliable, and that the entire story is a psychotic delusion; Mabbott suggests the hypothesis that 'everything was the diseased imagining of the speaker, who had really killed nobody, and mistook for policemen the guards from an asylum',²⁵⁶ while Robinson sees the text as possibly a dream,²⁵⁷ or as 'the complete fantasy of a madman'.²⁵⁸

If the narrator is, then, mad - liable to hallucinations and delusions, unable to distinguish between internal and external perceptions - various diagnoses and psychological interpretations have been offered to characterise his illness. Phillips, from an empirical standpoint, applies a nineteenth-century diagnosis, using the theories of Benjamin Rush and Isaac Ray; the narrator is seen as an instance of the 'homicidal maniac', whose crimes are characterised by absence of rational motive, are followed by confession, and may be accompanied by hallucinations and denial of insanity.²⁵⁹ For Richard, he suffers from a 'mégalomane de type mystique', the belief that he can destroy Time and Death;²⁶⁰ for Bonaparte, his auditory hallucinations are symptoms of paranoia;²⁶¹ while Thompson, similarly, sees him as suffering from 'obsessive paranoia'.²⁶²

The narrator has, further, been read in various ways as a split subject. For both Robinson and Claude Fleurdorge ('Discours et contre-discours dans "The Tell-Tale Heart"', 1975),²⁶³ his desire to 'rid myself of the eye/I' indicates a self-destructive tendency at work. Robinson sees the 'evil eye' as an 'evil I',²⁶⁴ and concludes that 'the theme of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is self-destruction';²⁶⁵ for Fleurdorge, 'l'annihilation de l'eye se traduisant par celle de l'I - [abouti] donc

à une auto-destruction'.²⁶⁶ Besides, the doubling which critics have identified as existing between narrator and old man implies that the former splits himself by projecting his "unacceptable" tendencies on to his victim/persecutor. A whole series of textual correspondences between the two protagonists (which will be detailed below)²⁶⁷ have been identified by Robinson²⁶⁸ and Richard²⁶⁹ as justifying what the latter calls 'l'identité entre le protagoniste et sa victime'.²⁷⁰

The old man has been seen, not only as the narrator's double, but as his literal or symbolic father. For Hoffman, the old man is, quite literally, the narrator's biological father;²⁷¹ Mabbott rejects any such reading, on the basis of the phrase 'calling him by name' (3): 'Since Poe's narrator mentions calling the old man by name, the crime was not parricide'.²⁷² However, if the crime is not literal parricide (and indeed inheritance, here unlike in IP, is not in question), it may perfectly well be a symbolic attack on the Oedipal father; and it is read in this sense by Bonaparte, for whom the tale 'stands like a faint precursor of that great parricidal epic which is Dostoyevsky's opus'.²⁷³ Other views of the old man's symbolic function are offered by Wilbur ('The Poe Mystery Case', 1967), who sees him as Time;²⁷⁴ Richard, for whom he is both Time and Death;²⁷⁵ and Hoffman, for whom he is Conscience.²⁷⁶ None of these significations is incompatible with his role as symbolic father, since Time, Death and Conscience all exert limitations on the subject's freedom of action, while Conscience (the superego) is nothing more than the internalised father. J.-P. Weber ('Edgar Poe ou le thème de l'horloge', 1958), pursuing his theme of clock-symbolism, reads the narrator as the minute-hand (father), superimposed over the hour-hand (mother).²⁷⁷ This reading is not incompatible with Bonaparte's, if it is supposed that the

narrator's aim in killing the old man/father is to replace him in his position of power and reduce him to the subordinate status of the 'mother' - as Weber puts it, 'le narrateur ... prend la place du père'.²⁷⁸

According to the consensus of psychoanalytic readings, then, the text is a symbolic re-run of the Oedipal drama - culminating, as Bonaparte points out, in the talion punishment of the "son"²⁷⁹ (although here, unlike in BC, there is no direct representative of the mother). Other readings are found; for Fleurdorge, the tale has theological connotations, and the narrator is a religious maniac who wants to save himself without a mediator,²⁸⁰ while for E. H. Davidson (Poe: A Critical Study, 1957), the narrator ruptures his unified subjectivity through the murder, but by the self-betrayal attains a 'return to full selfhood or primal being'.²⁸¹ These readings will not be used in the present analysis; it may be suggested that the narrator's megalomania cannot be reduced to a purely religious affair (the father he rebels against is not only God but the cultural Law), and that it is a bizarre 'full selfhood' that is gained on the gallows or in the madhouse, by a subject who never recognises himself as the agent of his confession - it is scarcely the conscious repentance of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment.²⁸²

The text will now be analysed in detail, beginning with the title. This must be read in a double sense - the 'tell-tale heart' 1) tells a tale, i.e. signifies something; 2) betrays, "tells on" the narrator like a tell-tale child or an informer. For the reader, the first sense, of signification, is dominant, since the heart can be read as indicating the narrator's self-destructive tendency; for the narrator, the second

sense, of betrayal, is dominant, since he considers the heart, and not himself, responsible for giving him away. The double sense of 'tell-tale' is paralleled in BC by the 'informing voice' of the cat (32), which both informs (gives information) and betrays (acts as an informer);²⁸³ it is, further, reinforced in Baudelaire's translation of the title as 'Le Coeur révélateur' (the heart exposes information (reveals), but also acts as a 'révélateur' (informer)).²⁸⁴

The noun 'heart' and its derivatives recur frequently in the text. The first instance is seemingly innocent, in what on first reading seems to be a dead metaphor: 'calling him by name in a hearty tone' (3); the second is, similarly, 'I chuckled at heart' (7). These phrases serve to associate the signifier 'heart', from the beginning, with the narrator, not the old man. The latter's heart is first referred to in (10); the paragraph preceding the murder: 'It was the beating of the old man's heart'; the word occurs four times in (11), until the heart stops beating. Then in (14), the narrator admits the police 'with a light heart' (another false dead metaphor); in (16), the old man's heart is "heard" for the first time since the murder, and continues with increasing intensity throughout (17), but the signifier 'heart' does not itself reappear until the last word of (18), which is also the last word of the text: "it is the beating of his hideous heart!"²⁸⁵ The silencing of the signifier in (16) and (17) increases the connotation of fear, and constitutes the heart as a taboo object; while its final reappearance, integrated into the narrator's direct discourse, serves to associate it, this time beyond recall, with the murderer, not the victim.

It may be stressed here that both title and text end with the signifier

'heart'. This convergence has various functions: it constitutes the title as a prolepsis of the narrative on the levels of both signifier and signified; it places the macro-text (title + narrative) under the sign of the compulsion to repeat; and it connotes the heart twice over with "ending", "finality", and therefore death.

Intertextually, the association heart/death is already present in two texts which entered into the composition of TTH. The epigraph to the first version²⁸⁵ (subsequently deleted)²⁸⁶ is a stanza from H. W. Longfellow's 'A Psalm of Life' (1838):²⁸⁷

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.²⁸⁸

The simile of the 'muffled drum' is taken up in TTH, in the comparison of the heartbeat to 'the beating of a drum' (10), and in the phrase 'the heart beat on with a muffled sound' (11). The drum image implies a high degree of psychological determinism, the insistence of the heart's pull; above all, Longfellow's text (at this point, at least) constitutes the heart as messenger of death, impelling the subject 'to the grave'. It may be noted that 'heart(s)' occurs five times in Longfellow's text (once in the subtitle, four times in the poem), but only in the stanza quoted by Poe is it associated with death - in all the other cases, its connotations are "optimistic".²⁸⁹ The signification of the lines is thus radically altered by the new textual context. Indeed, one reason for the absence of the epigraph from the later versions may have been that it made the heart/death link over-obvious, too early on. The drum/heart/death association also occurs in Henry King's 'The Exequy' (1657),²⁹⁰ a poem which Poe had already quoted in

'The Assniation' (1834), in a context of impending death (M II, 166).

The relevant lines for TTH are:

But heark! My pulse like a soft Drum
Beats my approach, tells Thee I come ...²⁹¹

Here too, the heart image is associated with inevitable death (the speaker is addressing his dead wife).

The heart may be read, then, as signifying an internal determining force that drums the narrator towards death; its 'tale' is the discourse of self-destruction, of the perverse, of Thanatos. Nonetheless, the narrator himself, right to the end, refuses to recognise himself as self-destroyed. For him, the heart is always other - 'his' heart, not 'mine'. The text thus sets up an opposition between the heart's 'tale' and the narrator's 'story' - between the 'story' of surface explanation (supernatural persecution) and the 'tale' of unconscious determination (destruction of self and other). This antithesis has been noticed by Richard, for whom the heart's 'tale' is a 'contre-voix' to the narrator's voice;²⁹² and by Fleurdorge, who finds an opposition between the narrator's 'discours' and the heart's 'contre-discours'.²⁹³ The narrator claims to be giving the reader an objective 'story': 'observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story' (1); but at once, the verb 'tell' points back to the title, and counterposes 'story' to 'tale'. The 'story' is one of persecution and betrayal; the 'tale' is one of paranoiac crime and confession.

The narrator appears to be telling his 'story' in a prison cell (or perhaps a mental hospital), to an unspecified narrataire (the 'you' of (1)) who, as in IP, may be a chaplain, or may be purely imaginary.

He gives very little information about himself, other than that he lived in the same building as the old man, who may or may not have been a blood relation. He refers to no other human relations; he emerges, in fact, as an anonymous, isolated urban man, resident in a modern metropolis - a city characterised by its streets, apartment blocks and 'police office' (14), and polarised against the 'country' (or the provinces) where he claims the old man is absent (15). Within the city, he may be as isolated as the man of the crowd or Dostoyevsky's Underground Man.

His unreliability, or "abnormality", is immediately made evident in the first paragraph; the disclaimer of madness is at once followed, and negated, by the megalomaniac claim to have 'heard all things in the heaven and in the earth' (1) - which also prepares for the auditory hallucinations to follow. He refers to a recent 'disease' which has induced hyperaesthesia ('sharpened my senses'). Although he begins his narration with a defiant 'True!', as if to place all that follows under the sign of truth, the reader is clearly under no obligation to believe him.²⁹⁴

The narrataire may be read as representing cultural and perceptual "normality" - the external social world ('you') with which the narrator ('I') can only have a disturbed relation. This role is equally apposite whether the narrataire is "real" or imaginary - if imaginary, he stands for Society, with which the narrator enters into dialogue in order to explain himself. His normative function may be deduced from the repeated occurrences, up to the narration of the murder, of 'you' (1, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12) - 'you' as the other against whom the narrator tries to justify himself. Indeed, the

absence of any reference to 'you' after (12) (i.e. from soon after the murder) may indicate the narrator's increasing alienation from "normal" reality and from any object-relations.

The text constructs both its 'story' (discourse) and 'tale' (counter-discourse) through the one, monologic voice of the narrator. João Paulo R. Moreira ('A Retórica das Ficções de Edgar Allan Poe', 1984)²⁹⁵ has pointed out how the use in TTH of the homodiegetic first-person narrator amounts to a narrative tour de force; he stresses the 'recusa de um narrador onisciente irônico' ('the rejection of an ironic omniscient narrator'), and the 'ausência de personagens-testemunhas que, concebidas à semelhança e à medida do mundo do leitor, possam expor para este os excessos do protagonista' ('the absence of witnesses - characters conceived as compatible with the reader's world - who might make the latter aware of the protagonist's excesses').²⁹⁶ As in a dramatic monologue - a genre into which Mabbott suggests the tale may be inserted²⁹⁷ - the speaker is made to expose his own contradictions. Not only is there no omniscient narrator, but the police speak only through the narrator's discourse (14, 16, 17), never directly; while the old man's direct discourse is restricted to the cry: "'Who's there?'" (5) and some brief remarks which the narrator speculatively attributes to him in (7). It is, then, entirely through the narrator's own discourse that the text permits the reader to construct the counter-text that exposes his pretensions to objectivity; that is, his discourse contains its own counter-discourse.

Here as in 'The Man of the Crowd', an isolated, alienated narrator is placed in intimate relation with an old man, who can be considered his double.²⁹⁸ As critics (Robinson, Richard)²⁹⁹ have noted, a series

of parallels between the two is constructed across the text. Thus, the old man's one 'vulture eye' is doubled by the 'single thin ray' from the narrator's lantern (3), and this relationship of doubling is itself doubled by its reappearance in (8). At the moment of the murder, the narrator's 'yell' is replicated when the old man 'shrieked' (11); and at the end, the narrator's pallor ('I now grew very pale' (17)) points back to the old man's 'pale' eye (2). All this suggests that the old man represents a dissociated part of his murderer's own subjectivity; the interchangeability is reinforced by the narrator's reference to the old man 'listening; - just as I have done, night after night' (6), and, later, by the phrases: 'I knew the sound well. Many a night ... it has welled up from my own bosom ... I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt' (7). The above examples suggest a certain similarity, the possibility of the narrator replacing the old man; indeed, in the narrator's lie to the police, an actual identity is made: 'The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream.' (15) This lie conceals an unconscious truth; the murderer sees himself as interchangeable with his victim.

Given all this, it may be concluded that one of the old man's functions in the text is to represent a part of the narrator himself; this reading would appear justified by the pun, already noted, on 'evil eye/I': 'rid myself of the eye/I for ever' (2); 'it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye/I' (3). In the second quotation, if it is 'I' who vexes 'me', then the narrator is clearly under the influence of the perverse, the 'longing of the soul to vex itself' of BC (9).³⁰⁰ The old man may be read as externalising the narrator's own (self-)destructive tendencies. Destruction of the other is indissociable from destruction of self; in the end, the only way he can rid

himself of the eye is by ridding himself of the I, that is, suicide.

However, the textual emphasis on substitution of one subject by another suggests that the narrator also wants to replace the old man. Given the age difference, his role as symbolic father is clear enough; while his possession of wealth, even though the narrator has no designs on it ('For his gold I had no desire.' (2)), places him in a position of social power. At the same time, he may be read as not only the external but the internal father, that is, the superego. In placing himself temporarily outside the patriarchal law through an illegal murder, the narrator is clearly trying to "kill" the superego, as William Wilson kills his double.³⁰¹

The relation of doubling between narrator and old man, murderer and victim, may, then, be interpreted in several senses at once; the old man corresponds, variously, to the narrator's (self-)destructive tendencies, to the father and to the superego. It may be suggested that, if the immediate goal of the murder is to "kill" the external and internal father, the goal of the suicidal impulse that underlies the murder is to "kill" not only the narrator's destructive tendencies but himself tout court. The relation is further complicated by the fact that the old man is at times represented as a whole body, and at times only metonymically by a part-object - eye, heart. The question will now be examined in greater detail, first from the point of view of the old man's Oedipal function, and second in terms of the roles of the eye and heart.

If the old man is a symbolic father, then the narrator's aim in killing him is, on one level, to replace him - to enter the father's

position of full access to phallic power. He sees his adversary as simultaneously "castrating" and "castrated"; if the eye has phallic connotations, then the potent Evil Eye has castrating power - yet, since it has a 'film over it' (2), it also suggests blindness, and therefore the state of castration.³⁰² This perception of the old man reflects both the narrator's fear of his castrating power and his drive to castrate, kill and thus replace him. When planning and anticipating the murder, he feels an onrush of pleasure: 'Never before that night, had I felt the extent of my own powers ... I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph.' (4). The imagery of dilation and overflowing suggests that he is anticipating his own forthcoming entry into phallic power. In his pursuit of the goal of replacing the old man (Time, Death, Authority), he comes to see himself as Death: 'Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim' (7) (the old man is here 'victim' of both the narrator and Death, which effectively equates the narrator with Death); and as Time: 'A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine' (4); 'The old man's hour had come!' (11). In the first case, he sees himself as the principle of temporality that underlies and is superior to the measurements of time; in the second case, as the power that determines that a particular 'hour' should be someone's last.

After the murder, he feels the anticipated triumph: 'I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done' (11); this sensation continues with his satanic laughter ('ha! ha!' (13)), 'the enthusiasm of my confidence' and 'the wild audacity of my perfect triumph' (15).

This 'perfect triumph' is the euphoria of Oedipal rebellion; the "son" believes he has killed the "father" and got away with it - that he has

himself become Time, Death, and the Father, forever.

On an intertextual level, the old man's role of symbolic father is reinforced by several implicit references to Shakespeare's Macbeth (1605).³⁰³ First, the eye is called the 'damned spot' (9); 'spot' here denotes the eye's place in the topography of the old man's body, but also anticipates the murder through its connotations of blood and guilt. These connotations are emphasised by the implicit link with the sleepwalking scene in Macbeth, where the 'damned spot' is, precisely, an imaginary blood-spot that symbolises guilt.³⁰⁴ After the murder, the narrator declares: 'There was nothing to wash out - no stain of any kind - no blood-spot whatever.... A tub had caught all' (13). This recalls Lady Macbeth's 'A little water clears us of this deed';³⁰⁵ but also, once again, the sleepwalking scene: 'Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? ... What, will these hands ne'er be clean?'³⁰⁶ Where Poe's narrator believes his hands are clean, Lady Macbeth believes, first that cleaning is easy, later that it is impossible; the textual convergence is, however, evident in the references to blood and washing. If Poe's murderer sees himself, at this stage, as guilt-free, the connection with Lady Macbeth implies that the sense of guilt will later return with a vengeance. Lady Macbeth's reference to Duncan as 'the old man' suggests a further link with Poe's tale; the murder of the old man, like that of the 'royal father' Duncan,³⁰⁷ will lead the murderer, like Lady Macbeth, to exclusion from culture (madness, death). The narrator may, of course, be read as a second Macbeth, a parricide who has to be punished by the lex talionis; but the convergence with Lady Macbeth, to the point where he incorporates her discourse ('damned spot') into his own, is more revealing, since it tends to 'feminise'

him - to place him in the position of a subordinate subject in revolt against his/her given place in the cultural order. The tell-tale heart itself connects the narrator more closely to Lady Macbeth, via the attendant's comment: 'I would not have such a heart in my bosom, for the dignity of the whole body.';³⁰⁸ like the 'unsexed' female protagonist of Shakespeare's play,³⁰⁹ the murderer of Poe's tale can be seen as engaging in a (failed) revolt against the patriarchal order. Both figures, as woman and "son" respectively, rebel against the Oedipal "father". At the same time, these intertextual references mark the point at which the female, otherwise excluded from this text, irrupts back into it; even if, as Bonaparte points out, 'the image of the mother is here suppressed',³¹⁰ the patriarchal order is thus exposed as based on the oppression of women.

But if the narrator is Lady Macbeth, he is also Macbeth; the murder and cover-up mark his apotheosis as rebel-become-Father. The old man is killed by suffocation: 'I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him' (11); the dragging down reduces him to a prostrate, "female" position, and the suffocation is, as Hoffman points out, symbolic castration.³¹¹ If the old man is thus "castrated" in death, the narrator conversely, acquires the phallic power that he loses; while the choice of the bed as space of murder points, as Bonaparte suggests,³¹² to the Oedipal origins of the conflict. The cover-up is marked by a repetition of the act of castration: 'I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.' (12); the symbolism of decapitation and dismemberment is clear, and is, again, pointed out by Hoffman.³¹³ The victim's body is fragmented, reduced to a series of discrete objects; but ironically, an imaginary part-object, the heart, will soon fragment and destroy the murderer himself.

After the murder, the paradox of the narrator's situation is that he has "become" the Father, but by illicit means, proscribed by the Law. It is as if the original Oedipal drama had been re-run, but with the "son" literally killing the "father" instead of accepting deferred gratification. The "son" is not playing the game by the rules, and has to be punished for his act of usurpation; inheritance cannot be replaced by parricide as a means of continuing patriarchy. The rebel has, then, to be reduced back to a position of subordination. The Lady Macbeth references have already subjected him to an admonitory "feminisation"; symbolic castration, and madness and death, await him.

If the old man as whole object signifies the father, the symbolic function of the part-objects that substitute him before and after the murder - eye and heart - is rather more complex. The eye will be examined first; its signification is heavily overdetermined. In the first place, it represents the old man's phallic power, his positive integration into the patriarchal order. Hence the 'vulture' image (8), which connotes the eye both with sadistic, predatory male sexuality and with death. At the same time, as already pointed out,³¹⁴ the 'film' over the eye (2) suggests the possibility of castration - hence the fear, the sense of coldness, which it induces in the narrator:

'Whenever it fell on me, my blood ran cold' (2); '(it) chilled the very marrow in my bones' (9) (coldness implies the absence of warmth and fire, and therefore castration). So far, then, the part-object symbolises certain qualities associated with the subject to whom it belongs. To this extent, the eye represents an objective external threat. However, in seeing it as a destructive force, the narrator is, to a large extent, projecting his own (self-)destructive drives on to the external world. He develops a fantasy of being persecuted by

the eye, which justifies his aggression against the old man: 'for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye' (3). After the murder, he declares: 'His eye would trouble me no more.' (11).

But what in fact 'vexes' and 'troubles' him is not the evil eye, but the evil I. In other words, he is suffering from paranoia, and is externalising his own self-destructive tendencies in the form of an imaginary persecutor. The old man as an individual has done nothing to him: 'He had never wronged me.' (2), and the notion of the Evil Eye is no more than a superstitious delusion. The psychoanalytic theory of paranoia will be more fully discussed below, in relation to the highly systematised delusions of Roderick Usher;³¹⁵ what is important for TTH is the role played in paranoia by projection.

In the Schreber case-study (1911), Freud writes: 'The most striking characteristic of symptom-formation in paranoia is the process ... of projection. An internal perception is suppressed and, instead, its content, after undergoing a certain kind of distortion, enters consciousness in the form of an external perception.'³¹⁶ Here, an internal perception ("I hate myself") is first transformed into "I hate him"; next reattributed to the other, reversed into "He hates me"; and then finally displaced from the whole object on to a part-object, becoming "It hates me". The murder, ultimately an expression of the self-destructive drive, is thus converted into what seems a legitimate means of self-defence against external aggression. The eye thus comes to symbolise the narrator's own death-drive.

As for the heart, it too, like the eye, signifies both the old man's phallic power and the self-destructive tendency in the narrator. Its role differs from the eye's in that it appears at two different stages

of the narrative - before and during the murder (10-11), and after, during the visit of the police (16-18). Its additional function as signifier of death has already been discussed, in relation to the title.³¹⁷

On its first occurrence (10-11) it is, in all probability, actually the old man's heart beating; but the potential doubling with the narrator's heart is already indicated: 'I knew that sound well, too.' (10). Its symbolic role at this point is clearly phallic; it represents the access to power which the old man has and the narrator wants. But it is also connoted with discipline, first through comparison with a watch ('a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton'), associating it with that Time which, in (4), the narrator wished to control;³¹⁸ and, second, through the military image of the drum: 'It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.' (10). A soldier is, of course, a killer, like the narrator; but he is also someone who submits himself to a rigid hierarchy, and the image thus ironically points to the authoritarian structures that the narrator believes he can free himself from. Eventually, the heart will discipline him back into the fold, drumming him to his death. The drumbeat is, further, a repetitive movement, like the heartbeat itself; the narrator is thus placed under the sign of the compulsion to repeat, and therefore of Thanatos.

The heart is silenced after the murder: 'There was no pulsation.' (11). But the pressure of the death-drive remains at work in the unconscious, and in (16) the heartbeat recommences. The narrator, confronting the police, believes he can keep his newly-gained power; placing his chair over the grave, he is both replacing the old man as master

of the room, and reducing him to subordinate, "female" status.³¹⁹

But the 'ringing in my ears' - a repeated, obsessive sound - indicates the triumph of the heart; the compulsion to repeat forces him to relive the sensation experienced during the murder. At first, he identifies it correctly as something 'in my ears' (16), that is, either his own heartbeat or an auditory hallucination; but then he comes to attribute it to the external world - 'until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears'. This moment - like parallel moments in 'Ligeia' and 'Usher'³²⁰ - marks his definitive passage into psychosis. The pattern of projection returns, with the imaginary persecutor now the heart, and the narrator will now become unable to distinguish between external and internal perceptions - hence his delusive belief that the police too hear the noise. His punishment for parricide thus involves his exclusion from culture through psychosis.

The watch simile returns: 'It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton,' (17); the narrator is thus placed under the power of the Time that he sought to control - it is now his 'hour' that has come. At the same time, the operations of the compulsion to repeat are evident; the text repeats the phrasing of the first appearance of the heart (10), except that 'such as' becomes 'much such a sound as'. On the level of the signifier, the language here is hyper-repetitive; the sentence begins with 16 consecutive monosyllables, and contains multiple alliterations and assonances (dull/much/such; much/such/watch; sound/such/sound).

In keeping with the compulsion to repeat, the narrator's actions become visibly self-destructive, tending to wreck the policemen's previous impression of him, and stigmatising him as a madman: 'I arose and

argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations'. He exhibits irrational repetitive movements which recall the man of the crowd: 'I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides';³²¹ and displays the received symptoms of mania, or violent madness: 'I foamed - I raved - I swore!',³²² culminating in his final, 'shrieked' confession.

It is he who makes the confession, as in IP (but not in BC), and before the exposure of the corpse: "'I admit the deed!'"'. However, he lays responsibility for the confession on the heart: "'it is the beating of his hideous heart!'"'; and thus, to the end, attributes his whole history to persecution from the outside. It is clear that retrospectively he takes the same position, for he says of the police: 'they knew! ... this I thought, and this I think' - a view which can only mean that he still, at the moment of narrating, believes in the objective existence of the heartbeat.

What has happened objectively, however, is that he has been betrayed by his own heart - literally, if it is a misperception, figuratively, if it is a hallucination. The unconscious sense of guilt activated by the murder has generated an extreme anxiety ('I felt that I must scream or die!') which can only be relieved by confession. He is ideologically reintegrated into the patriarchal order, but at the cost of his physical survival (if his fate is death) or social integration (if it is madness). To the end, he refuses to confront his own self-destruction - his 'story' has ended with the indictment of the old man's 'hideous heart', but to the reader, the tell-tale heart within has told quite another 'tale'.

As at the end of 'The Man of the Crowd', the narrator refuses to recognise that the 'worst heart of the world' (M II, 515) is his own, rather than another's;³²³ as in BC, to the end he projects his own death-drive on to an external object (the cat, the heart). The internal character of the destructive movement in this tale becomes further apparent through comparison with a text which has been identified as a source - Dickens' tale 'A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second' (Master Humphrey's Clock, 1840),³²⁴ whose marked similarities with TTH have been pointed out by Edith S. Krappe ('A Possible Source for Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat"', 1940)³²⁵ and Laurence Senelick ('Charles Dickens and "The Tell-Tale Heart"', 1973).³²⁶ Poe praised the tale in his 1841 review of The Old Curiosity Shop and Master Humphrey's Clock (H X, 142-55 (148)); its prison-confession format (the narrator declares: 'This is the last night I have to live')³²⁷ seems certainly to have determined that of Poe's three murder tales. Dickens' narrator murders his nephew, and buries the corpse in the garden; four days later, he receives a visit from four soldiers: 'I sat down with my chair upon the grave, ... and tried to drink and talk'.³²⁸ Thus far, the situation is paralleled in TTH; in Dickens' tale, however, the exposure comes from without, as two bloodhounds appear accidentally and dig up the grave. There is no necessary link here between crime and confession, destruction of other and self; TTH transforms the material derived from its source, replacing coincidence by a relentless psychic determinism.³²⁹

The narrator of TTH can, then, be read as another self-vexed victim of the Imp of the Perverse; the relation between murder and self-betrayal is as clear as in BC and IP. His actions are, on one level,

determined by the self-destructive drive, which manifests itself in the compulsion to repeat (the heartbeat, itself a repetitive sound, repeats itself in the text). On another level, they are also determined by a self-affirmative tendency, the Macbeth-like desire to substitute the father in his position of power. But since in patriarchal culture this act of revolt will inevitably be punished by the lex talionis, revolt itself takes on a self-destructive character; the whole process can be read as ultimately instigated by the sadistic superego, which punishes the rebellious "son" with exclusion from culture. In the symbolism of heart and eye, the language of the unconscious speaks; but is a language that bears the stamp of the authoritarian Father within. The heart has its reasons; but they are the reasons of an irrational cultural order.

In all three "murder tales", the same basic pattern repeats itself. Homicide leads to suicide; the subject is impelled to self-destruction through murder, through an intrapsychic agency which may be identified as the Freudian death-drive. At the same time, this self-destructive tendency is appropriated by a punitive superego. The compulsion to repeat operates, through verbal repetition ("I am safe"), or through the repetition of symbols (the cat, the heart); language and symbolisation tend towards the destruction of the subject, under pressure from the superego as internalised representative of the patriarchal order.

All three narrators can be read as criminals from a sense of guilt, victims of a sadistic superego which incites them to commit acts of rebellion, so as to initiate the sequence of crime, self-betrayal and punishment that will ultimately lead to their physical elimination.

It may be asked, however, where their unconscious sense of guilt has come from - what are they punishing themselves for? As shown above,³³⁰ it is for BC that this question can be most easily answered; the narrator unconsciously feels guilty for not being sufficiently "male", not conforming to the gender stereotypes of his culture. BC, besides, supplies a dimension lacking in the other tales - that of male-female relations - which permits location of the criminal's subjectivity in a wider context of power-structures. In the two other cases, the evidence is more incomplete; but for IP, the narrator's avowed irrationality, his inability to resist the perverse, and, for TTH, the murderer's confessed nervousness, together with the Lady Macbeth allusions, suggest that these figures may tentatively be seen as self-punished for their possession of unacceptably "feminine" qualities.

In all three tales, a harsh process of intrapsychic determinism is at work; the subject emerges as determined by the structures of the unconscious, as it functions in patriarchal culture, and, further, by the alienating pressures of early capitalism. In the world of these tales, to speak is to be spoken by the patriarchal order; the drive to self-destruction is underwritten by the authority of the superego. If 'JE est un autre',³³¹ it is not because nature makes I another, but because culture dictates I has to be another.

v. 'The Angel of the Odd': A Note

In the light of the above considerations on the murder tales and their emphasis on internal psychic determinism, another tale, 'The Angel of the Odd' (1844) (A0) merits brief examination. It precedes

IP by a year, but can be read intertextually as a comic pendant to that tale. The convergence of the titles is obvious, as noted above;³³² and both narratives consist of a series of *contretemps*. In A0, the narrator believes himself persecuted by the Angel of the Odd, who intervenes to ruin his life and frustrate his desires (his house burns down; he loses his hair, is temporarily blinded, is rejected in love, etc.). There is, besides, a series of parallels, which may be summarised as follows: 1) A0 contains the word 'imp', as noted above ('te imp ab de wing' (1103));³³³ 2) the narrator of A0 fails, self-destructively, to keep an appointment with the directors of his insurance company, and his house burns down that night; 3) the fire is started by a candle which he uses while reading in bed (compare the candle and the victim's habit of reading in bed in IP); 4) the narrator, after entertaining and rejecting a 'suicidal design', accidentally falls over a precipice, and 'should inevitably have been dashed to pieces' but for the intervention of the Angel in a balloon, 'humming an opera air' (1108) — the idea of suicide, the precipice and the opera air all point to IP.

This degree of convergence of detail suggests a possible convergence of theme; and, indeed, A0, though ostensibly a sequence of external accidents, can be read as illustrating the principle of internal, psychic determinism. The narrator believes he is the victim of an 'evil destiny' (1108) embodied by the Angel, 'the genius who presided over the contretemps of mankind' (1104). However, the whole narrative can be read as the narrator's alcohol-induced dream or hallucination, a case of delirium tremens;³³⁴ he wakes at four in the morning, with his head in the fireplace and his feet on 'the wreck of a small table, overthrown, and amid the fragments of a miscellaneous dessert,

intermingled with ... some broken glasses and shattered bottles, and an empty jug of the Schiedam Kirschenwasser' (1110). The "external" accidents, in this case, have had no existence outside his imagination, and they thus become fantasies of self-destruction induced by, not the Angel of the Odd, but the Imp of the Perverse. The Angel's exotic Germanic accent would then point to the "alien" discourse of the unconscious.

The tale may, then, be read as, first, a satire on the literature of external fatality, as exemplified by Blackwood's tales like 'The Man in the Bell' (1821)³³⁵ or 'The Iron Shroud' (1830)³³⁶ (in which the protagonist undergoes extreme suffering owing to accident or to the machinations of an enemy);³³⁷ and, second, as a comic negation of the whole notion of external destiny. It thus anticipates the model of internal determination advanced in IP.

vi. Baudelaire, Dostoyevsky and the Perverse

As shown above, the concept of the perverse was avidly seized upon by Baudelaire in his reading of Poe;³³⁸ it has also been seen as being of central importance in Dostoyevsky's appropriation of the tales, (e.g. by S. B. Purdy ('Poe and Dostoyevsky', 1967)³³⁹ and Louis Harap ('Poe and Dostoevsky', 1976)).³⁴⁰ It is therefore worthwhile to examine the convergences and divergences between the treatment of the theme in Poe's work and that of the two later writers.

In his 1857 essay, as noted above, Baudelaire refers to Poe's concept of 'la Perversité naturelle, qui fait que l'homme est sans cesse et à la fois homicide et suicide, assassin et bourreau'.³⁴¹

This formulation is paralleled in the poem 'L'Héautontimorouménos' (1857),³⁴² where sadism and masochism coexist in the same subject:

Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau!³⁴³

The "victim/executioner" formula could be applied to all three of the narrators of Poe's "murder tales". Further, the drum metaphor from TTH appears in the lines:

Et dans mon cœur qu'ils souleront
Tes chers sanglots retentiront
Comme un tambour qui bat la charge!³⁴⁴

The speaker of this poem can be seen as a victim of the Imp of the Perverse ('Je suis de mon cœur le vampire'),³⁴⁵ and as an exile from culture ('Un de ces grands abandonnés/ ... qui ne peuvent plus sourire!').³⁴⁶ Nonetheless, there is an element of self-conscious pleasure in revolt, present in the use of exclamation marks and rhetorical questions, which implies that perverseness is, in Baudelaire's text, a means of positive self-definition as well as self-destruction. Hence the declarative use of 'Je suis ...', five times repeated.³⁴⁷

The element of pleasure is constant across the text, not, as in the Poe tales, a temporary phase that is replaced by the rule of pain. Perverseness in Baudelaire, then, takes on a dimension of protest.

This tendency to self-definition through revolt ('La conscience dans le Mal!', as Baudelaire calls it in 'L'Irrémédiable' (1857))³⁴⁸ is, indeed, recurrent in Les Fleurs du Mal, as in 'Le Jeu' (1857):³⁴⁹

Et mon cœur s'effraya d'envier maint pauvre homme
Courant avec ferveur vers l'abîme béant,
Et qui, souî de son sang, préférerait, en somme
La douleur à la mort et l'enfer au néant!³⁵⁰

and in the conclusion of 'Le Voyage' (1859):³⁵¹

Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer or Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!³⁵²

The subject, defining himself in terms of difference, of the search for the extreme in experience and sensation, is prepared to confront his own exclusion from culture ('l'enfer'), in preference to the mediocre pseudo-rationality ('mort', 'néant') of his society. The 'abîme béant' or 'gouffre' for which the Baudelairean subject heads is thus not exactly the same as the 'abyss' that tempts the suicidal subject in IP (6); it is an abyss of self-affirmation as well as self-destruction. This lyric attitude contains an element of defiance - the crucial Baudelairean stance which Benjamin defines as heroic modernism;³⁵³ self-destruction or irrationality is a means of confronting and refusing an alienating social environment.

The self-destructive urge in Baudelaire is not, then, identical to that in Poe. It should be noted, however, that Baudelaire went so far as to plan a drama, L'ivrogne, whose plot would have effectively reproduced the murder-confession sequence of Poe's "murder tales". The plot is outlined in a letter of 1854;³⁵⁴ it is the story of an alcoholic husband who murders his wife. She is, like the uncomplaining wife of BC, 'un modèle de douceur, de patience'; the crime (he throws her down a well) is 'bien prémédité, bien préconçu'.³⁵⁵

After the murder, he is obsessed with the idea; "Je suis libre" (the "I am safe" of IP), until finally he is arrested and confesses, in a virtual re-run of the climax of IP: 'alors - avec une volubilité, une ardeur, une emphase extraordinaire, avec une minutie extrême - très vite, très vite, comme s'il craignait de n'avoir pas le temps d'

achever, - il raconte tout son crime. - Puis, il tombe évanoui.³⁵⁶ Baudelaire adds a reference to 'la dénonciation du coupable par lui-même, sous la pression d'une obsession';³⁵⁷ this is, of course, precisely the psychic mechanism at work in IP and TTH. The convergence with Poe's texts is striking, even down to the element of self-destruction through language.

Poe's 'perverse' also underlies Baudelaire's prose-poem 'Le mauvais Vitrier' (1862),³⁵⁸ as critics have pointed out; Mario Praz (The Romantic Agony, 1930) links the text directly to BC,³⁵⁹ and W. T. Bandy ('Baudelaire et Edgar Poe', 1967) makes a similar connexion.³⁶⁰ 'Le mauvais Vitrier' reproduces the split structure of IP, beginning as an "essay" and turning into a "confession"; 'J'ai été plus d'une fois victime de ces crises',³⁶¹ declares the narrator, as Poe's narrator sees himself as victim of the Imp. He describes a 'force irrésistible' which impels the subject to commit 'les actes les plus absurdes et souvent même les plus dangereux',³⁶² and gives an instance from his own behaviour. He invites a glass-vendor up to his sixth-floor room, sends him back down without buying, and then aims a flower-pot at him, smashing his wares. This anti-social act, motivated only by an irrational 'haine',³⁶³ can be read as an instance of the perverse; it is not only destructive but self-destructive, since it boomerangs on the subject himself: 'Ces plaisanteries nerveuses ne sont pas sans péril, et on peut souvent les payer cher.'³⁶⁴ The subject's sense of social integration is clearly endangered; and yet there is an element of pleasure, of rebellious self-affirmation, in his embracing of the perverse act and its consequences: 'Mais qu'importe l'éternité de la damnation à qui a trouvé dans une seconde l'infini de la jouissance?'³⁶⁵ In conclusion, the perverse in Baudelaire

is both self-destruction and self-affirmation, and thus acquires a dimension lacking in Poe.

The Poe-Dostoyevsky connection has already been considered for 'The Man of the Crowd'.³⁶⁶ For the three "murder tales", a link has frequently been suggested - by Praz (1930),³⁶⁷ Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933)³⁶⁸ and Harap (1976),³⁶⁹ as already mentioned; and also by Cortázar ('El poeta, el narrador y el crítico', 1956), who comments, in relation to IP: 'Un hombre cede a la necesidad de confesar su crimen, y confiesa; casos así se dan con frecuencia. Pero sólo los Poe y los Dostoievski alcanzan a situar sus relatos en el plano esencial y por ende efectivo.' ('A man surrenders to the need of confessing his crime, and confesses; such cases often happen. But only the Poes and the Dostoyevskys manage to situate their narratives on the essential, and therefore the effective, plane.')³⁷⁰

The "murder tales" have been connected to Crime and Punishment (1866), by Vladimir Astrov ('Dostoyevsky on Edgar Allan Poe', 1942);³⁷¹ and, implicitly, to The Brothers Karamazov (1880), by Bonaparte's reference to the common theme of parricide.³⁷² Praz, in more general terms, notes the 'preponderance of the "imp of the perverse" in the characters of Dostoievsky';³⁷³ much the same observation is made by Purdy (1967).³⁷⁴ Certainly, Dostoyevsky's murderer-philosophers resemble the narrator of IP; for present purposes, however, analysis will be concentrated on Notes from the Underground (1864).

Dostoyevsky's article, 'Three Tales of Edgar Poe' - already quoted in Chapter 2³⁷⁵ - appeared in the first number of his journal, Wremia, in 1861, three years before Notes from the Underground. The article

accompanied translations (by D. Michailovsky) of three tales by Poe - BC, TTH, and 'The Devil in the Belfry'; these were followed by Arthur Gordon Pym in the third number.³⁷⁶ Whether Dostoyevsky knew IP as well at this period is not clear, but he may have known it in Baudelaire's version, since his essay includes references to several tales as yet untranslated into Russian.³⁷⁷ At all events, his novel of 1864 contains a striking series of parallels with IP (its similarities with 'The Man of the Crowd' have already been noted);³⁷⁸ even without direct influence, and in spite of the gulf in development levels between Russia and the U.S., the convergences suggest that the two texts are the products of comparable social forces.

Dostoyevsky's 'Preface' to the novel introduces the Underground Man as 'a character which is peculiar to the present age'³⁷⁹ - that is, a distinctively modern figure. The urban setting and the isolation of the protagonist immediately connect with IP; further, like Poe's tale, Dostoyevsky's text is formally split between "essay" (Part I) and "story" (Part II). In the course of his 'torturing self-analysis',³⁸⁰ the narrator admits his 'perversity',³⁸¹ his tendency to estrange himself from object-relations, and to act 'against his own interests':³⁸² 'on certain occasions, man may desire, not what is good for him, but what is bad'.³⁸³ Here, the voice seems almost identical to that of IP: 'we act, for the reason that we should not' (3). The narrator, like that of IP, presents his perversity as not just an individual trait, but an instance of a collective tendency, of what 'man' may do 'on certain occasions'. Further, his claim to be speaking a psychological truth is expressed in terms that may recall Poe's projected essay 'My Heart Laid Bare':³⁸⁴ 'Confessions such as mine should never be printed, nor handed to others for perusal.... I wish, in particular, to try

whether one can ever be really open with oneself - ever be really fearless of any item of truth.³⁸⁵ It seems that Dostoyevsky - like Baudelaire in 'Mon Coeur mis à nu'³⁸⁶ - is taking up Poe's challenge to write the unwritable text, the complete and rigorous self-analysis of the subject.

There are, besides, specific convergences of textual detail between Dostoyevsky's novel and IP. The theme of circumlocution is present: 'You try to speak concisely, yet your nervousness leads you to spin a perfect web of words';³⁸⁷ and after his jostling of the officer on Nevsky Prospect,³⁸⁸ the narrator 'felt transported with delight, and trolled an Italian aria as I proceeded'³⁸⁹ - a detail which may recall the 'opera air' of IP (10).³⁹⁰

Nonetheless, there remains a crucial difference between Poe's and Dostoyevsky's constructions of the perverse. The element of protest, which Harap sees as central both to Notes from the Underground³⁹¹ and (as shown above)³⁹² to Poe, is certainly present in Dostoyevsky. The Underground Man's perversity is, amongst other things, a mode of revolt against a society that he despises - a mode of defence of individual 'volition',³⁹³ or critical discourse, against the reifying and stereotyping discourse of the utilitarians, the reduction of the human subject to 'the keyboard of a piano'.³⁹⁴ Thus, the jostling of the officer - as shown above in relation to 'The Man of the Crowd'³⁹⁵ - is not merely an irrational, anti-social act, but also a form of protest against oppression. This dimension of contestation, which Harap sees (in Dostoyevsky) as a 'deliberate revolt' against 'mechanized existence in an industrial society',³⁹⁶ is scarcely present in the same terms in Poe, whether in 'The Man of the Crowd'³⁹⁷ or the 'murder tales'. As

the man of the crowd is unable to break the cycle of his repetitive movements, so the narrator-murderers are unable to control the perverse tendencies that rule them. It may be concluded that, while Poe's concept of the perverse is a key determinant of certain texts of Baudelaire and Dostoyevsky, it operates there in a transformed context. Where the two later writers' texts tend to privilege the dimension of conscious revolt, the universe of Poe's tales is dominated by an iron psychic and cultural determinism.

CHAPTER 4

MYTHS OF THE FULL SUBJECT.

1. THE DETECTIVE: THE DUPIN TRILOGY

i. The Detective Figure

In 'The Man of the Crowd' and the three murder tales, the subject is exposed as alienated and contradictory, liable to disintegration and self-destruction. At the same time, the narrators, to a greater or lesser extent, refuse to recognise their own contradictions - with the partial exception of those of 'The Black Cat' and 'The Imp of the Perverse', who, while admitting their own perversity, are unable to control it. In the group of tales to be considered in this chapter, by contrast, the ideological attempt is made to deny the splits and fissures in the subject, through the construction of mythical "heroic" figures that embody a notion of "full", "unified" subjectivity. These figures include the detective and the mesmerist (a parallel figure, the artist, will be examined in Chapters 5 and 6); they may be considered as myths, in the sense of the word employed by Roland Barthes in Mythologies (1957),¹ i.e. illusory constructs which nevertheless correspond to determinate anxieties within a culture, offering imaginary consensual solutions to real problems, 'passant de l'histoire à la nature'² ('le mythe est une parole dé-politisée').³ The detective is a mythical incarnation of the intellectual as disinterested, objective investigator in the service of a cultural order perceived as natural; the mesmerist, similarly, represents the heroic, pioneering scientist, engaged in the mastery of nature. The first figure serves to alleviate middle-class fear of crime and conspiracy; the second to present science as an unproblematic, benevolent activity, and thus counter social anxieties about its actual effects. However, as will be shown, these ideological myths are subverted in the letter of the texts; the reassurance effect breaks down, as the detective tends to become interchangeable

with the criminal, and the mesmerist turns into a destructive figure.

Poe's detective, Dupin, is presented in the three tales, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' (1842-43) and 'The Purloined Letter' (1844) (henceforth, for this chapter-part, to be abbreviated as: MRM, MMR, PL). These tales are best considered as a connected sequence; in the words of Baudelaire's note to his translation of PL ('La Lettre volée', 1855);⁴ they form 'une espèce de trilogie'.⁵ This is confirmed by intertextual references in both MMR - to 'an article entitled "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"' (M III, 724) - and PL - to 'the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt' (M III, 974) - which tend to insert the texts into a signifying chain initiated by MRM.⁶

The present discussion does not aim primarily to consider the place of Poe's tales in the history of detective fiction, although some attention will be given to the question. The noun "detective" does not actually occur in any of the tales - although the verb "detect" had already appeared (in an unmistakably "detective" context) in 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840).⁷ The O.E.D.'s first examples of "detective" date from 1843 (for the adjective) and 1856 (for the noun),⁸ reflecting the formation of the Detective Department of the London Metropolitan Police in 1842.⁹ Poe himself called the Dupin tales 'tales of ratiocination', as in his letter to Philip P. Cooke (9 August 1846) (O II, 328); the absence of the word "detective", however, does not necessarily mean the absence of the concept, even though it was in the process of being formed in the 1840s. In modern usage, a detective may be defined as an investigator, working either inside or parallel to the police, who applies logical deduction and specialist

knowledge to the solution of crimes and other mysteries. Dupin, it is true, in contrast to Sherlock Holmes, never identifies himself as a detective by profession (whereas, in Conan Doyle's A Study in Scarlet (1887),¹⁰ Holmes tells Watson: "'I have a trade of my own ... I'm a consulting detective'").¹¹ However, his methodological rigour has a professional stamp to it; he appears in MRM as already on terms with the police ('"I know G-, the Prefect of Police"' (M II, 546)); his intervention is exercised repeatedly; he takes payment in MMR and PL; and in MMR the reader is told that 'the cases were not few in which attempt was made to engage his services at the Prefecture' (725). Dupin can be considered a modern detective, if an occasional one, in all but name, and such has been the critical consensus.

According to Jorge Luis Borges ('El poeta del regreso', 1980),¹² Poe should be considered 'el inventor del género' ('the inventor of the genre'); all subsequent detective stories 'corresponden a los cuatro o cinco cuentos de ... Poe, ... son variaciones sobre esos mismos temas. Lo tan evidente que no se ve; el crimen en una habitación cerrada ... Diría que Poe agotó el género' ('correspond to Poe's four or five tales, ... are variations on those same themes. What is so obvious that it goes unseen; crime in a locked room ... I would say that Poe exhausted the genre').¹³ For Conan Doyle (quoted in J. Brander Matthews, 'Poe and the Detective Story' (1907)),¹⁴ 'Poe ... was the father of the detective tale, and covered its limits so completely that I fail to see how his followers can find any fresh ground which they can confidently call their own'.¹⁵ Similar views are offered by Paul Valéry ('Situation de Baudelaire', 1928), for whom Poe was 'l'inventeur de plusieurs genres', among them: 'le roman de l'instruction criminelle';¹⁶ Walter Benjamin (Charles Baudelaire, 1935-39), who

saw the detective story as 'the most momentous among Poe's technical achievements';¹⁷ and T. S. Eliot ('From Poe to Valéry', 1949), who argues: 'So far as detective fiction is concerned, nearly everything can be traced to two authors: Poe and Wilkie Collins.... the brilliant and eccentric amateur (originates) with Poe'¹⁸ (Eliot's characterization of Dupin as an 'amateur' refers to his non-official status, not his methods). Students of the genre have come to similar conclusions. Howard Haycraft (Murder for Pleasure, 1941)¹⁹ sees Poe as the 'Father of the Detective Story',²⁰ who 'foretold the entire evolution of the detective romance as a literary form';²¹ and for Julian Symons (Mortal Consequences, 1972), Poe anticipated 'almost every later version of plot in the detective story'.²² Jerry Palmer (Thrillers, 1978), taking detective fiction as one instance of the thriller form, concludes that in MRM 'the thriller was born fully developed'.²³

If the received view that MRM is, in practice, the first modern detective story is correct, this does not, of course, mean that the tale had no ancestors. Earlier proto-detective narratives include Voltaire's Zadig (1747)²⁴ seen as a precursor of the Dupin tales by, for instance, Mabbott (1980)²⁵ and David Galloway ('Introduction' to The Other Poe, 1983);²⁶ William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794)²⁷ (cited as an antecedent by Symons (Mortal Consequences));²⁸ and Hoffmann's 'Mademoiselle de Scudery' (1819)²⁹ (which R. J. Hollingdale ('Introduction' to Tales of Hoffmann, 1982)³⁰ claims as the first detective story).³¹ A text which almost coincides in date with MRM (1841) is Dickens' Barnaby Rudge (1841),³² which Poe reviewed in Graham's Magazine (February 1842) (H XI, 38-64). The precursor texts, however, are only partial anticipations of Poe's practice, since none of them exhibits all the characteristics of the Dupin tales. They are discussed in more

detail at the end of this chapter, along with certain detective texts written after Poe's - Dickens' Bleak House (1853);³³ Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone (1868),³⁴ and two tales, 'A Stolen Letter' (collected 1856)³⁵ and 'Mr Policeman and the Cook' (collected 1887);³⁶ and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes sequence, beginning with A Study in Scarlet (1887).

Within the Poe canon, the Dupin tales do not stand alone as instances of the "tale of ratiocination". They should be read in relation to: 'Thou Art the Man' (1844), Poe's fourth detective story; 'The Gold-Bug' (1843); 'A Descent into the Maelström' (1841); and, negatively, to the tales that can be read as instances of 'failed' detection:³⁷ 'The Man of The Crowd' (1840) and 'The Oblong Box' (1844). 'The Man of the Crowd' has been analysed above, and the implications of the narrator's detective failure have been considered;³⁸ the remaining tales will here only be referred to in passing, given that it is clearly the Dupin tales which are fully paradigmatic of the detective genre. The small-town setting of 'Thou Art the Man', the island locations of 'The Gold-Bug' and 'A Descent', the shipboard situation in 'The Oblong Box', all exclude what, it will be argued below,³⁹ is a crucial element in the constitution of the detective genre - the urban dimension. Further, the tales in question all lack the element of competition, crucial to the detective story;⁴⁰ only in 'The Gold-Bug' and 'Thou Art the Man' is there a crime (in the former, an ancient one, in the form of Captain Kidd's murders); and 'Thou Art the Man' is best read, as Galloway (1983) suggests, as a 'parody of a detective story'.⁴¹ Attention will, therefore, be focussed on the Dupin sequence, with occasional reference to some of the other "tales of ratiocination".

The present analysis lays no claim to completeness; there is no attempt to examine the workings of the hermeneutic code, or to confront the heterogeneity of discourses (reported speech, newspaper extracts, etc.) or the narrative strategies of the texts. The construction of the detective, as mythical "full" subject, is considered primarily in its psychological and sociological aspects.

Dupin has frequently been read by idealist critics as symbolising the apotheosis of the "autonomous", "disinterested", "god-like" intellect. Thus, for Wilbur ('The Poe Mystery Case', 1967), MRM is an allegory of 'a soul's fathoming and ordering of itself', which issues in 'the reintegrated and harmonized consciousness of Dupin'.⁴² E. H. Davidson (Poe: A Critical Study, 1957) claims that the tales exemplify the autonomous, self-referential workings of mind: 'the mind alone can enjoy its own operations ...'⁴³ The ratiocinative exercise of the detective is simply an allegory of how the mind may impose its interior logic on exterior circumstances.'⁴⁴ LeRoy L. Panek ('Play and Games: An Approach to Poe's Detective Tales', 1977),⁴⁵ applying games theory to the texts, similarly reads Dupin as purely disinterested, as practising a ludic activity 'connected with no material interests': 'Compensation is irrelevant to Dupin except insofar as it serves as tangible proof of victory in the game.'⁴⁶ This type of reading is based on certain ideological notions of the "integrated" subject, the autonomy of mind from matter and the possibility of total disinterest.

As will be shown below, there is sufficient textual evidence to prove that Dupin's activity does tend to promote specific 'material interests' - not only his own financial interest, but the power of certain individuals and groups, not excluding himself. In any case, any reading of

the texts in terms of "harmony" and "autonomy" can only work by repressing the massive textual incidence of doubling and splitting in MRM and PL, and ignoring the repeated, and scarcely disinterested, references to social class in MMR.

The idealist reading can scarcely fail to appear naïve today, given the context of the Lacan-Derrida polemic over PL (Lacan, 'Le séminaire sur "La Lettre volée"', 1956; Derrida, 'Le facteur de la vérité', 1975)⁴⁷ and the interest it has aroused.⁴⁸ The psychoanalytic literature on the Dupin tales begins with Marie Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933). In her reading of MRM, the text signifies, not the illusory coherence of the subject, but the persistence of unconscious psychic conflicts - the ape represents the Oedipal father, the locked room the mother's body, and the murders correspond to the infant's 'sadistic conception of coitus';⁴⁹ while in PL, D- is, once again, the father, while the letter, as symbol of the missing 'maternal penis', signifies the disturbing insistence of female sexuality in the male unconscious.⁵⁰ Lacan's 'Séminaire' is, as Derrida points out,⁵¹ and Lacan himself refuses to admit, not innocent of convergence with Bonaparte's; for him too, the letter, 'comme un immense corps de femme',⁵² symbolises female desire. He goes further than Bonaparte in the direction of rupturing the illusion of the monadic subject; in the 'Séminaire', PL is read as exemplifying the determining instance of the signifier (the letter) in the unconscious: 'la détermination majeure que le sujet reçoit du parcours d'un signifiant'.⁵³ The various fictional subjects in the tale have their actions determined by the letter, 'sujet véritable du conte',⁵⁴ which inserts them into their respective places in the signifying chain of events. Consciousness is thus seen as intersubjective and non-autonomous. Derrida's critique of the 'Séminaire', while

not pertaining to orthodox psychoanalytic discourse, takes the process of deconstitution of the subject even further - with Freud's 'The "Uncanny"' providing the cue.⁵⁵ If for Lacan the central structure of the tale is the intersubjective triangle, for Derrida it is the double; subjects double subjects, letters double letters, and the text becomes a 'labyrinthe de doubles',⁵⁶ an infinite series of signifiers that displace and negate one another. The Lacan-Derrida exchange will be considered in detail in the analysis of PL below; it may be emphasised here that psychoanalytic readings of the tales tend radically to subvert any reading based on "unity".

In a different direction, recent sociological readings, both of Poe's texts and of the detective genre in general, have exposed the divine detective as a cultural myth, an ideological construct corresponding to determinate class interests. Stephen Knight (Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction, 1980),⁵⁷ sees Dupin as the first literary instance of the detective as 'intelligent, infallible, isolated hero', suggesting that the tales 'imply that the isolated intellectual and imaginative life is a sufficient and successful response to the world and its problems'.⁵⁸ The analytic intellectual is constructed as a hero who makes the reader's world comprehensible; the texts serve to palliate the anxieties of the bourgeois intellectual, objectively peripheral within his own class, making him feel that his own social group is uniquely equipped to interpret the world. PL, especially, is seen as written 'for and towards the skilled literate individual', and the whole sequence as alleviating Poe's insecurity as representative member of 'a whole class of alienated writers and intellectuals'.⁵⁹

Jerry Palmer (Thrillers, 1978), taking a broader literary and sociological view, sees the Dupin tales as the first fully-developed instance of the thriller genre (of which he considers the nineteenth-century detective story to be a sub-genre).⁶⁰ For Palmer, the basic structure of the genre can be reduced to the formula: competitive individualism versus conspiracy.⁶¹ The competitive, individualistic, isolated hero represents 'the social order that already exists',⁶² the existing social universe seen as 'a good place',⁶³ and as 'in the normal run of events, devoid of conflict'.⁶⁴ This homogeneous, conflict-free social order (ideologically identified with the 'natural order')⁶⁵ is disrupted in the thriller plot by a pathological, alien conspiracy, typically fronted by a specially evil "villain".⁶⁶ The source of disturbance comes either from outside society (foreigners, non-Europeans), or from degenerate individuals, seen as freaks of heredity or nature ('trouble comes from people who are rotten, but whose rottenness is in no way connected with the nature of the world they infect')⁶⁷—from 'forces which exist within society, but which have no social origin'.⁶⁸ The hero intervenes, through a combination of intellectual analysis and physical action, to crush the conspiracy and 'restore normality';⁶⁹ he thus functions as a social saviour.⁷⁰

In Palmer's analysis, the thriller/detective genre emerges as inherently conservative, tending to perpetuate the existing order by naturalising it. Palmer offers sociological explanations for the popularity of the genre and the ideological notions it encourages (competitive individualism and a conspiratorial view of disturbance). Competitive individualism is seen as fomented by the capitalist market economy, and as related to the emergence in late nineteenth-century Britain of a skilled "labour aristocracy" with a stake in the system;⁷¹ while the fear of

conspiracy tended, in the second half of the century, to intensify owing to the increase in crimes against property and the permanent threat of working-class insurrection.⁷² Palmer's historical analysis refers almost entirely to Britain, but given that most of his book is occupied with discussion of U.S. texts, it may be presumed that the argument is also intended to apply, mutatis mutandis, to the other side of the Atlantic.

For both Knight and Palmer, the detective genre offers the reader (above all the middle-class intellectual reader) an imaginary palliation for real social anxieties, whether concerned with status or revolution. This sociological perspective may be fortified by reference to two further related social factors: urbanisation, and the myth of the scientist.

The Dupin tales, as noted earlier in this study,⁷³ form part of the urban, "modern" pole of Poe's fiction, and should be read in the context of the intensified processes of urbanisation and industrialisation under way in the U.S. of the 1840s.⁷⁴ As for the France that provides the ostensible location of the tales (although the Paris of MMR is no more than a disguised version of New York), it is, again, a question of a modernising, urbanising society. E. J. Hobsbawm (The Age of Revolution, 1962)⁷⁵ stresses that by the late 1840s, the division between "advanced" and "underdeveloped" nations was already established, with France firmly in the "advanced" camp, although French capitalism was still marked by uneven development and the economic and political dominance of finance over industrial capital.⁷⁶ The "foreign" location of the texts does not affect their "modernity". The incidents of MMR occur 'amid the wild lights and shadows of the

populous city' (533), with its newspapers, advertisements and police. The Paris police, the Sûreté - founded in 1811, with the ex-criminal Vidocq (mentioned in MRM, 545) as its first chief - was older and more firmly established than the London Metropolitan Police.⁷⁷ The reference to Cuvier (MRM, 559) introduces the discourse of modern science; while the contemporary fashion of flânerie is present in Dupin's and the narrator's night-walks: 'we sallied forth into the streets ... roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking ... that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford' (MRM, 533).⁷⁸ The phrase 'mental excitement' recalls the fascinated 'emotion' induced by the crowd in the narrator of 'The Man of the Crowd' (MII, 507);⁷⁹ and it may be noted that Baudelaire's translation of MRM ('Double Assassinat dans la Rue Morgue', 1855)⁸⁰ explicitly constitutes Dupin and his friend as flâneurs, rendering 'We were strolling one night' (533) as: 'Une nuit, nous flânions'.⁸¹

The Paris of MMR is, as is well-known, simply a displaced version of New York (the text is a fictionalised version of the murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers in 1841).⁸² As for PL, it is true that, as Knight suggests, the setting is in a sense fabulous or non-realist: 'the events are abroad, royal and only vaguely described';⁸³ but this element should not be exaggerated. It is of course clear that, as Mabbott stresses, 'the real Queen of France, Marie Amélie, was not portrayed',⁸⁴ and that any attempt to read the text as a Balzac-type study of France under Louis-Philippe will not get far! Nonetheless, PL is not set in Ruritania; its fictional Paris is signified as 'modern' by the textual link with the two preceding tales and by the presence of a highly organised police apparatus employing technically sophisticated methods (as witness 'the most powerful microscope' (980)).

Indeed, the metropolitan setting requires closer attention. It was in the street that, in the words of Marshall Berman (All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, 1982), 'the fundamental social and psychic contradictions of modern life converged and perpetually threatened to erupt';⁸⁵ to the detective falls the task of interpreting those contradictions in such a way as to obliterate them ideologically. For Benjamin (Charles Baudelaire, 1935-39), the nineteenth-century detective is essentially an urban genre; its 'decisive elements' are four - the victim, the murderer, the detective and, crucially, the masses. The metropolis and its crowds provide the element of mystery, by facilitating the disappearance of the criminal. Benjamin concludes: 'The original social content of the detective story was the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd.'⁸⁶ In this context, he quotes a long passage from MMR concerning the possibility of Marie's disappearance on her way to her aunt's (749-50): 'Marie might have proceeded ... by any one of the many routes between her own residence and that of her aunt, without meeting a single individual whom she knew, or by whom she was known'.⁸⁷ The historical disappearance of Mary Rogers was itself made possible by the vastness and complexity of the modern city.⁸⁸ Dupin, it may be added, has to track down the sailor in MRM through an advertisement; the role of the detective is to make the invisible visible. Criminal, victim or accessory - all may be hidden in the urban labyrinth.

The urban disappearance theme has been mentioned above, in relation to 'The Man of the Crowd' and to texts like Hawthorne's 'Wakefield' (1835);⁸⁹ it is specifically related to law and order in Caleb Williams (1794), where the protagonist, framed as a criminal, disappears into 'London, which appears to be an inexhaustible reservoir of concealment to the majority of mankind'.⁹⁰ In Barnaby Rudge (1841), similarly, the

murderer Rudge hides in the London backstreets, 'to lose himself among their windings, and baffle pursuit'.⁹¹ The theme also recurs in texts after Poe; in Bleak House (1853), London provides a space of disappearance for both Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock, while in both The Moonstone (1868) (Godfrey Ablewhite) and Edwin Drood (1870) (Jasper), it permits characters to live a double life.⁹² It is also frequent in the Holmes narratives; thus, in The Valley of Fear (1915),⁹³ Holmes says of a double-agent: 'he ... defied me ever to trace him among the teeming millions of this great city'⁹⁴ (if many of the Holmes stories take place in the country, the detective himself, with his Baker Street base, remains an eminently urban figure, and the first two novels, which define the figure, are set squarely in London).

The city becomes a space punctured by absences, which the detective fills with presence. Dickens, in one of his Household Words articles on the Detective Department of the Metropolitan Police ('On Duty with Inspector Field', 1868),⁹⁵ allows the reader to follow the detective on his rounds of the backstreets and cheap lodging-houses, in search of stolen goods. The detective becomes the mapper and interpreter of the labyrinth: 'these intricate passages and doors, contrived for escape ... Who gets in by a nod, and shows their secret working to us? Inspector Field.'⁹⁶ Similarly, Inspector Bucket of Bleak House - Field's fictional descendant⁹⁷ - penetrates the maze of slums to track down Jo at Tom All-Along's,⁹⁸ and pursues Lady Dedlock through the 'labyrinth of streets'.⁹⁹

The task of the detective is to make sense of the city, and of the complex modern society of which the city is a metonym. Typically, however, the detective's act of interpretation is largely empiricist; urban life is reduced to a series of isolated "problems" demanding

isolated "solutions", and not analysed in terms of class structure and power-relations. If in Bleak House society is seen in terms of objective interrelations, the agent of this vision is not Bucket; and in the Dupin tales, as will be shown below,¹⁰⁰ no attempt is made to place the events in a wider context.

If the detective interprets the city, he does so both as artist (through intuition) and scientist (through deduction and specialist knowledge). As will be seen later, Dupin is paradigmatic in this aspect; in Knight's words, Poe here 'combines the twin nineteenth-century legends of the scientist and the artist'.¹⁰¹ The ideological figure of the artist in Poe's work is discussed elsewhere;¹⁰² the figure of the scientist, however, requires specific attention at this point. For Benjamin, the detective provides the 'calculating, constructive element' which 'permits the intellect to break through (the) emotion-laden atmosphere' of urban crime.¹⁰³ He is thus an essentially rationalist figure; and Dupin announces himself as such through his rigorous exclusion of the supernatural: "'...neither of us believe in praeternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L'Esplanade were not destroyed by spirits.'" (MRM, 551). It will be shown below that Dupin's methodology is composite; if in MRM and MMR empirical deduction ("science") dominates, in PL the mystery is solved through imaginative identification ("art").¹⁰⁴ However, in the first two tales the emphasis is heavily on empirical knowledge and its application to the mysteries. In MRM, the mystery is solved thanks to Dupin's possession of specialist knowledge of zoology and sailors' knots; the explicit derivation of the zoological information from Cuvier places the detective in the position of the scientist as accumulator and classifier of empirical facts (according to Mabbott, Dupin would have used the great naturalist's Règne Animal

(1817)).¹⁰⁵ Dupin is endowed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the animal kingdom that allows him to declare with full authority: "no animal but an Ourang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations" (559); and with an expertise on knots that extends to the smallest nations: "this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese" (561).

The use of specialist information continues in MMR, where Dupin eliminates the theory that the corpse found in the Seine was not Marie's, on the basis of his knowledge of specific gravity (738-44). In the Poe canon, he is here paralleled by Legrand in 'The Gold-Bug', whose discovery of the treasure is dependent on his specialist knowledge of cryptography (M III, 835), invisible ink (832) and sailors' jargon (841). Besides, Legrand is characterised as a scientist, a zoological expert who extends the existing classification: 'He had found an unknown bivalve, forming a new genus' (808); the naturalist appears as heroic innovator. In Dupin and Legrand, a certain myth of science is being articulated - the idea that accumulated empirical knowledge is a privileged discourse for understanding the natural and social universe; this myth will, of course, find its apotheosis in Holmes.¹⁰⁶

Berman points out that it was precisely in the Paris of the 1840s that 'Gautier and Flaubert were developing their mystique of "art for art's sake", while the circle around Auguste Comte was constructing its own parallel mystique of "pure science"'; he argues that both 'mystiques' constitute an imaginary negation of modern intellectuals' objective 'dependence ... on the bourgeois world they despise'.¹⁰⁷ It may also be noted that the English noun "scientist" was coined by Thomas Whewell in 1840.¹⁰⁸ Dupin, then, appears at a key moment in the constitution

of a certain ideology of science. In Raymond Williams' terms (Keywords, 1976), "science" appears as a 'model of neutral methodical observer and external object of study';¹⁰⁹ Dupin presents himself as an apparently objective analyst.

Dupin may be placed in relation to a certain "heroic-positivist" myth of the scientist, as articulated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in 'Da Sociologia da Ciência à Política Científica' (1978).¹¹⁰ In a global consideration of the sociology of science, Santos identifies various phases in the history of the ideological legitimation of the natural sciences. The discourse of utility, favoured in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to gain official support for science, was replaced in the nineteenth century by the discourse of the "autonomy of science", as scientific progress came to be identified with progress tout court. From the 1930s, the principle of autonomy, visibly undermined by the industrialisation of science, had once again to come to terms with the principle of utility; at this point, the discourse of Robert Merton (Science and Democratic Social Order, 1942) appeared in the U.S. to transform the autonomy of science into its utility.¹¹¹ Merton's model - the "heroic-positivist conception" of science¹¹² - is a normative one, defining the scientific ethos in terms of "universalism" (the acceptance of a theory is not seen as contingent on the personal or social qualities of its originator) and "disinterestedness" (a value inherent in the scientific institution which transcends any interested motives of individual scientists).¹¹³ This model, according to Santos, became the dominant paradigm for the sociology of science in the 1950s; post-Merton sociologists justified competition between scientists as tending to promote the extension of knowledge by speeding the process up.¹¹⁴ What is in question is 'uma concepção

heroica da ciência que, enquanto estrutura mítica, tem o seu correspondente epistemológico no positivismo empiricista'; 'A exaltação da autonomia da ciência acaba sempre na apologia da livre concorrência ... entre os cientistas e, portanto, na apologia da sociedade liberal' ('a heroic conception of science which, as a mythic structure, has its epistemological equivalent in empiricist positivism'; 'The exaltation of the autonomy of science always ends up as an apology for free competition ... among scientists and, therefore, for liberal society').¹¹⁵

In Santos' analysis, this model of science is rejected, in favour of Thomas Kuhn's model of the succession of paradigms (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1962);¹¹⁶ the Merton paradigm is seen as divorced from actual scientific practice, and as little more than a screen for the naturalisation of the liberal-capitalist order.¹¹⁷

In ideological terms, however, it may be suggested that the model of science offered in the Dupin tales approximates to (and anticipates) precisely the heroic-positivist conception of Merton. In the Merton scheme of things, scientific activity is characterised by competitiveness on the one hand and social utility on the other. The scientist is a hero whose isolated, competitive activity guarantees social progress.

The similarities with Palmer's definition of the thriller hero are arresting; perhaps the scientist and the detective are parallel cultural myths. In the case of Dupin, the detective is an applied scientist - and in a sense a pure one too, given that his application of the knowledge accumulated by the likes of Cuvier is such as to constitute a new kind of science (what Doyle, in A Study in Scarlet, was

to call the 'science of deduction').¹¹⁸ He places his knowledge and skills at the service of the social order, and competes with rivals who also deploy "scientific" skills - both D- the poet-mathematician (PL, 986) and the Prefect with his microscope. Dupin is, then, on one level, the bearer of a myth - the heroic, competitive, empiricist scientist. He is, of course, artist as well, and in PL the limits of the empirical method will be exposed; but the facet of scientist is an essential component of the detective figure.

The figure of Dupin will be analysed in the context of the psycho-analytic and sociological perspectives summarised above. The attempt will be made to show how while the notion of Dupin as "full", "integrated" subject, as swallowed whole by idealist critics, is indeed constructed in the texts, it can be broken down in the light of materialist discourses.

It may be pointed out that, in any case, the figure of Dupin is relativised by the other tales which frame the sequence within the canon.¹¹⁹

Dupin stands in problematic relation to parallel detective or quasi-detective figures in other tales. On the one hand, his successful detection is replicated by the similar feats of Legrand in 'The Gold-Bug' and the narrator of 'A Descent into the Maelström'; if in the Dupin tales ratiocination saves the social order, in the other two tales it serves the interest of the ratiocinator himself. Legrand gains wealth, and the fisherman in 'A Descent' saves his own life (although the status of the latter tale is complicated by its hoaxical dimension; as both Mabbott (1980)¹²⁰ and Beaver ('Commentary' to The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, 1976)¹²¹ point out, the "science"

of the tale is totally fraudulent). On the other hand, Dupin is also shadowed by what J. G. Kennedy ('The Limits of Reason', 1975) calls 'failed' detectives¹²² - that is, the narrators of 'The Man of the Crowd' and 'The Oblong Box'. In the former tale, as shown above,¹²³ the narrator's deductive skills allow him (he believes) to guess people's occupations from their physical appearance (M. II, 508-509); clerks and gamblers are thus identified by this Holmes avant la lettre.¹²⁴ On the other hand, his total failure to penetrate the enigma of the old man calls his detective pretensions into question. In 'The Oblong Box', the narrator tries to solve the mystery of his friend Wyatt's oblong box, and arrives at a totally mistaken conclusion: he thinks it contains a painting, when in fact it is the coffin of Wyatt's wife. As Kennedy suggests, this presence in the canon of instances of failed detection tends to work against the idealisation of Dupin, implying that 'ratiocination answers no questions of genuine importance'.¹²⁵

Kennedy also raises (and tries to answer on biographical grounds) the question of why Poe 'discarded his detective hero after "The Purloined Letter"'.¹²⁶ Later in the present discussion, the attempt will be made to provide a textually-based answer to this question; it will be argued that the generic conventions established in MRM are radically called in question and subverted in PL, to the point where the detective genre effectively breaks down. It may be pointed out here that it is, at least, curious that in 'The Man of the Crowd', written in 1840 before the first Dupin story, the detective quest is abandoned with the mystery unsolved, as the "normal" narrator refuses to confront his own latent identity with his "abnormal", possibly criminal, double.¹²⁷

The textual construction of Dupin as subject will now be considered in detail. In all three tales, the material is so organised as to give maximum prominence to Dupin himself - to what the narrator, in MMR, calls 'some very remarkable features in the mental character of my friend' (724). In the case of MRM, the narrative sequence may be outlined as follows: 1) discussion of the analytic faculty; 2) characterisation of Dupin; 3) the Chantilly episode, an "example story" illustrating Dupin's mental powers;¹²⁸ 4) presentation of the mystery through the newspaper reports; 5) Dupin's visit to the Rue Morgue; 6) Dupin's explanation of the mystery; 7) the sailor's visit and narrative; 8) capture of the ape and Dupin's triumph over the Prefect. The longest section is that of the explanation, which takes place in Dupin's apartment; all the other episodes can be seen as secondary to this one - either anticipating it (the Chantilly episode), providing Dupin with his raw material (the newspaper reports and the visit) or confirming it (the sailor's narrative, the finding of the ape). Dupin's intellect is favourably contrasted with that of the narrator and the Prefect, and he is thus constituted as the only person competent to solve the mystery. The mediation of Dupin's discourse through that of the narrator further isolates the detective by increasing his distance from the reader; the reader has to place him/herself in the position of the narrator, not the detective. The narrator is presented as an "average" middle-class intellectual, privileged in relation to the police (since he, unlike the Prefect, is allowed to receive Dupin's explanation) but inferior to the detective; he functions as a stand-in for the intended probable reader.

Palmer suggests that the thriller is typically organised around a triad of characters: the Amateur, the Professional and the Bureaucrat,

with the role of Professional falling to the hero. The Professional solves the mysteries which the Bureaucrat cannot fathom, while the Amateur admires at a distance.¹²⁹ MRM may be considered to fit this triadic structure. The Prefect is a Bureaucrat, unable to deal with anything outside the limits of his training and experience; the narrator is an Amateur, of no more than ordinary competence; Dupin is a Professional, not in the sense of making detection his profession,¹³⁰ but in the sense of applying analytic rigour and encyclopaedic knowledge. The text also provides an instance, in the Chantilly episode, of what Palmer calls the "kerygmatic encounter" - that is, the moment, early in the narrative, when the detective demonstrates his intellectual acumen and therefore his "saving" power as potential defender of the status quo.¹³¹ The text is thus organised around the central, dominating figure of the detective.

MMR repeats much the same formula, with the mystery followed by elucidation, and the Amateur-Professional-Bureaucrat triad; the kerygmatic encounter is replaced (as it will be in PL too) by intertextual reference to Dupin's previous feats. PL, however, attempts to throw Dupin's intellect into even greater relief, by introducing a "professional" villain who rivals him in intellectual power, but is finally defeated; and, further, by constructing a whole hierarchy of intellectual levels.

The narrative of PL may be divided into three phases: 1) the Prefect's first visit to Dupin; 2) the Prefect's second visit and the handing-over of the letter; 3) Dupin's explanation to the narrator. Once again, the narrative is organised so as to privilege Dupin's vision; all the directly-narrated events take place in his library (the stealing of the letter is mediated through the Prefect's discourse, and the finding of

it through Dupin's), and the rigorous unity of place thus constructs the detective himself as the locus of truth. The hierarchy Dupin-narrator-Prefect is established as in the previous texts; once again, the narrator is relatively privileged, as recipient of the explanation.

The situation is complicated, however, by the introduction of a hierarchy of intellect among the persons involved in the scandal of the letter, and by the function of D- as equal opposite number to Dupin - whereas in MRM the criminal was non-human, the victims dead, and the sailor both only indirectly guilty and easily tricked. Lacan has shown how the text constructs two triangular situations: the first, in the royal boudoir; the second, in D-'s hotel. In each case, there is 'un regard qui ne voit rien' (the king; the police), 'un regard qui voit que le premier ne voit rien' (the queen; D-), and 'le troisième qui de ces deux regards voit qu'ils laissent ce qui est à cacher à découvert pour qui voudra s'en emparer' (D-; Dupin).¹³² That is, there are three degrees of vision; there are blind, half-seeing and all-seeing people. In the second triangle, D- is reduced from the first (all-seeing) degree to the second (half-seeing); Dupin is thus, conversely, raised to the status of having the only consistently all-seeing vision in the text. Poe's detective can thus be viewed as a model reader, an exemplary decoder and interpreter of the world. The tale has been read in these terms by Roland Barthes ('Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', 1966),¹³³ who sees the Prefect as an imperfect reader and Dupin as one who can confront the object on more than one level ('pour trouver la lettre, ... il fallait passer à un autre niveau');¹³⁴ and by Sergio L. P. Bellei ('"The Purloined Letter": A Theory of Perception', 1976),¹³⁵ who stresses Dupin's unique ability to read objects in context ('he appropriates a meaning which is his creation in that he

reenacts its contextual reality').¹³⁶ Dupin would thus join the select band of Poe characters who, like Legrand as interpreted by Jean Ricardou ('L'or du scarabée', 1971),¹³⁷ exemplify the "perfect" reader - and, perhaps, by extension, the "perfect", full subject (even if Barthes would not see it in those terms).

All the above would tend to suggest that Dupin is, indeed, to be read as exemplary of the full subject. However, the structural pattern common to the three tales conceals a whole series of crucial differences among them - whether between MRM and MMR/PL, or MRM/MMR and PL. Firstly, Dupin's method is not homogeneous across the tales; secondly, his objective relation to the social order alters; thirdly, so does his relation to his opponent(s), actual or potential. These aspects will be considered in detail below;¹³⁸ it may be pointed out at this stage that Dupin's method in MRM and MMR is primarily "empirical", and in PL primarily "imaginative"; that in MRM he is a gentleman amateur, but in MMR and PL takes payment; and that while in MRM his opponent is non-human, and in MMR all his various actual or potential adversaries are his social "inferiors", in PL he meets an enemy on his own social and (almost) intellectual level. The existence of these marked divergences among the tales suggests that, on closer examination, Dupin will prove to be a less homogeneous figure than appears at first sight.

By the end of MRM, the naïve or first-time reader may have forgotten that the infallible, rigorous analyst who defeats both ape and Prefect exhibits certain discrepancies with the Dupin who was introduced at the beginning - although some critics, e.g. Mireille Vincent ('Le grand singe fauve', 1975),¹³⁹ have noted this 'troublante contradiction'.¹⁴⁰

Dupin is initially presented, not as "homogeneous" or "integrated", but as an unstable, contradictory subject, liable to splitting and disintegration. His imagination is 'wild', and his 'temper' is characterised by 'fantastic gloom' (532); he exhibits 'wild whims', his obsession with darkness being termed a 'freak of fancy' and a 'bizarrerie' (ibid.) (the love of darkness will return in PL, where the first conversation with the Prefect is conducted entirely 'in the dark' (975)). He has a double voice, alternating between 'tenor' and 'treble' registers (533). The narrator admits that an outsider might have seen them both as 'madmen' (532), and suggests that Dupin's eccentricities may have been 'the result of an excited, or perhaps of a diseased intelligence' (533).

These characteristics - doubleness, "wildness", hyperexcitation, obsession with darkness, melancholy - suggest less a lucid Parisian intellectual than one of the disturbed protagonists of Poe's Gothic tales. Dupin's use of artificial light to 'counterfeit' night (532) recalls the artificially-lit interiors constructed in 'Ligeia' or 'The Assignation'.¹⁴¹ Where the Visionary of the latter tale declares: "'I have ... framed for myself ... a bower of dreams.'" (M II, 165), Dupin and his friend 'busied our souls in dreams' (533) - an activity signified again in MMR: 'weaving the dull world around us into dreams' (724). Above all, Dupin as artist-dreamer exhibits close parallels with Usher - the isolation, the melancholy introversion, the double voice (Usher's voice 'varied' between the 'tremulous' and the 'guttural' - M II, 402). The resemblance is further emphasised by Dupin's bibliophilia - the 'very rare and remarkable volume' (532) which Dupin searches for recalls Usher's 'exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic' (M II, 409). Besides, the house in which Dupin lives, 'a time-eaten and grotesque mansion ... tottering to its fall' (ibid.), seems a House of Usher

transplanted to Paris; the description suggests both the literal fall of the House of Usher, and its owner's reason 'tottering ... upon her throne' (M II, 406).¹⁴²

The above parallels suggest that Dupin too suffers from disintegrative tendencies, from an 'incoherence' similar to that of Usher (M II, 402) that may lead him, likewise, to self-destruction. He is, further, signified by the narrator as double: 'I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin - the creative and the resolvent' (533). The narrator thus effectively splits Dupin into two.

Doubling is, in fact, a repeated theme in MRM, as Derrida stresses.¹⁴³ Dupin is doubled by the narrator, who seems a lesser version of himself; they meet 'in search of the same ... volume' (531-32), they furnish the apartment in accordance with 'our common temper' (532), and the narrator allows himself to replicate his companion's activities: 'into this bizarrerie, as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect abandon' (ibid.). At the same time - as has been noted by Wilbur (1967)¹⁴⁴ and by J. A. Leo Lemay ('The Psychology of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"', 1982)¹⁴⁵ - the Dupin-narrator pair is doubled by the L'Esplanade mother-daughter pair. The former live 'au troisième' (561), the French equivalent of the fourth storey in the U.S. usage,¹⁴⁶ and the latter too inhabit the 'fourth. story' of their building (537), and, like Dupin and his friend, who 'admitted no visitors' (532), 'lived an exceedingly retired life - saw no company' (556). As Lemay points out,¹⁴⁷ both pairs are further doubled by the sailor-ape pair, who occupy an upper storey (the ape runs 'down the stairs' (565)), while Dupin's double voice is doubled by the

sailor's 'gruff' voice and the ape's 'shrill' tones (549) heard in the L'Esplanade apartment (540). This incidence of doubling tends to undermine the coherence of the subject that Wilbur's reading wishes to maintain against the textual evidence.

Besides, as will be shown below in detail,¹⁴⁸ the ape doubles both the sailor and Dupin, and Dupin doubles the ape. The double motif is, in fact, written across the whole text; indeed, Baudelaire's translation underscores the fact by rendering the title as 'Double Assassinat dans la Rue Morgue', thus placing the entire narrative under the sign of doubleness. As seen above, Derrida, following Freud, emphasises the disturbing, "uncanny" effect of the double theme, its tendency to threaten the illusory "unity" of the subject;¹⁴⁹ Dupin himself may be unaware of his contradictions, may see himself as the 'harmonized' subject that Wilbur would have him to be,¹⁵⁰ but the text objectively inserts him into a structure of repeated doubling (in PL, of course, the doubling will be redoubled).¹⁵¹

Dupin is further, and crucially, double in the moments when his analytic activity is brought into play; it is precisely at such 'periods' (533) that the doubleness of his voice becomes evident, as his treble tone is heard (thus the Chantilly episode - but also, by extension, the explanation of the murders - should be "heard" in the detective's second voice): 'His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble' (533); 'I have already spoken of his abstract manner at such times.... his voice ... had that intonation which is commonly employed in speaking to some one at a great distance. His eyes, vacant in expression, regarded only the wall.' (548) The moments of ratiocination

thus reveal the 'double Dupin' (533). It may be noted that Baudelaire's version contains a curious mistranslation in this respect; 'his voice ... rose into a treble' is rendered: 'sa voix ... triplait en sonorité'.¹⁵² The element of doubling is thus unintentionally reinforced, indeed converted into trebling or multiplication! At all events, Dupin the ratiocinator, when exercising his 'peculiar analytic ability' (533), signifies himself as split. If MRM is read forwards, the reader may well have forgotten the 'double Dupin' by the end, seduced by the omniscient, infallible detective. On the other hand, if the text is re-read backwards, the impression of coherence produced by Dupin at the end will appear illusory. It cannot be concluded that through the act of detection Dupin has "cured" himself of his tendency to splitting, since he has had to split himself in order to ratiocinate. It could, of course, be claimed that in practice he 'reintegrates' himself, in Wilbur's terms,¹⁵³ by synthesising his 'creative' and 'resolvent' facets (533) in the art-and-science of detection. However, a close examination of his methods will reveal that this is not the case.

Dupin is also double as being both "artist" and "scientist", as suggested above.¹⁵⁴ He is both 'creative' and 'resolvent', 'imaginative' and 'analytic' (MRM, 531); like his double D-, he is 'poet and mathematician' (PL, 986), able both to discourse on mathematical theory (987-88) and to produce what he ironically terms 'certain doggrel' (979). He is both producer and consumer of art ('reading, writing' - MRM, 533), and conversant with literature, from the well-known (Rousseau - MRM, 568) to the obscure (Chamfort - PL, 986-87); equally, he is an expert on zoology (Cuvier) and astronomy (the nebular cosmogony - MRM, 536). Ideologically, this multifaceted erudition tends to construct him as

"perfect", "balanced" subject; one may compare Poe's self-construction in 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846) as artist-scientist (poet-mathematician): 'the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem' (H XIV, 195). Whether, however, the texts in practice "balance" Dupin's artist and scientist sides in such a way as to signify him as "unified" subject is highly dubious. For some critics, this is the case; thus Donald B. Stauffer ('Poe as Phrenologist: The Example of Monsieur Dupin', 1972),¹⁵⁵ in a reading clearly in line with Wilbur, sees Dupin as an 'analytical poet', the embodiment of 'apparently contradictory qualities'¹⁵⁶ synthesised in 'resolution'.¹⁵⁷ Whether Dupin is, in fact, such a Coleridgean poet¹⁵⁸ becomes dubious if his methodology is subjected to detailed examination.

Dupin's detective method is not homogeneous across the tales; he employs two principal methods, which operate discontinuously. These may be summarised as follows: 1) empirical deduction - the identification of ape and sailor (MRM); the elimination of the "still alive" and "gang" theories and the identification of the naval officer (MMR); 2) "mind-reading", the capacity to put himself in another's position - the reconstitution of the narrator's thought-processes in the Chantilly episode (MRM); the reconstruction of Marie's and the officer's thoughts (MMR, 755-56, 771); the location of D-'s hiding-place for the letter, on the grounds of his character (PL).

The first method is essentially "scientific"; deductions are made, and hypotheses eliminated, on the basis of the material evidence, with the aid of specialist knowledge. The second, in contrast, activates the Romantic concept of the imagination, which may be defined, in the

present context, as the capacity of the subject to place him/herself in the other's position. By entering the mind of the narrator or D-, Dupin is exercising the imagination as theorised by Shelley in 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821):¹⁵⁹ 'A man (sic), to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others';¹⁶⁰ or by Keats in his letter to R. Woodhouse (1818):¹⁶¹ 'As to the poetical Character ... it is not itself ... A Poet ... has no Identity - he is continually in for - and filling some other Body.'¹⁶² By temporarily "becoming" the other and reconstructing her/his thoughts, Dupin places himself in the line of the Romantic poets.

The "scientific" method predominates in both MRM and MMR; but in PL, it is actually denigrated in favour of the "imaginative" method, since the Prefect's microscope and knowledge of recherché hiding-places fail to find the letter. In Knight's words: 'The intricacies of reasoning ... have become unnecessary to the method.... Dupin is now more seer than scientist';¹⁶³ there is 'a crucial change in the detective's methodology' between MMR and PL.¹⁶⁴ In the first two tales, in contrast, the part played by the "imaginative" method is relatively minor; it is empirical deduction that resolves the enigmas. It may be concluded that, rather than synthesising the "analytic" and "imaginative" methods, the sequence of tales holds them in imbalance, privileging now one, now the other; it is a question, not of achieved equilibrium, but of unresolved tension.

The two methods will now be examined in detail, taking first the empirical one dominant in the first two tales. MRM offers the clearest instances; ape and sailor are tracked down through the study

of their traces. The Ourang-Outang is identified through examination of a tuft of its hair, found between the fingers of Mme L'Esplanaye (558) and the indentations of its fingers on Mlle L'Esplanaye's throat (558-59); the sailor, by a ribbon dropped by the lightning-rod (561), with its tell-tale knot.

Dupin's method here may be summarised as follows: the scene of the crime is minutely examined for clues; an object is found; its characteristics are established; specialist knowledge is applied to place that object within a larger system; the person (or animal) to whom the object belongs is thus identified. A relation of metonymy is thus reconstituted - hair to ape, knot to sailor. Under this method lie certain epistemological assumptions about objects and situations. Dupin assumes that to know an object means: 1) to describe it in detail; and 2) to classify it within a larger paradigm (the system of 'mammalia' (559) or of sailor's knots). To know a situation means to reconstitute its component parts in such a way that they form a coherent signifying chain ("There was no flaw in any link in the chain." (553)) The murder story appeared initially as an incomplete signifying chain; that is, the sentence "a sailor's escaped ourang-outang killed the L'Esplanayes" appeared with the subject deleted: "X killed the L'Esplanayes". The missing element, X, is identified by empirical deduction; once the chain is restored to completeness, the situation becomes "known" and "finished". This, for Dupin, is to know 'the matter as a whole' (545); the only totality he admits is that of a closed system.

Dupin, in fact, confronts the object on two levels - to use Saussure's terminology as modified by Culler (1974),¹⁶⁵ the syntagmatic and

paradigmatic levels. The syntagmatic level places the hairs in the sequence of events that includes the murders, thus restoring the complete signifying chain; the paradigmatic level permits the identification of the hairs by inserting them into a classificatory scheme. The generic term "ourang-outang" is defined in contrast to the other terms in a paradigm which contains "gorilla" "baboon", etc., which is itself inserted in a wider paradigm of the "mammalia" (non-human and human). Thus, once it is established that 'this is no human hair' (558), the term "human being" is eliminated and another term from the paradigm (in fact "ourang-outang") has to be inserted. Dupin's method, then, does not confront the object in total isolation; the ape's hair can only make sense if inserted into a series of wider structures and if viewed simultaneously on syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels.

What identifies Dupin's method as empiricist, however, is that he refuses to place the ape in any larger structures than those which are absolutely necessary to explain the events. There is no question of inserting the animal, once classified à la Cuvier, into any wider social or historical context. The text answers the question: how did the ape get to Paris? (it was captured in Borneo (564)); but does not begin to ask: why? what are the historical forces which make its presence there possible? Dupin never considers the possible existence of an objective historical link binding him to the ape. Nonetheless, the process which does ultimately link subject to object may be given a name: imperialism.

The sailor's presence in 'the Indian Archipelago' (564) (i.e. modern Indonesia, then colonised by the British and Dutch) is not fortuitous, but dictated by European economic interests (the European penetration

of the East Indies had already (as noted in Chapter 1)¹⁶⁶ been signified by Poe in 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), with its trading voyage starting from Java (M II, 135)). The ape's owner, further, is French, indeed doubly metropolitan, given his 'Parisian origin' (562); his status as crew member of a 'Maltese vessel' (560) also requires attention. Malta was not only an important naval base and source of sailors; it was also (since 1800) a British colony¹⁶⁷ - a fact which further links the sailor with European imperialism (the Maltese connection reinforces his "marginal" associations, as will be shown below).¹⁶⁸ Besides, the ape is inserted into the capitalist-imperialist economy as a commodity; the sailor effectively steals it from the jungle, seeing in it an object with a high exchange value: 'His ultimate design was to sell it.' (564) The ape is not an isolated "exotic" object, but, rather, a commodity integrated into the economic structures of Paris (the sailor 'obtained for it a very large sum at the Jardin des Plantes' (568)). Nor is the zoological knowledge that enables Dupin to identify the ape an "innocent" possession; it is itself a by-product of imperialism. Knowledge does not come by chance; it derives from determinate power-structures (it is unlikely that an inhabitant of Borneo could, in 1841, have identified a French chamois, say, by its hairs!).

Dupin's method, however, supposes that objects become knowable, and known, through being inserted into a larger - but partial - closed system, that is, a closed syntagm plus a closed series of paradigms. His epistemology is thus classically empiricist; it is confined by what Lukács, in History and Class Consciousness (1923), calls the 'isolated and isolating facts and partial systems' of bourgeois thought.¹⁶⁹

If historical materialism 'sees the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and integrates them in a totality',¹⁷⁰

and is aware of 'the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process',¹⁷¹ Dupin's empiricism, in contrast, estranges objects and situations from history and fails to problematise the subject-object relation.

In MRM, besides, any possibility of investigating the social causes of crime is blocked off by the attribution of the murders to an animal.¹⁷²

In MMR, the question is simply ignored; the murder of Marie is treated as an isolated "problem" with an isolated "solution", and not placed in a wider context. No attention is given to the possible roots of sexually-related violence in class and gender power-structures; as will be shown below,¹⁷³ Dupin's criminological discourse simply assumes that 'ruffians' are 'ruffians' by nature. Here too, his method is clearly empiricist; the appropriate critique may be provided this time by Marcuse, who in One Dimensional Man (1964) rejects the kind of positivism that 'insulates and atomizes the facts, stabilizes them within the repressive whole, and accepts the terms of this whole as the terms of the analysis' so that 'the given form of society is and remains the ultimate frame of reference for theory and practice'.¹⁷⁴

In Dupin's criminal investigations, empiricism walks hand-in-glove with the existing order.

The second, "imaginative" method makes its first appearance in Dupin's practice in the Chantilly episode of MRM (533-37), but it has been anticipated earlier in the passage on draughts: 'the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith' (529). It is a question, then, of placing oneself in the other's position; and in the Chantilly episode, Dupin does precisely this with the narrator.

Here the analyst reconstructs the 'links of the chain' (535) of his companion's thoughts. A coherent, uninterrupted signifying chain is produced, as follows: pavement - stereotomy - atomies - Epicurus - nebular cosmogony - nebula in Orion (constellation) - Orion (mythical figure) as referent of line in Ovid - Ovid quoted in newspaper review of Chantilly's performance - narrator thinks of Chantilly and smiles. Dupin reconstitutes the chain on the basis of his existing knowledge of the narrator's intellectual level and interests, his recollection of their recent conversations, and observation of his friend's physical actions. The associations work, in general, on the level of the signified, though two operate on that of the signifier (the phono-morphological link between 'stereotomy' and 'atomies', and the double sense of 'Orion').

Dupin's 'method' (534) here is not that of pure empiricism; it is based on a knowledge of the narrator, which, to be effective, has to insert him as subject into wider structures. The other has to be placed in a determinate context; the analyst has to ask: what is this person's class position and educational level? The social structure is not, of course, itself called in question, but more allowance is made for context than in the case of the ape. Further, by entering another person's mind, Dupin is in a sense "becoming" that person, and thus reducing that distance between subject and object which the empirical method rigidly maintains. As Barbara Johnson ('The Frame of Reference', 1977) points out, the Prefect - who in PL represents the empirical method - works on the basis of a 'falsely objective notion of the act of seeing' (the polarity "hidden/exposed"), whereas Dupin's method adds a "subjective" element (the polarity "blindness/sight");¹⁷⁵ by identifying with another subject, the analyst calls in question the self/other

and subjective/objective antitheses.

Allan Smith ('The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe', 1973) relates the Chantilly episode to the nineteenth-century psychological principle of the "association of ideas" - as for 'The Black Cat'¹⁷⁶ - and affirms the compatibility of Dupin's method with contemporaneous theories, such as that of George Payne (Elements of Mental and Moral Science, 1828), who argued that in mental association there is 'a fixed and regular order of sequence, ascertainable by experience'.¹⁷⁷

Baudelaire's translation, it may be added, renders 'That you did combine them (i.e. the 'two ideas of Orion and Chantilly') I saw' (536) as: 'Cette association d'idées, je la vis'.¹⁷⁸

On the other hand, attempts, explicit or implicit, have been made to read this episode as an anticipation of Freud's method in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901). Thus Daniel Hoffman. (Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, 1972) states: 'Dupin can summon and surrender to the associative linkages of preconscious thought';¹⁷⁹ and Raymond Queneau ('Poe et l'"Analyse"', 1957)¹⁸⁰ stresses Poe's (and Dupin's) 'application du raisonnement aux actes quotidiens et en apparence insignifiants';¹⁸¹ 'Dupin retraçant la marche des associations d'idées de son ami s'appuie ... sur une confiance absolue dans le déterminisme'.¹⁸² These comments clearly imply a perceived convergence between Dupin's method and Freud's in Psychopathology, a text which is based on the propositions that 'nothing in the mind is arbitrary or undetermined'¹⁸³ and that 'certain seemingly unintentional performances prove ... to have valid motives'.¹⁸⁴ Whether Dupin's model of mental association does so closely anticipate Freud's may, however, be doubted; at this point, it may be interesting to compare Dupin's mind-reading feat with the

"Aliquis" episode in the second chapter of Freud's text.¹⁸⁵

Here, Freud explains to an acquaintance the associative process by which he came to forget the Latin word "aliquis" (someone), in a quotation from Virgil. His conscious train of thought was disturbed by an idea which was not, at that moment, admissible to consciousness: "I may hear from X that her periods have stopped". This idea, either censored or repressed, forced its re-entry into consciousness through the symbolism of his subsequent associations: "miracle of St Januarius (liquefaction of blood) - popular fear of its delay". The same idea, through phonological association, had induced the forgetting of "aliquis" ("a-liquis" could suggest "no liquid"). The inadmissible idea, on the one hand, returned in the blood-symbolism of the miracle, and, on the other, forced the forgetting of "aliquis" instead of itself.

Clearly Dupin's exercise is not entirely dissimilar to Freud's. In both cases, a series of apparently discrete mental events is shown to be linked in a coherent signifying chain. On the other hand, the signifying chain reconstructed by Dupin operates on one level only; there is no question, as there is in Freud's exercise, of a manifest level of "acceptable" ideas disturbed by a latent level of "unacceptable" ideas. The narrator accepts all the ideas "returned" to him by Dupin without resistance, and nothing censored or tabooed is revealed; nor does Dupin make any attempt to "translate" any symbols from one level to another, as Freud does with the blood ("you've made use of the miracle of St Januarius to manufacture a brilliant allusion to women's periods").¹⁸⁶ Dupin, in effect, simply fills in the gaps in the chain from the fruiterer to Chantilly; Freud, in contrast, exposes his companion's thought-process as being an incomplete manifest text,

disturbed by a latent text which the speaker only accepts after considerable resistance: "something has come into my mind ... but it's too intimate to pass on".¹⁸⁷ It is true that the "unacceptable" fear of the woman's pregnancy probably constitutes a censored, rather than a repressed idea; but a note of Freud's links it with another, almost certainly repressed, idea— that of 'getting rid of the unwanted child by abortion'.¹⁸⁸

In Freud's text, then, the coherence of the subject's surface discourse is ruptured by a disturbing element linked with the repressed. Dupin's 'mind-reading', in contrast, cannot be seen as radically undermining the coherence of the subject, since it does little more than complete an incomplete signifying chain which the narrator readily accepts as 'his'. Preconscious thought-processes are certainly implied, as a kind of anteroom to consciousness; but there is no question of unconscious ideas. Queneau's notion that the episode implies a principle of mental determinism may be accepted; and certainly, it may be located within Poe's general psychological project of investigating shadowy mental areas, as outlined in Chapter 2.¹⁸⁹ This is not, however, one of the cases - in contrast to, say, 'The Imp of the Perverse'¹⁹⁰ - where Poe's writing closely anticipates the discoveries of psychoanalysis.

Certainly, however, the 'mind-reading' method undermines the autonomy of the subject, to the extent that it turns the "analyst" into the "analysand's" double: "I had correctly followed your steps" (536). The method recurs later in MRM, when Dupin places himself in the sailor's position: "He will reason thus: ..." (561); and again in MMR, when Dupin reconstructs Marie's thoughts on meeting the officer (755-56),

and those of the officer after the murder: "His natural thought would have been ..." (771). It becomes dominant in PL, on which attention will now be focussed.

The imaginative method is introduced in PL via Dupin's discussion of the game of "even and odd"; as the narrator puts it, the schoolboy's successful method is based on 'an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent' (984). The Prefect fails with D- 'by default of this identification' (985), whereas Dupin succeeds, since he believes that he knows D- ("I knew him" - 988) and that he can therefore put himself in his shoes: "my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded" (ibid.). D- is thus viewed, not in the abstract, but in a determinate context, or 'circumstances'; his 'train of thought' is thus correctly reconstituted: "He must have foreseen, I reflected ..." (ibid.); "I saw, in fine, that he would be driven ... to simplicity" (989). The imaginative method allows the thoughts and actions of the other to appear completely predictable.

By this 'identification' with D-, Dupin effectively undermines his own autonomy as subject; this is one element in the complex process of doubling between Dupin and D-, which will be discussed below. On the other hand, the method simultaneously works in the opposite direction; if viewed from the standpoint, not of the analyst, but of his construction of the other, it tends actually to underwrite the notion of the autonomous subject.

The method rests on a specific, ideological conception of "character". In the game of even and odd, the schoolboy's strategy is based on the

definition of his opponent's "character": "how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one" (984). The key syntactic element here is the copula, in the structure: subject - "to be" - adjective; the generalising use of "to be" points to a notion of "character" as an unchanging metaphysical essence. What is in question is precisely that ideological notion of the autonomous subject that has been unmasked by psychoanalysis, especially in the work of Lacan;¹⁹¹ what Rosemary Jackson (Fantasy, 1981) calls the 'definition of the self as a coherent, indivisible and continuous whole'.¹⁹² For Dupin, it seems, people are not made in culture, they simply "are". He thus defines his rival D- in terms of fixed, inherent qualities: "He is, ... perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive" (990); "'D-... is a man of nerve.'" (992); "He is that monstrum horrendum, an unprincipled man of genius.'" (993) "Energy", "nerve", "lack of principle" are thus seen as irrevocably inscribed on his face; the recurrent copula once again exposes the ideology of "character".

Dupin's methodology is, then, double, and points in two different directions. The empirical method tends to validate the "full" subject by maintaining a rigid subject-object divide; the imaginative method on the one hand undermines the autonomous subject through its leaping of that divide, but on the other underwrites it, through its failure to question the concept of "character", or to identify more than one level of mental activity. The replacement of the first method by the second in PL does, however, suggest a certain tendency towards the undermining of the "full" subject across the sequence.

Dupin's relation to the social structure also requires close attention. His methods do not function in a vacuum; whether as "scientist" or

"artist", the detective undertakes his work in the context of what Palmer calls the 'social order'.¹⁹³ This order is, on one level, the existing class structure; the system implied in these tales is that of expanding mid-nineteenth-century capitalism, in which elements inherited from pre-capitalist society (aristocracy, monarchy) are increasingly enlisted in the service of the newly dominant mode of production.

At the same time, however, this society in transition wishes to naturalise the idea of class per se, to occlude the reality of social mobility by perpetuating notions of the inherent superiority of rulers to ruled. Dupin is an aristocrat, a 'Chevalier' (MMR, 724), of 'an excellent - indeed of an illustrious family' (MRM, 531); if objectively he incorporates himself into capitalism by accepting payment, subjectively he maintains the notion of an immobile, rigid class system. This is clear from the Chantilly episode, where the 'quondam cobbler' (MRM, 534) is implicitly ridiculed for wanting to play the Emperor Xerxes - that is, for aspiring out of his "station". The main reference is made by the narrator, but Dupin's agreement shows that he shares his friend's views; if Chantilly would 'do better for the Théâtre des Variétés' (*ibid.*), it may be concluded that, in Dupin's view, artisans can legitimately play comedy but not tragedy. Dupin's class prejudices are further demonstrated in MMR, in his comments on the weekend 'pollution' of the woods around Paris by the picnics of the 'unwashed' (760); his criminological discourse in this text, with its repeated reference to 'wretches' and 'blackguards', is equally class-based, as will be shown below.¹⁹⁴

Dupin's social values are, then, coherent with his membership of a privileged class. His economic relation to the social order, however, undergoes significant alterations across the series. When first introduced, he is a down-at-heel aristocratic rentier: 'there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and, upon the income arising from this, he managed ... to procure the necessaries of life' (531). The term 'patrimony' recalls 'Usher' (M II, 399),¹⁹⁵ and implies that Dupin's income derives from inherited ownership of land; it also serves to insert him into the patriarchal law. However, after meeting the narrator (who is presumably a rich American), he accepts his patronage: 'as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting, and furnishing ... a ... mansion' (532). For the moment, he remains on the margins of the market economy; in MRM, no reward is asked for or given. The detective is, at this stage, a gentleman amateur. Nonetheless, the objective presence of the market is already signified in the commodity status of the ape, as noted above.¹⁹⁶

In MMR, Dupin follows the sailor's example and turns businessman; the narrator states rather coyly, as if slightly ashamed of his friend's metamorphosis, that the Prefect made Dupin 'a direct and certainly liberal proposition, the precise nature of which I do not feel myself at liberty to disclose' (728). After the mystery is solved, 'the Prefect fulfilled ... the terms of his compact with the Chevalier' (772). That is, Dupin does his work and is paid the rate for the job; detection has become a (scarce and valuable) commodity, which Dupin sells in the dearest market. It is not his means of support, as it will be with Holmes (with the narrator paying his rent, he hardly needs

to work regularly); but he can no longer be called an amateur.¹⁹⁷

In PL, the financial element is stated without embarrassment; Dupin only surrenders the letter on receipt of the Prefect's cheque, and his anecdote about Abernethy implies that no-one should expect services for free (982). It is true that the reward as such goes to the Prefect, not Dupin, and that no doubt the 'very liberal reward' (ibid.) was far more than the fifty thousand francs which Dupin receives; but the main point of the cheque is to confirm Dupin's definitive insertion into the market economy.

As Knight points out, Dupin is gradually incorporated into the cash-nexus: 'Poe does not at first place his hero in a cash-nexus with the society he protects, though this crucially bourgeois element will develop.'¹⁹⁸ Indeed, Dupin's transition from patronage to the market (though incomplete) corresponds to a wider social shift in the social position of intellectuals; one may compare the trajectory of Lucien de Rubempré in Balzac's Illusions perdues (1843),¹⁹⁹ from Mme de Bargeton's favours to market-place journalism.²⁰⁰ Dupin is, then, an aristocrat absorbed into the capitalist order; he anticipates the more fully "professionalised" Holmes, whose 'ancestors were country squires' ('The Greek Interpreter', 1894).²⁰¹ There is no textual justification for presenting his activity as "disinterested" or "value-free".²⁰²

Economically, then, Dupin identifies with capitalism; ideologically, he embodies a notion of fixed social class more appropriate to earlier modes of production. As for his political position, this is specified only in PL: "'You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned.'" (993) He now becomes a

behind-the-scenes actor in court politics; by aligning himself with the queen and against both minister and king, he is choosing one of the rival factions within the ruling power-group. He is thus, on the one hand, complicit with the existing monarchical order; on the other hand, that order is itself not homogeneous but fissured, split into rival factions, and in augmenting the queen's 'power' (ibid.), Dupin is reducing that of both minister and king. The sexual-political implications of this choice will be examined below;²⁰³ it may be suggested already that, while the political options open to Dupin are determined by the system, the choice he makes objectively aligns him against certain elements of Power. As the queen's 'partisan', Dupin may become a kind of rebel in spite of himself.

In 'The Man of the Crowd', as shown above,²⁰⁴ the reader's expectations of a tale of mystery are called in question by the disturbance of the hermeneutic code. In MRM and PL, that code remains intact, although MMR is a more problematic case, since, as will be shown,²⁰⁵ the "solution" offered is less than clear-cut. The coherence of the detective figure is, however, undermined across the sequence, through the non-homogeneity of the method, through the gradual incorporation of Dupin into the cash-nexus and, above all, through the disturbing complexities of his relations with his various opponents, "real" or potential. The three tales will now be examined in turn, in the context of those relations - and also, for PL, of Dupin's relations with the queen for whose protection he intervenes.

ii. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'

Benjamin suggests in One-Way Street (1928) that at the heart of 'a certain type of detective novel' (which 'begins with Poe'), there lies 'the horror of apartments'; the bourgeois interior comes to house the corpse.²⁰⁶ The illusory totality of the interior, symbol of the full subject,²⁰⁷ is shattered by the irruption of violence. In MRM, this disruptive role falls to the ape.

However, while the Ourang-Outang is clearly the main disturbing element in the tale, some attention should first be given to his owner, the sailor. Dupin exonerates him from criminal responsibility for the murders ('"I perfectly well know that you are innocent"' (563)), but he remains ideologically suspect, thanks to his contact with alien cultures (his 'sunburnt' appearance (562) almost makes him an honorary non-white). He is, further, signified as unrepressed and unrespectable by his phallic 'huge oaken cudgel' (ibid.),²⁰⁸ his habit of swearing ('"sacré"', "diable"' (540)), his dedication to 'pleasure' (564), and what is probably his frequentation of brothels ('some sailors' frolic' (ibid.)-rendered by Baudelaire as: 'une petite orgie de matelots').²⁰⁹ His Maltese associations also contribute to his marginal status; Malta, with its people of Carthaginian origin and Semitic language,²¹⁰ is a point of contact between the European and non-European worlds, and was traditionally a source of itinerant workers and footloose vagabonds (the Portuguese word 'maltês' means, variously, 'Maltese', 'vagrant', and 'wandering labourer'). One may also compare the Maltese sailor in Moby-Dick (1851) (chapter 40), who appears as sexually open and unrepressed: "'Where's your girls? ... Partners! I must have partners! ...²¹¹ Now would all the waves were women, then I'd drown, and chassee with them evermore!"²¹²

The sailor may thus be read as occupying an intermediate position between the "civilised" world of Dupin and the L'Esplanades and the "barbarity" of the ape; he already represents, in himself, a disturbance of the "normal" universe symbolised by the apartment, but it may be significant that he does not actually penetrate the room. When he follows the ape, he remains at the window, looking in (566). The act of penetration and rupture is the Ourang-Outang's alone; his owner remains an accessory, rather than a primary, disturbing element.

Dupin has also to deal with various phantom opponents before confronting the ape. Le Bon, the bank clerk, is symbolically ruled out from the beginning by his name, which constitutes him as a "good citizen"; suspicion does, however, rest on certain categories of person, which the detective has to eliminate. As Dupin stresses, the 'shrill voice' heard from the stairs was universally described as 'that of a foreigner' (549) - a voice 'in whose tones, even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognise nothing familiar!' (550). It is thus implied that the murders could only have been committed by an alien, "unfamiliar" person - "savage", or non-European. Dupin goes on to raise the possibility that 'it might have been the voice of an Asiatic - of an African' (ibid.), thus anticipating the ape's Asiatic provenance! Responsibility for the murders is thus shifted on to the Other, away from the reader's world and from the "natural" cultural universe of home and nation, even before the agent is identified as non-human. The association of non-Europeans with violent crime is convergent with the various instances of racist stereotyping to be found elsewhere in Poe's work, in the representation of Native Americans and blacks ('The Man that was Used Up'),²¹³ and Indians ('A Tale of the Ragged Mountains');²¹⁴ for the ideological

coupling of non-European and non-human, one may compare Frankenstein (1818), where Walton's first sight of the monster suggests 'a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island'.²¹⁵

Later, the narrator suggests another hypothesis: "'A madman ... has done this deed - some raving maniac, escaped from a neighboring Maison de Santé.'" (558). Here, the crime is attributed to an alien force within society - to the 'madman' as exile within his own culture, 'dead to the World' like William Wilson (M II, 448).²¹⁶ The term 'maniac', signifying one pole of the mania/melancholia cycle, is discussed below, in the analysis of 'Usher';²¹⁷ it implies the violent, uncontrollable phase of madness, as in the reference to the 'raging maniac' in 'Tarr and Fether' (M III, 1006).²¹⁸ Thus, before the ape is identified, the crime has already been ascribed to the Other, whether a savage alien or someone mentally alienated. In fact, its author will prove to be more alien still - 'absolutely alien from humanity' (558).

The ape, as signifier of the non-human (and yet disturbingly similar to the human) is, as William Carlos Williams ('Edgar Allan Poe', 1925)²¹⁹ points out, a 'recurrent image' in Poe's fiction, usually associated with 'extreme terror'.²²⁰ Elsewhere in the tales, reference to apes signifies the reduction of the human to object or quasi-animal status; thus in 'Tarr and Fether' the tarred and feathered keepers look and act like 'Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, or big black baboons' (M III, 1021),²²¹ and in 'Hop-Frog' (1849) the king and courtiers are made to impersonate 'Eight Chained Ourang-Outangs' (M III, 1350), before being burned to death. Alternatively, the ape may symbolise stupidity, or the absence of intellect or meaning. Thus,

in 'Four Beasts in One' (1836), the god Ashimah proves to be a baboon, a fit symbol for a city ruled by 'Antiochus the madman' (M II, 126); and in 'Mystification' (1837), a pseudo-profound text turns out to be a coded version of 'a most horribly absurd account of a duel between two baboons' (M II, 303). Similarly, in MRM, the ape's noises are presented as non-linguistic ('devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification' (558)) and therefore meaningless. The ape thus becomes a symbol of unmeaning; its 'fiendish jabberings' (568) are contrasted with the rationality of the French language, or, indeed, of all the European languages that the witnesses mistake the ape's noises for examples of. The terror induced by the ape is thus that of the non-human and the non-linguistic. The alien object signifies the discourse of the other; the possible interpretations of the ape's otherness will be considered below.²²²

The Ourang-Outang has been subjected to the most diverse interpretations. For Bonaparte (1933) it externalises the child's Oedipal fears; the 'savagely potent father'²²³ is 'the prototype of the Ourang-Outang, the ravisher-murderer-castrator of the mother.'²²⁴ Lemay (1982) sees the ape in more general terms as corresponding to repressed anti-social tendencies in the subject ('unrestrained sexuality and animality').²²⁵ Its escape symbolises the 'outbreak of repressed libidinal urges', while the sailor's confinement and whipping of it correspond to the "normal" social repression and control of sexuality.²²⁶ In Wilbur's reading (1967), the ape is seen as the 'base or evil force within', the 'brute' or 'fiend' in Dupin himself which he manages to recognise and exorcise.²²⁷ In all three cases, the Ourang-Outang is read as externalising certain tendencies within the human subject, although for Wilbur that externalisation is definitive and desirable.

More sociological readings are offered by Harry Levin (The Power of Blackness, 1958), for whom the ape represents the Southern fear of miscegenation;²²⁸ and by Vincent (1975), who, taking up the ape-god association from 'Four Beasts in One', sees the 'grand singe fauve', with its 'force surhumaine, cruauté, langue non-humaine et terrifiante', as the Old Testament God, 'Dieu-l'assassin'.²²⁹ On this reading, Dupin is fighting 'l'assassin de la rue Morgue ... en lui-même',²³⁰ in the shape of his own fixation on the authoritarian values symbolised in Jehovah; the narrative thus charts the symbolic liberation of humanity from God.

The Bonaparte, Lemay and Vincent readings all, in various ways, link the ape to the structures of patriarchal culture. Whether, however, the ape should be read as a symbol of the authoritarian principle in itself (the Father or God) is dubious; it appears more correct to follow Lemay in reading the ape as signifying that which authoritarian culture represses. At the end of MRM, Dupin reconstitutes himself as subject, having apparently expelled any "abnormal" tendencies; the ape's extreme sadism points, not to the "normal" functioning of patriarchal culture, but to the "pathological" disturbance caused by the return of the repressed. To read the post-ape Dupin as a symbol of modern rational humanity is to take his apparent coherence at face value.²³¹ The ape represents, not the "familiar" figures of authority, but the "unfamiliar", "alien" forces which disturb the cultural order from within.

Levin's connection of the ape with slavery has a certain credibility, given the 'African' reference in the text (550); the Ourang-Outang disrupts Parisian society, as the fear of miscegenation (and slave

revolt) threatened the coherence of the Southern order. The ape's violence may be seen as symbolising, like the inmates' revolt in 'Tarr and Fether',²³² the possibility of a slave insurrection; as a humanoid animal, it converges with the blacks seen ideologically as animaloid humans, and like a runaway slave it has escaped from its 'master' (565). The theme of slavery may, besides, be linked with that of imperialism; the ape's Bornean origins suggest that its violence may be a symbolic act of revenge on the part of the exploited. In the Poe canon, one may point to the massacre on Tsalal in Pym (chapters 21 and 22),²³³ and the killing of Oldeb by a Bengali in 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (M III, 949),²³⁴ as instances of the revenge of the colonised; another relevant text is Matthew Lewis' 'The Anaconda' (1808),²³⁵ where the lethal snake which threatens white lives on a Ceylonese plantation may be read as a displaced symbol of the possible resistance of the "natives".

The ape will be read as signifying the Other - both the Other within (the unconscious) and the cultural Other (the foreign and the "savage"). It is this otherness which produces that effect of 'extreme terror' of which Williams speaks.²³⁶ The ideology of criminality constructed in MRM is, essentially, that crime is always committed by the Other - that there is no continuity whatever between the "normal", "respectable" citizen and the "evil", "alien", "subhuman" criminal, here symbolically represented by the non-human ape. This ideology is presented in an extreme form by having an animal commit the crime; a wedge is thus driven between detective and criminal, seen as belonging literally to different species. At the same time, the murders are dehistoricised and desocialised. As W. Bronzwaer ('Deixis as a Structuring Device in Narrative Discourse: An Analysis of Poe's "The Murders in the Rue

Morgue"', 1975) points out, 'the "murders" turn out to be not murders in the legal sense, but "killings"', since there is no human agent,²³⁷ Panek stresses that the reader is spared 'the discomfort of arrest and punishment';²³⁸ while Lemay similarly sees the identification of the ape as a source of relief for the reader.²³⁹ Knight, who also stresses the absence of punishment, suggests that the murders are 'not a real crime at all, but a freak occurrence';²⁴⁰ and Palmer notes the absence of any human 'villain': 'actions have to be performed by people - although Poe avoided even that minimal contact with villainy in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"'.²⁴¹ There is, then, a critical consensus that the absence of a human criminal tends to have a reassuring effect on the (naïve) reader; apparently, Dupin - and therefore the narrator, and therefore the reader - can all rejoice in their discontinuity with crime and violence.

Superficially, then, MRM constructs an unbridgeable gulf between Analyst and Ape, and thus affirms Dupin as 'full' subject. However, this ideology of discontinuity is subverted by the materiality of the text. Objectively, the text constitutes a series of relations of doubling which negate any attempt to quarantine off the ape.

The incidence of doubling in MRM has already been referred to;²⁴² analysis will now focus specifically on the case of doubling of the ape.

It may be noted, first of all, that the ape's violence is doubled by that of the anonymous representatives of "normality" in the text; its penetration of the room and sadistic attack on the women is replicated by the way the police and neighbours enter the house: 'the gateway was broken in with a crowbar ... the door ... was forced open' (537).²⁴³ The phallic 'crowbar' is later declared by the gendarme to have been,

in fact, an even more suggestive 'bayonet' (539); violent entry into a female space is not only the ape's prerogative. The episode symbolically suggests that under certain circumstances, the ape's violence may be reproduced by the guardians of the patriarchal order.

Besides, the ape doubles the sailor, indeed imitates or apes him. The text refers to the 'imitative propensities' of Ourang-Outangs (559), and, accordingly, the ape is seen to imitate the sailor's act of shaving - incidentally doubling itself too, by looking in the mirror!: 'Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master' (565). The sailor's relatively unrepressed sexuality, as signified in the cudgel (562), is doubled in extreme form in the ape's razor (stolen from him anyway), which symbolises the phallus as instrument of destruction: 'so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it' (565). In the ape, the sailor confronts his own sexuality and hedonism in exaggerated and distorted form.

But if the ape apes the sailor, Dupin apes the ape. Dupin has already revealed his own 'imitative propensities' by 'counterfeit[ing]' the night (532) (the verb employed itself has criminal connotations); just before identifying his adversary, he shows the narrator a 'little sketch I have here traced upon this paper'. It is a 'fac-simile drawing' of the 'indentations of finger nails, upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Españaye' (558-59). Dupin thus doubles the animal by drawing (imitating) its traces; by imitating the ape, he not only identifies it but identifies with it. The term 'fac-simile' implies, through its etymology (facere = make; simile = like) that Dupin is

thus making himself similar to the ape; by making a visual reproduction of its grip on the victim's throat, he is putting himself in the ape's position and to that extent "becoming" it (one may compare 'The Gold-Bug', where Legrand's sketch of the bug doubles Kidd's drawing of the death's head, and thus effectively doubles scientist and pirate (M III, 829)). Besides, at the end Dupin doubles the ape in the terms of his triumph over the Prefect: 'In his wisdom there is no stamen. It is all head and no body' (568); by symbolically beheading (or castrating) his rival, Dupin is following in the footsteps of the decapitator of Mme L'Esplanaye ('upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off' (538)). The ape's "animal" sadism is thus latent in the "civilised" Dupin!

There is, then, something of the ape in Dupin, even (pace Wilbur) after the apparent exorcism of the brute! The ape-madman connection, too, points back to the characterisation of Dupin and the narrator as 'madmen' (532); the text effectively undermines its own ideology of "normality", presenting Dupin and ape, detective and criminal, as doubles. A certain continuity between "normal" and "abnormal" is thus established, in the teeth of the textual surface; indeed, Knight suggests that 'the potential identity of hero and criminal' is a submerged theme of the tale.²⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the text insists ideologically, time and again, on the non-human character of the murders. Dupin sees them as 'altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action' (557), and of 'a grotesquerie in horror absolutely alien from humanity' (558); the narrator declares: 'this is no human hair' (558) and "'This ... is the mark of no human hand.'" (559). That is, the text goes out of its

way to imply that no human being could have committed the murders.

(This effect is reinforced in the final (1845) text by a tendency to replace 'he' by 'it' as the pronoun used for the ape).²⁴⁵ However,

as Lemay points out, this is not true: 'Similar crimes of mutilation and murder appear in every large city newspaper nearly weekly.'²⁴⁶

The means of entry and the 'strength superhuman' (558) may themselves point to the non-human, but the notion of sadistic murder and (symbolic or real) sexual assault itself is demonstrably not 'alien from humanity';

Lemay even suggests that up to the identification of the ape, the first-time reader will probably assume the murderer was an all-too-human sex-maniac.²⁴⁷ In a sense, then, the text is lying, for ideological ends; by presenting the murders as a non-human act, it encourages the reader to see real sex-murderers as 'animals'.

The notion of the criminal as animal or subhuman is paralleled in other nineteenth-century texts. Frankenstein is of particular interest here, since it takes the cliché of the criminal as "monster" au pied de la lettre. For instance, after the murder of his brother, Victor Frankenstein comments: 'Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child.'²⁴⁸ Here, as in MRM, the text is lying; child-murder is scarcely unknown in the annals of crime. The ideological effect is, here too, to characterise as "subhuman" the criminality embodied in the "non-human" monster. The central contradiction of Mary Shelley's novel lies in the tension between Frankenstein's rejection of the monster as 'animal'²⁴⁹ and diabolic ('filthy daemon'),²⁵⁰ and the textual indications of his actual continuity with it. Thus he calls it 'the fiend that lurked in my heart',²⁵¹ and 'my own vampire, my own spirit, let loose from the grave'.²⁵² The monster, then, becomes his creator's double - in the words of David Punter (The Literature of

Terror, 1980), 'the embodiment of Frankenstein's desire';²⁵³ the scientist's perception of his creation is coloured by a marked element of projection, with the murder corresponding to his own split-off sadistic and criminal tendencies. Nonetheless, the ideological effect of the text, on a superficial reading, is to present crime, through the monster, as a pathological disruption of the social fabric by alien forces; as Franco Moretti ('The Dialectic of Fear', 1978) puts it: 'The monster ... serves to displace the antagonisms and horrors evidenced within society to outside society itself.'²⁵⁴

Dupin and the ape; Frankenstein and the monster; this ideological split between "normal/civilised" and "animal/subhuman" is reproduced in some of Dickens' writing on crime. In his essay 'The Ruffian' (The Uncommercial Traveller, 1860),²⁵⁵ he describes a typical 'ruffian' as a 'burly brute';²⁵⁶ while Edwin Drood (1870) contains the notion of the criminal as a species apart. The narrator comments, in relation to Jasper; 'what could she know of the criminal intellect, which its own professed students perpetually misread, because they persist in trying to reconcile it with the average intellect of average men, instead of identifying it as a horrible wonder apart'.²⁵⁷ This discourse implicitly constitutes the criminal as a non-human monster; Dickens is here in line with his friend, the medical theorist John Elliotson, who claimed in 1849 that criminals are phrenologically predetermined to anti-social acts: 'Let us detest such organizations as we detest the organizations called wolf, tiger, rattle-snake, scorpion or vermin'.²⁵⁸ The ideological link between criminal and animal recurs in the Holmes stories, with their Poe-derived variations on the themes of the criminal as animal and the animal as criminal.²⁵⁹ Nor is the notion peculiar to the nineteenth century; one need only open a newspaper at random to find a headline

like 'Judge frees sex beast who attacked four girls',²⁶⁰ where the phrase 'sex beast' reassures the reader of his/her total discontinuity with the sex-criminal.

In conclusion, the ape represents the ideological construction of crime as "alien" and "other". Crime is attributed to a non-human agent and thus robbed of a history and a discourse; Dupin's detective activity ideologically restores order and normality, and constitutes the "disinterested" intellectual as social saviour. Yet at the same time, the text undermines this construction of the "full" subject, through its structures of doubling. At the end, the ape is caged in the zoo; but the chance remains that, sooner or later, Dupin himself may go ape!

iii. 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt'

MMR is a text clearly differentiated from MRM (or PL), thanks to its "documentary", semi-fictional status. It is not the aim of the present study to reinterpret the historical murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers, or to assess the accuracy of Poe's fictionalised version (although use will be made of the information contained in William K. Wimsatt, Jr, 'Poe and the Mystery of Mary Rogers' (1941),²⁶¹ and in Mabbott's introduction and notes to the tale).²⁶² Any discussion of MMR, however, should take two factors into account. First, the text is a hybrid object, a compound of "fact" and "fiction"; an actual New York murder is reconstructed, with the scene changed to Paris and the names of characters, streets, newspapers, etc. altered (on 25 July 1841, Mary Cecilia Rogers, a cigar-girl, disappeared from her mother's home; three days later her body was found floating in the Hudson. The fictional story of Marie Rogêt follows the same trajectory.). The case is further fictionalised by the introduction of imaginary subjects - Dupin,

the narrator, the Prefect - deriving from MRM, and by explicit reference to the earlier text. At the same time, MMR incorporates pieces of "real" discourse, in the form of newspaper extracts - for the most part cited verbatim, with the necessary changes, but with occasional synthesis and adaptation.²⁶³ The text thus alternates between the fictional voices of Dupin and the narrator, and the "real" voices of the press. From this "documentary" character of the tale, it may be deduced that the criminological discourse it constructs reflects, with a relative absence of mediation, that prevalent in the U.S. of the 1840s.

Second, the text was carefully rewritten to take account of new developments in the case. In the first (1842-43) text, the enigma is presented, certain false solutions are rejected, and Dupin offers the "true" answer (Marie was murdered by a naval officer). The second (1845) text, however, is systematically rehandled so as to admit the possibility of a new solution (Marie died following an abortion), without discarding the first.²⁶⁴

In the first version, Dupin dismisses five theories, as follows:

- 1) that Marie was not murdered at all and was still alive (731-33; 737-47);
- 2) that the murderer was Beauvais, the man who found the corpse (733; 747-48);
- 3) that Marie committed suicide (737);
- 4) that she was killed by a gang, whether near her mother's house or near the river (734-36; 748-51);
- 5) that the murderer was St. Eustache, her fiancé (736; 751-53).

He then proposes, as the authentic solution, the following: 6) that Marie Rogêt was murdered by a naval officer, who had previously seduced or tried to seduce her, after a proposal of elopement (which she refused), which may have been followed by an actual or attempted rape (753-56) (Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933) thinks

Marie was definitely raped before the murder;²⁶⁵ but she does not seem to be aware of the abortion theory or the revisions, or that a specific reference to 'violation' was in fact deleted from the 1845 text).²⁶⁶

However, the appearance of fresh evidence changed the picture; the dying confession of an abortionist suggested that Mary Rogers had in fact died after an abortion, and that clues had been planted to fake a murder.²⁶⁷ This evidence required the rehandling of the fictional case of Marie Rogêt; thus the 1845 text contains a considerable number of revisions²⁶⁸ made to accommodate the abortion theory while not invalidating the murder theory. It is implied that, if there was an abortion, the naval officer was implicated in it. The final text is thus complicated by the fact that the "solution" is presented in "either-or" terms: "We have thus attained the idea either of a fatal accident under the roof of Madame Deluc, or of a murder perpetrated, in the thicket at the Barrière du Roule" (768) (the words from 'either' to 'or' were added in 1845).²⁶⁹

One effect of this process of revision is to undermine the figure of Dupin; here, in contrast to MRM, the detective is not allowed to produce the one definitive solution, but has to hedge his bets under a wrapping of "either-ors". Indeed, even before the revisions, certain details remained obscure (e.g. whether or not there was a rape, or attempted rape, and the precise character of Marie's relations with the officer, 'a lover, or at least ... an intimate and secret associate of the deceased' (768)). In the revised text, Dupin's tarnished image is only partially redeemed by the paragraph assuring the reader that he duly got his reward for a successful case (772); the final text deletes from this paragraph a reference to the confession and conviction of 'an individual assassin'.²⁷⁰ The reader is, in effect, told that Dupin

solved the mystery, but not told what the final solution was! The heroic-omniscient figure of the detective is thus undermined by the need to accommodate the fiction to the real complexities of history. Nonetheless, the text maintains the ideological antithesis, as constructed in MRM, between Dupin and his antagonists. The antithesis is no longer between human and animal, but between "respectable" and "criminal"; the criminal is signified not as non-human but as sub-human, and the Other is located in society's marginal or oppressed elements - in the navy or the working class. The divide between law-abiders and law-breakers points back to 'The Man of the Crowd', where the narrator, as a self-defined paragon of 'respectability' (M II, 509), cordons himself off ideologically from the gamblers, drunkards, prostitutes and 'ruffians' (510).²⁷¹ In MMR, Dupin will fight, not an alien invasion, but the enemy within.

Here as in MRM, the crime is analysed from an empiricist viewpoint, with no attempt to insert it into wider social structures. Criminality is, implicitly, attributed to individual or collective degeneracy, and not seen as having determinate socio-historical causes. In particular, Dupin's demolition of the gang theory - even if it corresponds to the facts²⁷² - has the ideological effect of reducing the crime from a collective to an individual phenomenon. The gang is replaced by the naval officer, seen as a solitary 'wretch' (771), that is, an innately degenerate individual. There is a curious analogy here with Hoffmann's 'Mademoiselle de Scudery' (1819) where the mystery concerns a series of murders accompanied by jewel-thefts; the original "gang theory" is exploded by the identification of the jeweller Cardillac as the murderer: "There never has been such a band. It was Cardillac alone!"²⁷³ In both

texts, crime is reduced to an expression of individual "rotteness"; although it should be added that in MMR, the abortion theory does to some extent forcibly re-collectivise the crime, since it would have to involve an abortionist (Mme Deluc) as well as the sailor (hence, where the first text reads: 'The horrors of this dark deed are known only to one living human being',²⁷⁴ the final text has: 'one, or two' (768)).

Nonetheless, the gang theory is considered in detail before being disposed of; Dupin's "opponents" in MMR may be considered to be, first the gang as potential adversary, and then the officer. The gang is assumed to consist of working-class marginals, who are automatically seen as inferior (as will be shown below by lexical analysis). The officer, though educated 'above the grade of the common sailor' (769), is ideologically suspect thanks to his profession, which brings him into contact with alien cultures - his 'dark and swarthy' complexion (ibid.) links him to the sailor of MRM²⁷⁵ (one may compare the frequency with which, in the Holmes stories, Anglo-Saxon males are represented as having "gone wrong" after residence in the tropics).²⁷⁶ Whatever his class origins, the officer is removed from the reader's "respectable" world by his presumed history of interaction with foreigners.

The lexis of criminality employed in MMR merits close attention. The naval officer is signified (in all cases through Dupin's voice) in terms which imply a discourse of innate criminality: 'villainy', 'base designs' (755), 'the wretch' (771). In the case of the gang, the passages referring to it belong, variously, to the newspaper reports and to the "fictional" parts of the text; what is noteworthy is that both "factual" and "fictional" discourses share the same assumptions.

Some (though not all) of the newspaper accounts of the gang appear to be fictional, others factual;²⁷⁷ but there is effectively no difference between: the perspectives on criminality offered by the "real" public discourse, the invented public discourse, and the private discourse of Dupin or the narrator. Thus, the "real" newspaper extracts describe the gang as follows: 'villains' (L'Etoile, or Brother Jonathan (732) (Mabbott says this passage is a 'virtually literal' transcription));²⁷⁸ 'fellows who had no pocket-handkerchief' (Le Commercial, or the New York Journal of Commerce (734) (this, again, is reprinted 'almost verbatim')).²⁷⁹ The invented newspaper extracts include reference to the gang as 'one of the numerous bands of blackguards which infest the vicinity of the city' (754), and to another gang as 'villains' (753) (these paragraphs, according to Mabbott, seem to have been composed by Poe).²⁸⁰ The narrator's own discourse includes reference to 'a gang of desperadoes' (734) and 'a gang of miscreants' (735), and to marginals in general as 'blackguards from the city' (ibid.). As for Dupin, besides his reference to the 'unwashed' noticed above (760),²⁸¹ his lexical selection follows the same lines: 'some gang of low ruffians' (749); 'the lowest class of ruffians', 'the thorough blackguard' (750); 'a gang of blackguards', 'a gang of young ruffians' (757); 'some ruffian or party of carousing blackguards', 'the town blackguard' (760); 'of arrant blackguards alone are the supposed gangs ever constituted' (765), etc.

The various textual voices all speak the same language where criminality is concerned. The criminal is seen either as an innately degenerate individual ('villain', 'wretch') or as a member of an innately inferior social class ('fellows who had no pocket-handkerchief') - i.e. the working class. The adjectives 'arrant' and 'thorough' imply a notion of anti-social tendencies as absolute and irremovable, while 'low' means

both socially and morally "inferior".

Of the nouns used, 'miscreant' etymologically means an unbeliever or heretic, and therefore implies one who rejects that order which narrator and reader perceive as natural; 'desperado', with its Spanish derivation, condemns the marginals by association with the "degenerate" Latin nations; and 'blackguard', with its suggestion of "black", almost converts them into honorary non-whites, thus linking them with the 'swarthy' officer (769).

'Ruffian' requires special consideration. Its Italian derivation gives it, once again, "alien" connotations; in nineteenth-century usage it tends to mean a violent working-class or marginal male, with the implication of innate and incurable criminality (today's equivalents would be "thug" or "hooligan"). Poe uses the term in 'The Man of the Crowd', as mentioned above;²⁸² in a letter to George Roberts (4 June 1842), concerning MMR: 'I have demonstrated the fallacy of the general idea - that the girl was the victim of a gang of ruffians' (O I, 200); and in his 1842 review of Barnaby Rudge (H XI, 38-64), where the murderer Rudge (a steward who killed his master) is five times called a 'ruffian' (44, 46 (twice), 47, 51) (whereas Dickens' actual text, somewhat more circumspectly, tends simply to label him, once his guilt is revealed, as 'the murderer').²⁸³ The class connotations of 'ruffian' should, then, be evident; "gentlemen" cannot, by definition, be ruffians.

Dickens' 'The Ruffian' (already referred to above),²⁸⁴ specifically distinguishes 'ruffians' (who commit crimes against the person) from 'thieves' (who commit crimes against property) - although the two categories may coincide in the same person. A group of 'ruffians' is described as being 'repulsive wretches inside and out'.²⁸⁵ Once again,

this is the discourse of innate criminality; 'ruffianism' is seen as an inherent character trait, as thieving is seen as an innate trait of thieves: 'The generic Ruffian ... is either a Thief, or the companion of Thieves Always a Ruffian, always a Thief. Always a Thief, always a Ruffian.'²⁸⁶ The criminal working class is, of course, distinguished from the "respectable" working class; but no explanation other than innate degeneracy is given for criminality. Similarly, in 'On Duty with Inspector Field', the London criminal proletariat is described via terms like 'villain', 'notorious robbers and ruffians', 'the wicked'.²⁸⁷

For Dickens, then, once a ruffian, always a ruffian; for Dupin, all gang members are always 'arrant blackguards' (765). MMR reproduces a certain discourse of criminality which sees anti-social behaviour as the product of individual or collective degeneracy. There is no question of locating crime in economic conditions (social deprivation), or of seeking its roots in the legitimation of violence in legal contexts by patriarchal or militarist ideology. In this text, the "law-abiding" detective (and reader) is opposed to the subhuman criminal, in the form of the 'ruffian', 'wretch' or 'blackguard'. There is no question, in MMR, of any significant undermining of this structure by doubling; the double theme will, however, return with a vengeance in PL.

iv. 'The Purloined Letter'

The rigid antithesis between Dupin and his "evil" opponents, constructed (and part-subverted) in MRM and maintained in MMR, breaks down altogether in PL. In MMR, the double theme can only be said to be present insofar as Dupin is still doubled by the narrator, and as the text doubles both its predecessor, MRM, and the real history of Mary Rogers. PL, however,

reintroduces and develops the element of doubling between Dupin and his opponent, and places both within a complex structure of repeated doubling.

As Derrida stresses, the whole text can be seen as a 'labyrinthe de doubles';²⁸⁸ Lacan's analysis too, although it fails to mention the double theme explicitly, is predicated on the presence in the text of the compulsion to repeat.²⁸⁹ Dupin is, once again, doubled by the narrator, who places himself under the sign of doubling in the very first sentence: 'I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum'. (974) The phrase 'twofold luxury' (rendered by Baudelaire as 'double volupté')²⁹⁰ constitutes the narrator as double; and, as Henri Justin ('The Fold Is the Thing: Poe Criticism in France in the Last Five Years', 1983)²⁹¹ suggests, it also makes him a double of the twice-folded ('folded and ... refolded' (992)) purloined letter.²⁹² The letter itself, as Justin also stresses, is double, in various senses - it is front and back, inside and outside, deceptive appearance (reverse) and authentic appearance (obverse); it is thus 'twofold' both literally and figuratively.²⁹³ It has been folded twice, on two different occasions; first by the Duke of S-, and then by D-, in each case to write the respective addresses (Mabbott explains: 'The letter was on an old-fashioned four-page sheet, with text on the first and address on the last page, and so could be turned inside out.');294 for simulacra of its appearance, and of that of the substitute letter, see the diagrams on pp. 368a and b). It is, in addition, twice doubled by substitutes - the 'somewhat similar' letter left by D- in the boudoir (977), and the 'fac-simile' left by Dupin in the hotel (992); further, the pact between the queen and S- which it symbolises may be seen, as Derrida suggests, as the 'double menaçant' of the queen's legal pact, as wife and subject, with the king.²⁹⁵ D- himself is doubled by his brother, and this very doubling is signified

1) THE PURLOINED LETTER: OUTSIDE

Front

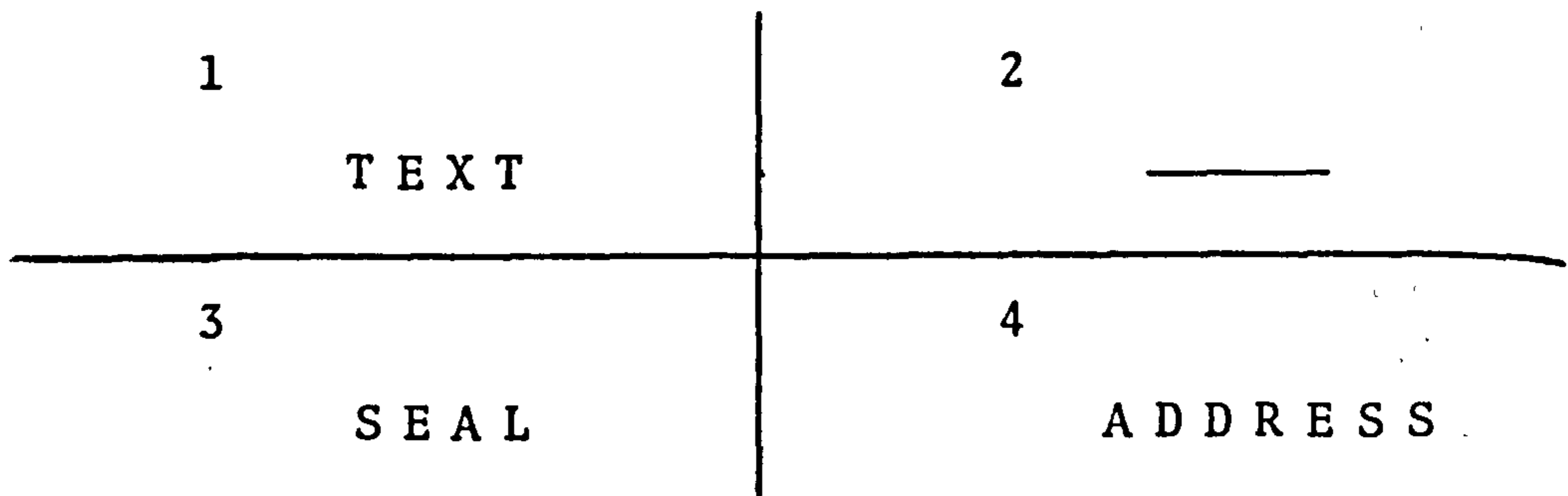
Back

To:

HER MAJESTY
THE QUEEN
PALAIS ROYAL
(S-'s hand)

RED SEAL
(S- Arms)

Original Sheet
(obverse)



2) THE PURLOINED LETTER: INSIDE

MESSAGE

From S- To Queen

Front

Back

To:

MINISTER D—

HOTEL D—

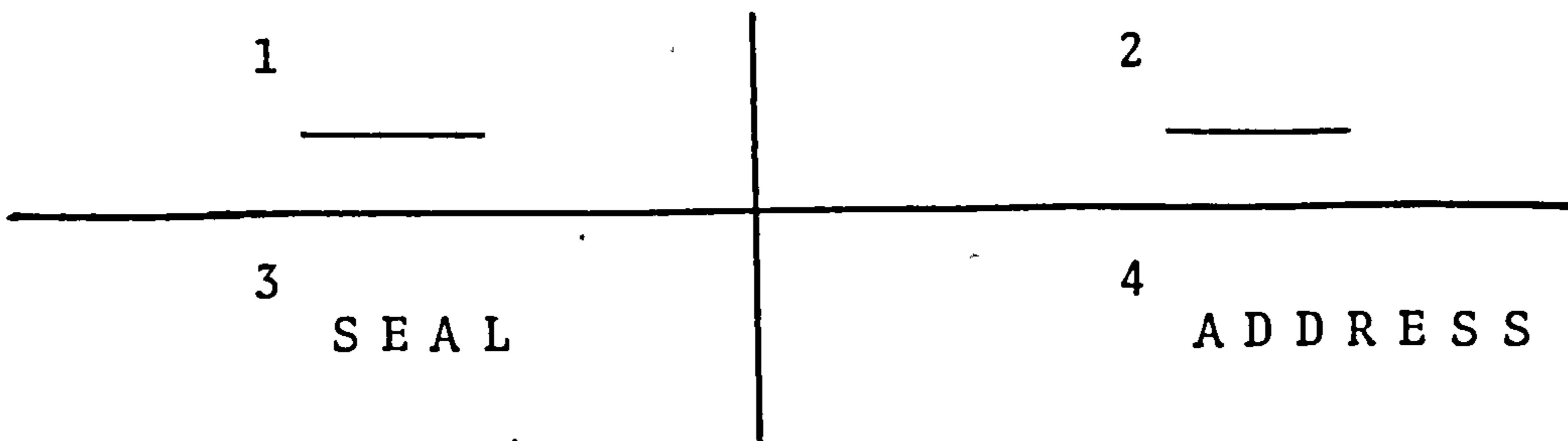
*(D-'s hand, in imitation
of that of a female
relative)*

BLACK SEAL

(D- Arms)

Original Sheet

(reverse)



4) THE SUBSTITUTE LETTER LEFT BY DUPIN

Outside

Inside

Front

Back

To:

MINISTER D—

HOTEL D—

*(Dupin's hand,
in imitation of
D-'s disguised
hand)*

BLACK SEAL

(D- Arms)

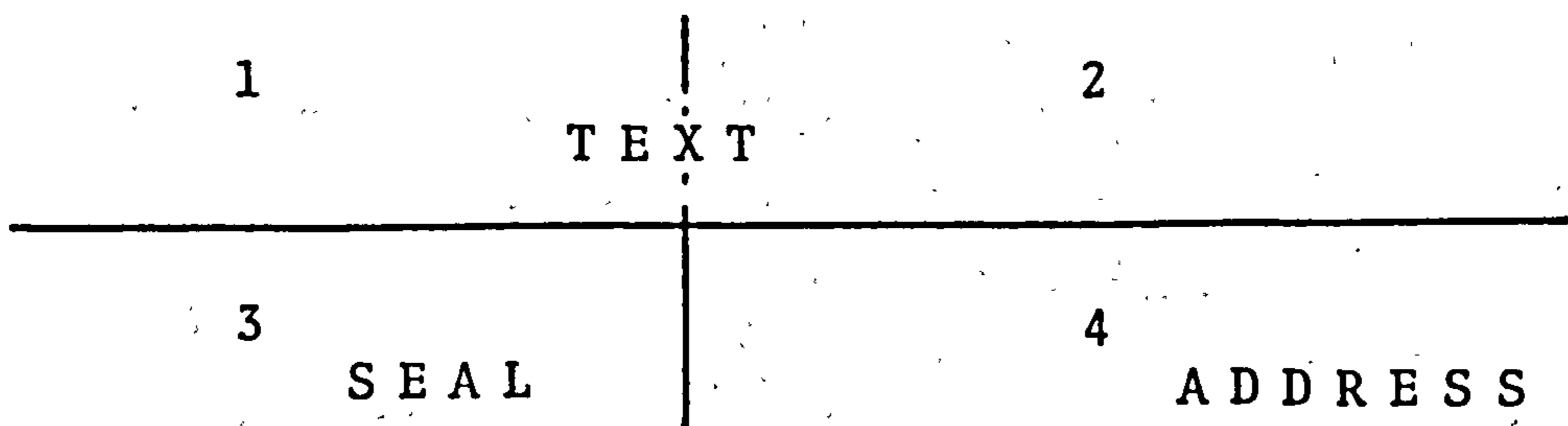
(IMITATION)

M E S S A G E

(unsigned)

From Dupin To D—

Original Sheet



under the sign of 'letters': "There are two brothers, ... and both have attained reputation in letters." (986)

It is in this context of redoubled doubling that the relation between Dupin and D- must be considered. They are, immediately, doubled on the plane of the letter (or grapheme) D, which itself, in context, suggests doubleness. Lacan's model of the two triangles, discussed above,²⁹⁶ places first D- and then Dupin in the position of the all-seeing look; the compulsion to repeat at work in the text determines the doubling of minister by detective. Besides, Dupin doubles D- (as Daniel Hoffman points out),²⁹⁷ by purloining the purloined letter, and by leaving a substitute in its place. By making a 'fac-simile (so far as regards externals)' of the letter (992), Dupin imitates D-'s action, his seal ('imitating the D- cipher' (ibid.)), and his writing (the address on the substitute letter is Dupin's simulacrum of the address written by D- in a disguised hand); the term 'fac-simile', besides, points back to MRM (558) and Dupin's imitation of both the ape's finger-marks and its 'imitative propensities' (559).²⁹⁸ Here too, the detective "becomes" his opponent by imitating him - and thus, in a sense, "becomes" the criminal, since to copy can be a criminal act, as in the double sense of 'counterfeit' in MRM (532)²⁹⁹ (itself paralleled in Dupin's admission, in PL, that he is 'guilty of certain doggrel' (979)). "Innocent" investigator and "guilty" malefactor thus change places.

Outside their respective relations to the purloined letter, there is further textual evidence for the doubling of detective and minister. D- is 'poet and mathematician' (986), and, as shown above,³⁰⁰ the same formula can be applied to Dupin. Both have unusually penetrating vision - D-'s 'lynx eye' (977) is doubled by Dupin's acute vision behind the green spectacles (990) - and use similar ruses to distract their

opponents (D-'s absences from home (988), Dupin's staging of the street disturbance). Both are good readers in the sense of interpreting the acts of others (D- "reads" the queen ('fathoms her secret' (977)) and is "read" in turn by Dupin), and great readers in the literal sense (the narrative begins, and remains localised throughout, in Dupin's library; the books on D-'s 'writing-table' (990) double those in Dupin's 'book-closet' (974)). In Palmer's terms, both are 'Professionals'.³⁰¹ They share, besides, the alternation of energy and lethargy (temperamental doubleness); Dupin declares that under his appearance of 'ennui', D- is 'perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive' (990), while the detective himself superficially appears 'intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke' from his meerschaum (974), but shows his capacity for decisive action in the re-purloining of the letter. In the message (a quotation from P.-J. de Crébillon's Atrée et Thyeste (1707)) which Dupin leaves for D- inside the substitute letter:

— Un dessein si funeste,
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste. (993)

there is further evidence of doubling. Dupin implies that D-'s plot against the queen is a 'dessein funeste', a nefarious scheme worthy of Thyestes (who committed incest); however, Thyestes and Atreus were brothers in the myth, and Atreus forced his brother to commit cannibalism.³⁰² If D- is Thyestes, perhaps Dupin is Atreus; in which case, there is little to choose between the enemy brothers, or between their respective 'desseins funestes' (D- against the queen, Dupin against D-). Finally, as Lacan points out,³⁰³ both minister and detective are "feminised" by the letter; D- feigns a 'diminutive and feminine' hand (991), which Dupin in turn copies, while Dupin acts as a 'partisan of the lady' (993). Both thus identify themselves with female subjects (the real or imaginary

relation of D-; the queen). It may be concluded that, when Dupin claims to know D- ("I knew him" (988)), it is a question, not just of knowing one's enemy, but of knowing one's double.³⁰⁴

If, then, Dupin and D- are both double and doubled, and double each other - if the text is, indeed, a 'labyrinthe de doubles', it may be concluded that this structural characteristic is in itself sufficient to subvert any attempt at constructing the detective as "full" subject. Indeed, the argument may be pushed further; it may be asked whether the two figures do not become interchangeable. For Wilbur, they remain polarised, doubles but not equivalent; Dupin is 'lofty-minded', while D-, his "'unprincipled" double', is 'base' and 'brutish'.³⁰⁵ For Bonaparte, the doubling is a matter of Oedipal rivalry, with D- as father and Dupin as son; this reading would make them doubles but still differentiated.³⁰⁶ The "enemy brothers" reading, on the other hand, places the rivals on a plane of equality; and, in any case, the guardian of the patriarchal law in the text is surely not D- but the king. Knight, in this context, suggests that D- is 'a coded version of Dupin';³⁰⁷ while Lacan's reading clearly pushes in the direction of interchangeability, since both D- and Dupin in turn occupy the same position in the triangle, and both are seen as "feminised".

Dupin certainly sees himself as D-'s direct rival ('the person who had outwitted him' (993)), and in aiming to be 'even with him' (990), he runs the risk of becoming identical to him. Besides, his motives are not as 'lofty' as Wilbur suggests, and certainly less disinterested than in the other two tales. To the financial factor and competition with the Prefect are now added 'political prepossessions' (993) and the desire for personal vengeance on D- ("D-, at Vienna once, did me an

evil turn, which I told him ... that I should remember." (ibid.)). D-'s own motives in stealing the letter also include 'power' over the queen (ibid.) and, probably, his own 'political prepossessions' in favour of the king; but Dupin does not emerge as either more or less 'base' or 'brutish' than his opponent, since both reveal destructive and ambitious tendencies.

It may, then, be legitimate to ask whether Dupin himself is not 'that monstrum horrendum, an unprincipled man of genius' (993); the extremity of the phrase suggests a high degree of projection (of his own unacceptable or "horrendous" tendencies, on to D-), while the "monster" image both points back to the ape of MRM and recalls Frankenstein's disingenuous disavowal of his own kinship with the monster.³⁰⁸ In MRM the ape was Dupin's double but not interchangeable with him; in PL, however, the possibility is raised that the roles of hero and villain, "principled" social saviour and "unprincipled" conspirator, may have become exchangeable. Is Palmer's model of Hero versus Conspiracy maintained?³⁰⁹ or does that antithesis break down? Who is the real conspirator: D- or Dupin himself? To answer these questions, the two rival males must be placed in relation to the queen, as representative woman in the text.

A brief backward glance at the presentation of women in MRM and MMR will first be necessary. In all three tales, the crime in question is a crime against women; the L'Esplanayes, Marie Rogêt and the queen are all victims of actual or symbolic male aggression. In MRM, the ape's brutality may be read as a caricatural version of male violence: 'No woman could have inflicted the blows' (544). What may be the attempt of two women to live without men (Mme L'Esplanaye has her own bank account (541)) is symbolically punished by the ape; the murders may be read as

surrogate rape (the forcing of the daughter's body up the chimney) and castration (the decapitation of the mother),³¹⁰ while the forcing of the gateway with a bayonet, as mentioned above,³¹¹ doubles the ape's violence and thus symbolically serves to legitimate aggressive male sexuality. If the ape's actions do not quite reflect the day-to-day treatment of women in patriarchal culture, they represent everyday violence taken to the last extreme; sadistic tendencies which are "normally" repressed may erupt at any moment in males within such a culture. The reader of 'The Black Cat' will recall that from wife-beating to murder is but a short step.³¹²

Marie Rogêt, similarly, is the victim of male power, whether of physical violence (on the rape theory) or of societal taboos (on the abortion theory). Indeed, her death can be read as a "punishment" for her (possible) previous sexual activity; her association with the officer, 'much noted for his debaucheries' (753), is presumed to have provoked 'base designs' in the latter which, Dupin thinks, had not yet been 'altogether accomplished' before the renewal of their relations (755). At all events, there was almost certainly some kind of sexual contact between the two, even if it stopped short of the act itself.³¹³ Further, the text contains a veiled reference to gang rape, in the collateral episode of the girl 'brutally treated' by a gang (753), who perpetrated 'an outrage similar in nature to that endured by the deceased ... a most unheard-of wrong' (757). Rape is presented as, in effect, an extreme instance of the aggressive male norm; extreme, but not infrequent, since Dupin is lying in calling it an 'unheard-of', or unusual, crime.

Both MRM and MMR also tend to present masculinity in terms of aggression and competitiveness. In the first section of MRM, the (male) analyst

is compared to the 'strong man' who 'exults in his physical ability' (528); Dupin will later affirm himself as both analyst and 'strong man'. He exhibits competitiveness, in his relations with narrator and Prefect ("I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle." (568)); and symbolically "castrates" both the Prefect (in the 'no stamen' gibe referred to above (ibid.))³¹⁴ and the sailor (the pistol wins out over the cudgel). The narrator, in his turn, affirms his 'masculinity' against the 'diminutive' Chantilly (534) (tallness symbolises phallic power, and smallness its absence); so much is clear from Dupin's remark: "I saw you draw yourself up to your full height" (536). The 'very little fellow' (537) is thus symbolically castrated. In MMR, the officer plays a stereotype Casanova role, and is referred to as a 'Lothario' (753). In spite of all this, the text of MRM, at least, raises the possibility of the subversion of the active/passive, male/female stereotypes of patriarchal culture; not only the L'Esplanades, but also the reference in the epigraph to the 'Syrens', point to active femaleness, while the image of Achilles 'among women' (also in the epigraph), and the detail of Dupin's 'treble' voice (533),³¹⁵ anticipate the "feminisation" of males which will be a marked feature of PL.

In PL, female sexuality is signified in unmistakably active terms. Lacan's notion of the "feminising" effect of the letter suggests that it is, inter alia, a signifier of female desire. What D- purloins from the queen is, on one level, control over her own sexuality, for the letter is the product and symbol of a pact between her and the Duke of S-. Its text is never revealed, although it is represented as being read twice, by the queen (977) and the Prefect (983). D- has obviously read it, and Dupin is, at least, familiar with its 'internal ... appearance' (981), as minutely described to him and the narrator by the

Prefect (ibid.). In fact, every interested party is, to some extent, acquainted with its text, except for the king (who never knows of its existence)³¹⁶ - and the reader!³¹⁷ The letter, as micro-text, is endlessly signified in the macro-text, but never quoted or paraphrased; its inside thus forms a gaping hole at the heart of the text. It may be concluded that its text must be subversive on the literal level, and must also constitute a symbolic threat to the cultural order. The silenced discourse of the purloined letter will, then, here be read as the discourse of female sexuality - but of a sexuality which will be seen, not, as Bonaparte would have it, as an absence (lack of the phallus),³¹⁸ but as an active and disturbing présence.

What, then, is the exact content of the Duke of S-'s message to the queen? Lacan suggests it may either be a 'lettre d'amour' or a 'lettre de conspiration';³¹⁹ it may, of course, be both. In either instance, it places the queen in a position of insubordination towards her husband and overlord. As Lacan stresses, 'il reste que cette lettre est le symbole d'un pacte, et que, même si sa destinataire n'assume pas ce pacte, l'existence de la lettre la situe dans une chaîne symbolique étrangère à celle qui constitue sa foi'.³²⁰ On the one hand, by entering on a clandestine correspondence with S-, she is literally or symbolically affirming herself as active woman and thus breaking the cultural law; on the other, the letter constitutes her as an actual or potential conspirator against the juridical law, and thus as a second Guinevere, guilty, as Lacan puts it, of 'haute trahison'.³²¹

If the letter, then, signifies (to use Derrida's phrase) 'le désir de la Reine',³²² then the court scandal that threatens to break conceals the greater scandal of female dissent. Thus to retrieve the letter is also

to silence the public exposure (that is, signification) of active female desire. To punish the queen would also give public voice to her desire. The plot of PL thus revolves around the same culturally-imposed silence as that of the last section of Balzac's Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes (1847),³²³ where Vautrin's appointment as head of the Parisian secret police depends on his recovery of the compromising erotic letters sent by certain titled ladies to Lucien de Rubempré:³²⁴ "Les fantaisies d'une femme réagissent sur tout l'État!"³²⁵ In the Balzac text, the sexual character of the letters is made explicit, but the need for the public silencing of private female desire is repeatedly affirmed. In Bleak House, too, Lady Dedlock's love-letters to Hawdon appear as compromising documents, to be either hushed up or used against her;³²⁶ letters involving female desire play a similar role in two of the Holmes stories, as will be shown below.³²⁷

Both Dupin and D- identify with the patriarchal order, and yet their strategies for the defence of that order divide them. D-'s strategy is that of exposure. If the letter were shown to the king, Lacan suggests a 'Chambre Ardente' could await the queen;³²⁸ divorce or execution might follow. D- can, of course, either sell the letter back to the queen, or show it to the king; but as long as he has the letter, the threat of exposure hangs over her, and thus her 'honor and peace are ... jeopardized' (976). D-'s possession of the letter thus maintains the possibility of the public denunciation and punishment of female desire.

Dupin's strategy, on the other hand, implies the private acceptance of active femininity (at least of its existence) and its public cover-up. As in Splendeurs et Misères, the strategy can be summed up as: "Un silence de mort sur tout ceci"³²⁹ to quote M. de Sérizy's verdict on

his wife's extravagant reaction to Lucien's death. Dupin's aim, in relation to the letter, is not to denounce the queen, but to retrieve the letter and so to silence its contents. Women, it seems, can have desires so long as the public does not know about them; this aim is achieved in PL, insofar as the reader (representative of the public) never has access to the letter's text!

To this extent, Dupin's position towards the letter implies a certain solidarity with woman; his strategy is in a sense more "liberal" than that of the minister, since, however hypocritical, it does permit a certain (discreet) freedom of action for female desire. Dupin has, in fact, been forced by the letter to solidarise - in spite of his conservatism - with an oppressed group! This has happened thanks to various conjunctural factors - competition with the Prefect, the financial incentive, desire for revenge on D-, choice of one court faction rather than another - but the objective result is, indeed, a certain "feminisation". In fact, it appears necessary to distinguish between the ways in which the letter "feminises" detective and minister. If the letter enlists Dupin as a 'partisan' of the queen, its loss serves to devalue D- in relation to her. The return of the letter will allow the queen to exert power over him, at the future moment when he is 'defied by her' to open the (substitute) letter (993): "For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers" (ibid.). In this sense Lacan is correct to claim ('Présentation' (1969) to Écrits 1) that 'le Ministre vient à être châtré',³³⁰ since the "normal" male-female power-relation is reversed; but if D- is "feminised" by loss of power, Dupin, in contrast, is "feminised" by a positive identification (partisanship) with active female power (besides; by quoting the opera singer Catalani (993),³³¹ he further

identifies himself with a professionally active woman, while also reviving the connotations of his own 'treble' voice in MRM (533)). In this context, one may also compare the two "letters" produced by Dupin and D- respectively; as the diagrams on pp. 368a and b show, of the three "letters" "written" in the text (the original purloined letter, D-'s transformed version, and Dupin's simulacrum), the only one which has no text is D-'s (Dupin's contains the quotation from Crébillon). The absence of text, signifying emptiness and lack, serves further to "castrate" D- in contrast to his rival.

Appearances are maintained, yet the patriarchal order is subverted from within. From all the above, the surprising conclusion can be drawn that perhaps the real conspirator is less D- than Dupin! At the very least, Dupin is part of a conspiracy of silence over the letter; he has certainly defeated D-'s conspiracy against the queen, but at the cost of tacitly assenting to the queen's conspiracy with S- against the king. How far, then, can Dupin be considered to be the saviour of the existing order?

In a sense, it may be claimed that the legitimate defender of the patriarchal law is actually D-, who, by showing the letter to the king, would have restored male power and put the woman "in her place". The roles of "hero" and "villain" become, in PL, interchangeable; both Dupin and D- can be seen either as conspirator or social saviour. At this point, the detective/thriller genre may be said to have broken down.

It may be objected that any subversion of gender roles and generic conventions in this text is severely limited by the fact that all the

participants in the drama are either members of the ruling power-group or their agents. It is certainly unlikely that Dupin would have solidarised with Marie Rogêt as he does with the queen! The interchangeability between Dupin and D- is clearly made possible by their shared class and cultural background; Dupin could not have entered into the same relation with the sailor or the naval officer of the previous tales. However, it can be counter-argued that in PL, the ruling power-bloc is presented as internally fractured, riven by conflicts (king/queen, king/S-, queen/D-); and that, in any case, the structures of patriarchal power cut across class lines. The ruling group is, at all events, not presented as homogeneous or unproblematic; the queen of PL is a far more complex figure than the 'certain gracious lady' (Queen Victoria) who presents Holmes with a tie-pin in 'The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans' (1917).³³² The purloined letter may be read as, in Lacan's words, a 'signe de contradiction et de scandale',³³³ which disturbs the political and familial order, ruptures the coherence of the subject and, finally, undermines the detective genre itself.

The detective genre is subverted in PL from various points of view. Empiricism is devalued in favour of the imaginative method, and the subject/object gap is thus narrowed; "hero" and "villain" double each other to the point of interchangeability; the hero becomes as much conspirator as social saviour; the social order emerges as liable to disturbance from within; and the structures of doubling tend to call in question any notion of a fixed, stable subject and therefore of social "normality". It may also be noted here that PL contains, as Symons points out in Mortal Consequences, a curious textual flaw; on his visit to the D- Hotel, Dupin could not simultaneously have seen the front and

back of the letter, and therefore could not have prepared so accurate a facsimile.³³⁴ This "flaw" in the text is undeniable; it is, however, possible that this lapse in verisimilitude points to a hoaxical element in the tale. Perhaps the reader who swallows the text to the letter is being secretly fooled; the writing process may have determined a certain subversion of the detective in the letter of the text. The Dupin whose explanation is materially flawed is no longer godlike; the idol has feet of clay.

The Dupin tales may, of course, be read à la Derrida as a series of labyrinths, as a hall of mirrors in which one signifier doubles and distorts another in an infinite regression of self-destroying structures.³³⁵ However, rather than deconstructing the texts out of history and into a self-referential "textuality", materialist criticism can place them as productions of a historically specific ideology: the detective as guarantor of the social order and exponent of competitive individualism and "disinterested" science. The textual structure of doubling, rather than, as Derrida would have it, prising the texts away from any specific meaning or "truth",³³⁶ serves to undermine the ideological model of the subject that they construct, and thus to expose the limits of that ideology. The process of undermining, already at work in the first two tales, has by PL reached the point where the genre constituted in MRM can no longer function. If Poe wrote no more detective stories after 1844, the reason may be the breakdown, in PL, of the "normal/abnormal", "civilised/criminal" antitheses - a breakdown already anticipated in 'The Man of the Crowd', where the narrator abandons his quest from fear of discovering his own continuity with the old man.³³⁷ In that tale, the narrator concludes: "I shall learn no more of him" (M II, 515); in PL, in contrast, Dupin claims in relation to his opponent: "I know him well"

(986). But in both texts, knowledge and ignorance lead to the same end: the fusion of self and other, "normal" and "abnormal". It may be concluded that the inventor of the detective story ceased to write in the genre, because the genre had come to disintegrate under his own pen.

v. Precursors: Voltaire, Godwin, Hoffmann, Dickens

The specificity of the Dupin tales may be further illuminated by comparison with the various precursor texts mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.³³⁸ The precursor, proto-detective texts include Voltaire's Zadig (1747), Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) and Hoffmann's 'Mademoiselle de Scudery' (1819), while Dickens' Barnaby Rudge (1841) is virtually contemporary with MRM.

In chapter 3 of Zadig, 'Le chien et le cheval', Zadig identifies two missing animals - the queen's dog and the king's horse - from their traces. This use of empirical deduction based on specialist knowledge certainly anticipates Dupin with his Cuvier in hand: 'il étudia surtout les propriétés des animaux et des plantes, et il acquit bientôt une sagacité qui lui découvrait mille différences où les autres hommes ne voient rien que d'uniforme'.³³⁹ However, his privileged vision and his 'profond et subtil discernement'³⁴⁰ only cause him trouble; he is suspected of having stolen the animals, and is all but sent to Siberia. Later, in chapter 21, 'Les énigmes', he appears as a decipherer of Sphinx-style riddles, again anticipating Dupin and his feat of 'reading the entire riddle' (MRM, 548); Zadig, too, is the only person in the text who can 'expliquer les énigmes'.³⁴¹ In Caleb Williams, the protagonist plays the role of detective in relation to his employer, Falkland, whom he suspects of murder; his relentless pressure eventually

provokes Falkland into admitting his guilt. Poe refers elsewhere to both texts - to Zadig in 'Hop-Frog' (1849) (M III, 1345), and to Caleb Williams in the Barnaby Rudge review (1842) (H XI, 64) and the 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846) (H XIV, 193). It should be pointed out, however, that in both earlier texts, detection does not pay. Zadig temporarily, and Williams for most of the narrative, place themselves on the wrong side of the law through their exposure of the truth (even though there is no criminal in Zadig). Zadig's exercise of intellect runs counter to the values of absolute monarchy: 'Zadig vit combien il était dangereux quelquefois d'être trop savant';³⁴² Williams's 'curiosity',³⁴³ exposes him to the rigours of class justice, as Falkland frames him as a criminal. Thus in both proto-detective texts, a visibly unjust social system (Things As They Are, in the words of Godwin's original title)³⁴⁴ marginalises the detective as a criminal; this is clearly a different model from that of the Dupin tales, which at least start from the premises that the detective is always on the side of the law, and that the law will recognise his efforts.

R. J. Hollingdale ('Introduction' to Tales of Hoffmann, 1982) claims 'Mademoiselle de Scudery' as effectively the first detective story, 'embodying most of the tricks of the genre supposedly invented by Poe ... twenty years later'.³⁴⁵ Hoffmann's tale certainly revolves around an enigma (a series of murders), with a series of false solutions (a gang, as in MMR,³⁴⁶ and a false suspect, anticipating Le Bon in MRM) followed by the discovery of the true murderer, Cardillac. Mlle de Scudery plays the role of detective, taking on 'the unravelling of this dreadful mystery',³⁴⁷ and manages to elicit the truth. However, there is no use of empirical deduction; Cardillac's assistant Brusson, the false suspect, simply tells her what he knows.³⁴⁸ This is as if Dupin had simply been told about the ape by Le Bon! Hoffmann's text, while certainly

a crime story, is thus only in part a proto-detective story, since it fails to introduce the heroic-omniscient figure of the detective.

As far as Barnaby Rudge is concerned, Poe's review of February 1842 pointed to the construction of the novel around an enigma: 'The thesis of the novel may ... be regarded as based upon curiosity. Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader, and whet his desire for elucidation' (H XI, 49). Indeed, Poe himself played detective to Dickens' text, attempting in the first version of the review (Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post, 1 May 1841) to solve the mystery on the basis of the first few chapters.³⁴⁹ Rudge, the murderer of Reuben Haredale, is finally tracked down by the victim's brother, Geoffrey. Haredale may, to this extent, be seen as a proto-detective, but his motivation is essentially personal - the clearing of his own name,³⁵⁰ and a 'gloomy thirst for retribution'.³⁵¹ He lacks, then, the "disinterested" aura of Dupin (or at least the Dupin of the first two tales). The various precursor texts should all, then, be read as partial but not complete anticipations of the genre constituted in MRM.

vi. Successors: Dickens, Collins, Doyle

The first detective in British fiction is generally considered to be Inspector Bucket in Dickens' Bleak House (1853).³⁵² Bucket is differentiated from Dupin as being a professional policeman, but both are presented as employing "disinterested" intellect and empirical deduction on the side of the law (thus Bucket convicts Hortense of Tulkinghorn's murder on circumstantial evidence, based on deduction from clues).³⁵³ The Inspector's major interventions in the narrative are the tracking-down of Hortense and the pursuit of the disappeared Lady Dedlock, and in these two cases he appears "disinterested"; but his first appearance

is as Tulkinghorn's paid agent in his persecution of Lady Dedlock,³⁵⁴ and he is also responsible for the 'moving-on' of Jo.³⁵⁵ The detective thus emerges, in the novel, as an ambivalent figure, clearly distanced from the unproblematic hero of the journalistic sketches which describe Bucket's original;³⁵⁶ the law which the detective upholds is, in Bleak House, itself corrupt and arbitrary. The element of ambivalence clearly provides a link with Poe's texts.

The detective fictions of Wilkie Collins also reveal certain continuities with Poe. The Moonstone (1868) contains two (antithetical) detective figures, Sergeant Cuff and Ezra Jennings. Cuff, as a Bureaucrat (in Palmer's terms),³⁵⁷ is a similar figure to Bucket; both appeal to 'experience' and precedent,³⁵⁸ and remain within the confines of the empirical method. There is, however, a crucial difference, in that in Cuff's case the empirical method fails. The Sergeant evolves an ingenious theory, based on his knowledge of previous cases, to the effect that Rachel Verinder has framed the theft of the jewel.³⁵⁹ The discovery of the truth, however, falls to Ezra Jennings, a non-bureaucrat, who combines deductive ability with the elements of a psychological 'theory'³⁶⁰ (delirium has a sense; states of dissociated consciousness exist). In particular, Jennings' reconstitution of the signifying chain of Mr Candy's delirious discourse³⁶¹ - which he compares to 'putting together a child's "puzzle"'³⁶² - may be compared to Dupin's reconstruction of his companion's thought-train. As Martin A. Kayman ('A Responsabilidade Moral. O Amor e a Lei em The Moonstone (1868) de Wilkie Collins', 1980) puts it, 'o discurso empirista consegue apresentar o mistério, mas não solucioná-lo. Isto exige a intervenção de um psicólogo' ('empiricist discourse is able to present the mystery, but not to solve it. This requires the intervention of a psychologist').³⁶³ 'Theory' is counterposed to 'experience';

the role played by Cuff is analogous to that of the Prefect in PL, and both texts tend to expose the limits of empiricism.

The detective genre also undergoes questioning in Collins' tale, 'Mr Policeman and the Cook' (collected 1887),³⁶⁴ under the disturbing insistence of sexuality. The narrator, a policeman, has to deal with a murder case, which remains unsolved for some time; finally he discovers through circumstantial evidence that the murderer was the woman who is now his own fiancée. The clash between Desire and Law results in a draw; he breaks off the engagement, but retires from the force and keeps the secret. The notion of "disinterest" is thus ruptured by the emergence of desire;³⁶⁵ as, similarly, the letter, signifier of the queen's desire, places Dupin in opposition to the law represented by the king.

On the other hand, in another Collins tale, 'A Stolen Letter' (collected 1856),³⁶⁶ the empirical method and the detective conventions remain unscathed. The continuity of this tale with PL has been noted by Herbert van Thal ('Introduction' to Collins, Tales of Terror and the Supernatural, 1972)³⁶⁷ and Kayman (1980).³⁶⁸ The narrator, a lawyer, has to find a stolen letter that would compromise his client's marriage; it is found under the carpet of a hotel room.³⁶⁹ This is, of course, precisely the kind of recherché hiding-place that, in PL, would have come within the competence of the Prefect: "he has taken it for granted that all men proceed to conceal a letter ... in some out-of-the-way hole or corner" (PL, 985). Thus, in Collins' text, both criminal and detective remain stuck on the level of Poe's Prefect; if on the one hand the tale fails to reinforce the myth of the detective by privileging his unique intellect, on the other it maintains the empirical

method intact. The tale thus functions on a more superficial level than the other Collins texts discussed.

The Sherlock Holmes novels and stories, while clearly leaning heavily on Poe's tales, do not, in general, exhibit the same kind of disturbing elements observed for Bleak House or The Moonstone. Doyle's detective is, in many respects, a continuation of Dupin, in a more "professionalised" form.³⁷⁰ So much may be established from a brief synchronic glance at the cycle (the later Holmes narratives, while adding nothing essential to the figure,³⁷¹ nonetheless at times introduce important thematic extensions and reformulations, and the cycle will therefore be considered as a whole).

Dupin's name appears in the very first Holmes narrative, A Study in Scarlet (1887), where the derogatory reference to Poe's detective as a 'very inferior fellow'³⁷² is probably a ruse to divert the reader's attention from the resemblance. By 'The Resident Patient' (1894), however,³⁷³ Holmes was sufficiently established to be allowed to refer to Dupin in more complimentary terms; this text refers to 'one of Poe's sketches' (i.e. MRM),³⁷⁴ and Holmes undertakes a "mind-reading" on Watson parallel to the Chantilly episode.³⁷⁵ In effect, Holmes is repeating Dupin, and the compulsion to repeat appears to have dictated an almost verbatim re-run of the same incident in 'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box' (1917).³⁷⁶ Poe's name, then, occurs three times in the cycle; further, Palmer has suggested that the structure of MRM is 'identical to that of the Sherlock Holmes series'.³⁷⁷ There is, in the Holmes as in the Dupin narratives, the same distinction between the Professional (Holmes/Dupin), the Amateur (narrator/Watson) and the Bureaucrat (the police);³⁷⁸ the same emphasis on competitive individualism and the inimitable

idiosyncrasy of the hero, with his 'singular personality and unique methods' ('The Adventure of the Second Stain', 1905);³⁷⁹ the same use of eccentricities (cocaine use, violin playing) to isolate the hero; the same rationalist rejection of the supernatural ("The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply.") ('The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire' (1927));³⁸⁰ the same construction of the detective as both artist and scientist (Watson describes Holmes' 'science of deduction' (A Study in Scarlet),³⁸¹ and also calls him a 'great artist' ('The Problem of Thor Bridge', 1927));³⁸² and the same stress on empirical deduction based on specialised information (Holmes again and again makes use of his encyclopaedic grasp of such areas of knowledge as cigar ash (A Study in Scarlet),³⁸³ poisonous snakes ('The Adventure of the Speckled Band', 1892)³⁸⁴ or perfumes (The Hound of the Baskervilles, 1902)).³⁸⁵ Indeed, as the cycle develops, Holmes tends to become more like Dupin; as Symons notes in Mortal Consequences,³⁸⁶ his initial lack of literary culture in A Study in Scarlet³⁸⁷ is replaced in The Sign of Four (1890)³⁸⁸ by the more Dupinesque ability to quote Jean Paul and Goethe.³⁸⁹

As for the conspiracies Holmes averts, they tend, as Palmer shows, to come from outside "normal" British society.³⁹⁰ The exotic origins of Poe's ape are repeated in the origins of Doyle's conspiracies: in the U.S. (the Ku Klux Klan in 'The Five Orange Pips' (1892),³⁹¹ Chicago gangsters in 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men' (1905));³⁹² or in what Holmes, in 'The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans' (1917), calls 'the Latin countries - the countries of assassination'³⁹³ (the Mafia in 'The Adventure of the Six Napoleons' (1905),³⁹⁴ a Central American dictator in 'The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge' (1917)).³⁹⁵ The ascription of the crime to an animal agent also recurs, in 'The Speckled Band' with its swamp adder, 'The Adventure of the Lion's Mane' (1927)³⁹⁶

with its poisonous jellyfish, and, centrally, in The Hound of the Baskervilles (although only in 'The Lion's Mane' does the non-human creature act autonomously, rather than being put up to the crime by a human manipulator).³⁹⁷ Poe's Ourang-Outang, as humanoid animal, has its mirror-image counterparts in various animaloid humans in the Holmes canon. The Andaman Islander in The Sign of Four enters a locked room through a trapdoor in the roof, is identified by Holmes via his traces (a poisonous thorn), and is described in terms of 'bestiality' and 'half-animal fury';³⁹⁸ in 'The Adventure of the Creeping Man' (1927),³⁹⁹ a professor injects himself with an aphrodisiac serum from the Langur monkey, and in the process nearly turns into a monkey himself. In both tales, the source of disturbance is externalised, as in MRM, by the non-human references; the criminal or madman is presented as an honorary animal.

Where the disturbing element comes from within British society, it tends to be attributed to hereditary degeneracy, as with Moriarty ('A criminal strain ran in his blood! ('The Final Problem', 1894);⁴⁰⁰ or, in the case of the working-class criminal, to inherent animality, as with the murderer Selden in The Hound of the Baskervilles: 'an evil yellow face, a terrible animal face, all seamed and scored with vile passions'.⁴⁰¹ There is clearly a continuity with the 'monstrum horrendum' D- in the first case, and the 'ruffians' of MMR in the second.⁴⁰² ..

Another source of disturbance is the British person who "goes wrong" in the colonies - e.g. Dr Roylott in 'The Speckled Band', whose hereditary 'violence of temper' is 'intensified by his long residence in the tropics',⁴⁰³ and Colonel Moran in 'The Adventure of the Empty House' (1905),⁴⁰⁴ who 'began to go wrong'⁴⁰⁵ in India. This notion of contamination by exposure to an alien, "inferior" culture is an expansion of the suspect swartheness of Poe's sailor (MRM) and officer (MMR).⁴⁰⁶

In thus displacing the origins of crime on to the Other (animals, foreigners, or the innately corrupt), the Holmes stories follow the logic of the Dupin tales. However, it should be noted that Holmes derives certain characteristics from other figures in the Poe canon, not all of them "innocent". His knowledge of ciphers points back to Legrand (Laurence Meynell ('Introduction' to Poe, Tales, Poems, Essays, 1952)⁴⁰⁷ has pointed out the similarity of 'The Dancing Men' to 'The Gold-Bug');⁴⁰⁸ while the cocaine use suggests Bedloe, in 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains'.⁴⁰⁹ His claim in A Study in Scarlet that he can tell anyone's job from their physical appearance ('distinguish the history of the man, and the trade or profession to which he belongs')⁴¹⁰ recalls the narrator of 'The Man of the Crowd'.⁴¹¹ Besides, Holmes has certain traits that clearly derive from Usher. As T. S. Eliot points out in 'From Poe to Valéry' (1949), Holmes' 'remarkable gift for improvisation' on the violin mentioned in The Sign of Four⁴¹² suggests Usher's guitar 'impromptus' (M II, 406);⁴¹³ while, indeed, that novel opens with Holmes lying Usher-like on the sofa, reading an 'old black-letter volume'⁴¹⁴ which seems a double of the latter's 'quarto Gothic' missal (M II, 409). The convergence with Usher suggests that Holmes may share some of Dupin's disintegrative tendencies. Moreover, Holmes takes further traits from no less a personage than the Minister D-. Like D-, he is doubled by his brother, Mycroft ('The Greek Interpreter', 1894), who himself resembles D- in his 'extraordinary faculty for figures';⁴¹⁵ the detective's 'languid, lounging figure' conceals the 'incisive reasoner' ('A Scandal in Bohemia', 1892);⁴¹⁶ and his habit of keeping 'his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantelpiece' ('The Musgrave Ritual', 1894)⁴¹⁷ can only suggest the hiding-place of the purloined letter! The link between Holmes and D- not only points up the interchangeability

between Dupin and D-, but suggests that Holmes too may have "conspiratorial" tendencies.

In general, Holmes, like Dupin, identifies with the existing social order; as 'champion of the law', his aim is to 'free society' of conspiracies ('The Final Problem').⁴¹⁸ His attitude to the law is that of a liberal conservative; thus in The Valley of Fear (1915), he declares: "'The English law is in the main a just law.'"⁴¹⁹ In the title story of His Last Bow (1917)⁴²⁰ he actually becomes a government double-agent in World War I. Nonetheless, he is at times capable of taking the law into his own hands and intervening illegally on behalf of blackmailed women ('The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton' (1905),⁴²¹ where he commits burglary) or protecting a woman who stole a document from her husband under pressure from a blackmailer ('The Second Stain'). As with Dupin, the disturbing insistence of female desire can sometimes push Holmes on to the wrong side of the law; denunciation of female revolt is replaced by cover-up.

Essentially, Holmes, like Dupin, is a mythical embodiment of the illusory coherence of the subject - although there is no Holmes narrative where the apotheosis of the detective goes so far as in PL, with its elaborate intellectual hierarchy.⁴²² Nonetheless, like his predecessor, he shows certain centrifugal tendencies; not only to conspiracy, as shown above, but also to disintegration (the cocaine use), doubling (he makes a replica of himself in 'The Empty House',⁴²³ a strategy re-used - and therefore doubled! - in 'The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone' (1927))⁴²⁴ and multiplication (his frequent use of disguise).

He is also, to some extent, doubled by his opponents, as Dupin is by

D-; above all by Moriarty ('The Final Problem', The Valley of Fear) and Stapleton (The Hound of the Baskervilles). Professor Moriarty, the 'scientific criminal',⁴²⁵ and mathematical genius, obviously recalls D-; he is said to have written a treatise on 'The Dynamics of the Asteroid',⁴²⁶ which doubles D-'s work on the 'Differential Calculus' (PL, 986). His 'extraordinary mental powers' double those of Holmes himself: "'I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal'".⁴²⁷ Similarly, Stapleton the naturalist is described by Holmes as 'a foeman who is worthy of our steel';⁴²⁸ he (like Holmes himself) derives in part from Legrand, given his recondite zoological knowledge (his identification of a new species of moth⁴²⁹ corresponds to Legrand's discovery of an 'unknown bivalve' (M III, 808)).⁴³⁰ The genesis of Holmes' enemies in both "good" and "bad" Poe figures suggests a certain convergence between them and Holmes himself. Moriarty is both Dupin and D-; Stapleton is both Legrand and Kidd, the killer.

In spite of all the above, it may be affirmed that in the Holmes cycle the detective genre never reaches the advanced state of decomposition observable in PL. First, the doubling between Holmes and his opponents at no point reaches the point of interchangeability; in the few stories where Holmes appears as conspirator, there is no equivalent of D-. Nor is there any equivalent to that other doubling between Dupin and the ape; Holmes cannot be said to be doubled by any of his animal or "human-animal" adversaries (in 'The Creeping Man', the professor's intelligence approximates him to Holmes, but his allegedly immoderate sexual appetite, seen as 'unnatural',⁴³¹ at once places him at the opposite pole to the abstinent detective). Second, Holmes tends to stick to the empirical method, with only occasional use of

the imaginative method. There are several stolen-document stories ('A Scandal in Bohemia'; 'The Naval Treaty' (1894);⁴³² 'The Second Stain'), which superficially resemble PL; but in each case, as in Collins' 'A Stolen Letter',⁴³³ the hiding-place is a recherché nook on the Prefect's level,⁴³⁴ and the detective's method thus remains within the limits of empiricism.

Sherlock Holmes is, then, in general, paradigmatic of the "full" subject: 'the best and wisest man whom I have ever known' ('The Final Problem'),⁴³⁵ 'the man whom above all others I revere' ('Thor Bridge');⁴³⁶ although certain disintegrative tendencies are present across the cycle, on the whole their disturbing effect is limited, and the detective conventions remain in place. Doyle consolidated the genre invented by Poe, without radically subverting it; the comparison of Holmes and Dupin confirms the view that Poe's three tales mark not only the foundation of the detective genre, but the exposure of its ideological limits.

2. THE MESMERIST

i. The Mesmeric Ideology

The mesmerist, or hypnotist, seen as "heroic" scientist, is a recurrent figure in mid-nineteenth-century literature, and presents certain parallels with the detective; both can be seen as embodiments of the triumphant bourgeois subject, affirming and extending its control over nature and humanity. Poe's detective trilogy is, indeed, balanced within the canon by a "mesmeric trilogy" - three tales linked, not by a recurring character, but by the common theme of mesmeric experimentation: 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844); 'Mesmeric Revelation' (1844); and 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845)

(the texts will be referred to, in this chapter-part, by the abbreviations TRM, MR and 'Valdemar' respectively). The three narratives share a 'modern', urban setting, introduce mesmerism as an innovative branch of contemporary science, and stress the relation between mesmerist and mesmerised. Each, however, confronts the mesmeric phenomena from a distinct angle: occultism (MR), the 'mastery of nature' ('Valdemar'), and manipulative power-relations (TRM).

In this chapter-part, the ideology of mesmerism will be examined, in relation to some of its representations in nineteenth-century literature; the three tales will then be considered in detail. The necessary contextual information is derived mainly from two historical works: Vincent Buranelli, The Wizard from Vienna: Franz Anton Mesmer and the Origins of Hypnotism (1976), and Maria M. Tatar, Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature (1978), and two studies of mesmerism in Poe's work: S. E. Lind, 'Poe and Mesmerism' (1947), and Doris V. Falk, 'Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism' (1969).¹ Some reference is also made to Taylor Stoehr, 'Hawthorne and Mesmerism' (1969)² and Fred Kaplan, Dickens and Mesmerism (1975);³ to a contemporaneous text (which has been attributed to Poe), 'The Philosophy of Animal Magnetism, by a Gentleman of Philadelphia' (1837);⁴ and to a modern empirical study, F. L. Marcuse, Hypnosis: Fact and Fiction (1959).⁵

'Unité de l'animal, unité de fluide, unité de la matière première, toutes ces théories récentes sont quelquefois tombées par un accident singulier dans la tête de poètes, en même temps que dans les têtes savantes.' Thus Baudelaire, in his 'Note' to his translation of 'Mesmeric Revelation' ('Révélation magnétique', 1848),⁶ draws

attention to the close mutual approximation in the projects of poets and scientists, the convergence between literary texts and 'théories récentes' in other domains; his examples of 'esprits ... littéraires' include Poe and Balzac, who are placed in the company of Franz Anton Mesmer.⁷ Baudelaire offered Poe's tale to the French public as a 'haute curiosité scientifique';⁸ his high regard for the mesmeric tales and the ideology behind them is suggested by the fact that 'Mesmeric Revelation' was the text chosen for his first published translation of a tale by Poe,⁹ and by his arrangement of the three mesmeric narratives in Histoires extraordinaires as the eighth, ninth and tenth tales in the collection ('La Vérité sur le cas de M. Valdemar', 'Révélation magnétique', 'Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe') - that is, as a connected group.

Baudelaire was not alone in considering mesmerism as an integral part of modern science. In Poe's own 'Some Words with a Mummy' (1845), the assembled intellectuals of New York, engaged in defending their own modernity against the claims of ancient Egypt, produce mesmerism as one of their trump cards: 'Here our whole party, joining voices, detailed, at great length, ... the marvels of animal magnetism.' (M III, 1191).¹⁰ The theories and practice of Mesmer and his followers, while always controversial in medical circles, were regarded by many in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, France, the U.S. and elsewhere as constituting an authentic science; the label "pseudo-science" that is often attached to mesmerism today fails, as will be shown, to do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon. Among the writers of the period who showed an interest in mesmerism, and put it to literary use, must be included Hawthorne (The House of the Seven Gables, 1851;¹¹ The Blithedale Romance, 1852);¹² Balzac (Louis

Lambert, 1832;¹³ Ursule Miroüet, 1841;¹⁴ Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes, 1847);¹⁵ Dickens (The Mystery of Edwin Drood, 1870);¹⁶ and Robert Browning ('Mesmerism', 1855).¹⁷ Mesmeric influence is also visible in, for instance, the passage in Melville's Moby-Dick (1851) where Ahab effectively hypnotises the crew into compliance ('the hearty animation into which his unexpected question had so magnetically thrown them')¹⁸ and tries to impose his will on the mates: 'It seemed as though, by some nameless, interior volition, he would fain have shocked into them the same fiery emotion accumulated within the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life.'¹⁹ and in the episode in Dostoyevsky's 'The Landlady' (1847) where, in a battle of wills, the jealous husband Murin hypnotically fixes his lodger Ordinov to his chair: 'the old man's gaze was bent upon him with a look of concentrated malice ... He tried to rise, but some invincible force nailed his feet to the floor ... some evil dream ... was weighing down his eyelids'.²⁰ In these passages, as in innumerable other moments in nineteenth-century literature, what is being described is the phenomena of hypnosis; as will be shown in this chapter-part, the figure of the mesmerist is a (highly problematic) manifestation of the mythical "heroic" scientist, while the power-relations constituted through the mesmeric rapport may be read as displaced expressions of other types of unequal relations, both sexual and economic.

The term "mesmerism" and its derivatives ("mesmerist", "mesmerise", "mesmeric") were in general use over most of the nineteenth century (although French usage tended to prefer "magnétisme", "magnétiseur", etc.); the modern term "hypnosis" was not coined until 1843, and only gradually became standard usage²¹ ("hypnotise" appears, for instance, in Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897):²² "you can hypnotise me

and so learn that which even I myself do not know").²³ The lexis of mesmerism or (animal) magnetism derives from the theories of the Swabian doctor Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815); it must be stressed that in the literature of the period, these terms have a specific, technical sense, and are not to be read as vaguely suggestive clichés. Mesmerism was one of the principal modes of therapy available for nervous disorders (in spite of its marginalisation by the medical establishment). As both theory and therapy, it was in some respects the forerunner of psychoanalysis; indeed, it was via the practice of hypnosis that Freud developed his technique of free association, on the road to the discovery of the unconscious.²⁴

Mesmer's theory and clinical practice were constructed on the hypothesis of "animal magnetism". The theory is summarised in twenty-seven 'Propositions', published in his Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal (1779).²⁵ Animal magnetism was conceived as 'un fluide universellement répandu', invisible and intangible, which pervaded all space and all matter, animate and inanimate.²⁶ It was also mobile: 'Cette vertu magnétique peut être accumulée, concentrée, transportée.'²⁷ Nervous illnesses (what are today called psychosomatic and neurotic disorders) were seen as being caused by an imbalance (excess or deficiency) in the quantity of animal magnetism present in the subject's body.²⁸ Certain individuals were believed to be endowed with an unusual susceptibility to the fluid,²⁹ and were known as "animal magnets";³⁰ such a person, acting as therapist (or "magnetiser", or "operator"), could function as a conductor of the fluid and redress the balance of animal magnetism in the patient's organism, thus curing his/her illness. On the basis of this theory, Mesmer and his followers effected a long series of (often successful)

treatments of nervous illnesses.

Mesmerian theory laid special emphasis on the doctor-patient relationship; for therapy to be effective, it was vital to establish an emotive bond, or "rapport", between mesmerist and mesmerised. Mesmer, according to Buranelli, 'understood that the physician confronted by nervous problems should use all the means available to create a rapport between him and his patient'.³¹ While Mesmer always maintained that physical factors (i.e. animal magnetism) were primary in the mesmeric process, he simultaneously attached great importance to psychological factors (i.e. rapport) as a necessary component; 'the physician had to be ... careful to establish rapport with the patient at the start of the treatment and ... sustain the mood of confidence throughout'.³²

Mesmer treated a wide range of illnesses, but only those which he considered to be functional in character; he refused to treat organic ailments.³³ His therapeutic technique was based on two concepts, the "crisis" and the "trance". The crisis was a deliberately provoked convulsive attack, 'designed to intensify the illness to an extreme limit, from which point it would suddenly and swiftly begin to recede'.³⁴ The trance - originally introduced in order to bring on the crisis - was an induced transitional state, between sleep and waking, in which the patient became unusually susceptible to suggestion.³⁵ The crisis was dropped by later mesmerists, following the example of Mesmer's follower the Marquis de Puységur;³⁶ the trance, however, was retained, becoming central to later practice. In Buranelli's words, 'the trance grew in importance until it overshadowed everything else and became the essential phenomenon of the system'.³⁷

The trance, which became the key component of the therapeutic process, requires special attention. It was, supposedly, a privileged state for the restoration of the balance of animal magnetism in the patient's body. The means used to throw the patient into the trance were various, often, but not always, involving physical contact. The mesmerist might stare at her/him with a concentrated gaze; touch him/her directly, e.g. on the face or limbs; pass his hands in close proximity to her/his body, but without actually touching; or indirectly "magnetise" him/her via a third person or an object (e.g. he might touch a piece of wood or metal, which the patient would touch in turn). Mesmer also believed that animal magnetism could be transmitted at a distance, without any physical interaction between mesmerist and patient: 'Son action a lieu à une distance éloignée, sans le secours d'aucun corps intermédiaire.'³⁸

Diverse terminology was employed to describe the therapy. The mesmeric trance was also called the "magnetic sleep", the "magnetic somnolency" (TRM, II III, 941), "sleep-waking" (in MR (M III, 1030) the patient is called a 'sleep-waker') and "somnambulism" (which, in this context, does not mean sleep-walking). The term "mesmeric passes" (also "manipulations") could refer to the two types of manual mesmerism (with or without touching) described above; in 'Valdemar', both 'passes' (M III, 1236-37, 1242) and 'manipulations' (1237) signify the first type (direct touching), as in: 'the first lateral stroke of my hand across his forehead' (ibid.).

Mesmer himself never abandoned his belief in the cosmic fluid as a physical substance: 'Accepting the reality of the psychological factors, he insisted to his dying day that he was dealing in physics.'³⁹

However, various different currents emerged in the movement, some of which tended to de-emphasise the notion of a fluid. Idealist and materialist tendencies may be distinguished - on the one hand, occultist interpretations, leading ultimately to spiritualism;⁴⁰ on the other, psychological interpretations stressing the elements of rapport and suggestion, rather than the fluid. Puységur, who flourished from c. 1780, did not actually drop the concept of animal magnetism, but laid far more emphasis than Mesmer had on the trance and the psychological dimension, conceiving the therapy primarily in terms of suggestion; hence his motto, 'Croyez et veuillez', privileging the role of the will.⁴¹ He also discovered - as shown above, in the case of Victor Race (Chapter 2)⁴² - that repressed, culturally unacceptable ideas could emerge in the patient during the trance. In the late 1830s and 1840s, mesmerism took on a new lease of life, spreading rapidly across France, Britain and the U.S.; one of its main British exponents was John Elliotson (who instructed Charles Dickens in the mesmeric art),⁴³ and on the other side of the Atlantic Charles Poyen introduced the therapy from France in 1836.⁴⁴ Both of these practitioners, however, continued to believe in the fluid.

In 1843, the Scottish doctor James Braid introduced a decisive theoretical rupture in his Neurypnology, by abandoning the concept of animal magnetism altogether. Developing the line initiated by Puységur, he concluded that the trance was a purely psychological phenomenon, the product of suggestion alone; it was Braid who coined the modern term "hypnotism" (the alternative form "hypnosis" is first recorded in 1876).⁴⁵ At this point, the pre-history of hypnotism may be considered over; to quote Buranelli: 'Mesmerism with animal magnetism is an interesting fallacy in the history of science.'

Mesmerism without animal magnetism is hypnosis.⁴⁶ In modern medical usage hypnotism, or hypnosis (the terms are, in practice, interchangeable) is defined as - to quote the 1974 Encyclopaedia Britannica - 'a sleeplike state that nonetheless permits a wide range of behavioral responses to stimulation'.⁴⁷ The recognised phenomena of hypnosis are similar to those observed for mesmerism; they include anaesthesia, perceptual distortions (positive and negative hallucinations), paramnesias, delusions of identity, and the emergence of repressed memories and fantasies.⁴⁸ The subject's behaviour after the hypnotic trance is often characterised by posthypnotic amnesia (what was said and done in the trance is forgotten), while posthypnotic suggestion is also frequently observed: 'A deeply hypnotized individual can be induced to carry out an action in response to a specific cue some time after trance termination.... All phenomena that can be elicited during hypnosis can, in suitable subjects, be elicited posthypnotically.' (Encyclopaedia Britannica).⁴⁹ Hypnosis may also be used in combination with drugs; to quote Marcuse (1959): 'Drugs alone do not produce hypnosis, but they do seem to act as accessories to the hypnotic state.'⁵⁰ It can also be produced, in some subjects, at a distance (modern theory here agrees with Mesmer):⁵¹ 'A post-hypnotic signal to go into a hypnotic state can be delivered from a distance and still be effective.'⁵² (Marcuse).

Once the theory of hypnosis was freed from the baggage of animal magnetism, it gained greater medical credibility, especially through the work of the Nancy school, under Ambroise Liébeault and Hippolyte Bernheim, and the Paris school, under Jean-Martin Charcot.⁵³ Liébeault conceived hypnosis in terms of suggestion (Du Sommeil et des états analogues, 1866), and used it for the removal of neurotic symptoms.

Charcot's therapy was similar, but there was a major theoretical divergence between him and the Nancy school; he claimed that only hysterical patients could be hypnotised (Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux, 1873) whereas Bernheim maintained that anyone was hypnotisable (De la suggestion dans l'état hypnotique et dans l'état de veille, 1884).⁵⁴

From Charcot and Bernheim it is only a short step to Freud, who studied hypnosis under both, in 1885-86 and 1889 respectively.⁵⁵

Certain continuities between mesmerism and psychoanalysis should be evident from the account so far given - the concentration on nervous disorders, the bond between therapist and patient (rapport or transference), the emergence of repressed material in the trance. The mesmerised subject frequently experienced him/herself as other, divided, fragmented, as in the cases of Victor Race and Mme de la Rue (described in Chapter 2).⁵⁶ There is, besides, a direct historical link between hypnosis and psychoanalysis. Freud initially used hypnotic suggestion, following his mentors, for the simple removal of symptoms; but he soon, in his own words (An Autobiographical Study, 1925),⁵⁷ 'made use of hypnosis in another manner'.⁵⁸ He began to follow Josef Breuer in using the "cathartic method", which the latter had developed in his treatment of "Anna O." for hysteria (1880-82).⁵⁹ In Breuer's method, the subject was questioned, under hypnosis, on the origins of her/his symptoms, and repressed memories and connexions would come to the surface: 'Not until they have been questioned under hypnosis do these memories emerge with the undiminished vividness of a recent event.'⁶⁰ The retrieval of repressed memories led to the disappearance of the symptoms associated with them. It was in the course of his treatment of patients by this method⁶¹ that Freud began

to evolve the basic concepts of psychoanalysis (the unconscious, repression, the sexual aetiology of the neuroses).

Freud abandoned hypnosis quite early (between 1893 and 1896), and developed the method of free association in replacement of the cathartic method. It was, however, partly through his study and use of hypnosis that the discovery of the unconscious came about; thus he emphasised in 'The Unconscious' (1915) that 'hypnotic experiments, and especially post-hypnotic suggestion, had tangibly demonstrated the existence and mode of operation of the mental unconscious'.⁶² Besides posthypnotic suggestion, other features of hypnosis that provided evidence for the unconscious included hypnotic anamnesis (recall of repressed memories), and posthypnotic amnesia.⁶³ Hypnosis was thus crucial to the development of psychoanalysis, both as therapy and as theory; indeed, Freud declared in the Introductory Lectures (1919) that psychoanalysts were the 'legitimate heirs' of hypnotists,⁶⁴ while Tatar similarly stresses 'the continuity of the development linking animal magnetism with psychoanalysis'.⁶⁵

Today, psychoanalysis maintains that hypnosis is a psychological (not a physical) process, and that it is produced through suggestion. The effectiveness of hypnotic suggestion is seen as depending on the rapport between hypnotist and patient; Freud explained this rapport, in a note to Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905), in terms of unconscious erotic factors: 'the essence of hypnosis lies in an unconscious fixation of the subject's libido to the figure of the hypnotist, through the medium of the masochistic components of the sexual instinct'.⁶⁶ The hypnotist is thus considered to be a father-substitute, with whom the subject stands in a quasi-sexual dependent relation.

It may be concluded from the above history that mesmerism occupies an important place in the development of depth-psychological theory and practice; once the crisis and the fluid were dispensed with, a material substratum remained that could be positively appropriated by later discourses. Certain dimensions of mesmerism, all of them having some bearing on Poe's three tales, will now be examined in greater detail: the therapeutic aspect; the occultist tendency; the concept of the will; the utopian notion of social and natural transformation; and the question of sexual power-relations.

The diseases treated by mesmeric therapy included hysteria, epilepsy, neuralgia (as in TRM (940)), and psychosomatic blindness and paralysis.⁶⁷ It was also used for anaesthesia - whether to alleviate pain, as in the cases of Poe's Vankirk (MR, 1030) and Bedloe (TRM, 941), or for surgical purposes; it lost its surgical popularity, however, after the introduction of ether in 1847.⁶⁸ Among the instances of mid-nineteenth-century writers' involvement with therapeutic mesmerism may be mentioned Dickens' regular mesmerising of the hysterical sufferer Mme de la Rue in 1845,⁶⁹ and the mesmeric treatment undergone by Hawthorne's fiancée Sophia Peabody (who later became his wife) for her headaches, at the hands of Dr J. E. Fiske (1838) and Mrs C. Park (1841-42).⁷⁰ Mesmeric therapy was, in keeping with Mesmer's own beliefs,⁷¹ sometimes practised at a distance (as shown above, this is not incompatible with modern hypnotic theory);⁷² thus Dickens, when forced by circumstances to be away from Mme de la Rue, continued to mesmerise her at a distance, at 11 a.m. each day.⁷³ The therapeutic dimension of mesmerism, as will be shown, enters Poe's tales, but largely as a pretext for other uses (occultism, scientific experimentation, psychological manipulation).

The occultist tendency within mesmerism, although of little interest today, was quite influential. Occult mesmerists, taking their cue from mystical tendencies present in Mesmer's later writings (Mémoire, 1799),⁷⁴ believed that in the trance the subject could receive messages from another world, and communicate "revelations" about the meaning of the universe. The mesmerised subject who allegedly transmitted these messages was known as a "seer", or "clairvoyant(e)", or "mesmeric medium". This occultist ideology is presented, fairly critically, in Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance (1852), where Priscilla, manipulated by the mesmerist Westervelt, is exhibited on stage as the 'Veiled Lady', a clairvoyante who is claimed to be 'in communion with the spiritual world'.⁷⁵ Her supposed "visions", however, can be explained in terms of induced hallucination, since the mesmerist's own discourse effectively gives the game away, admitting that the "occult" phenomena originate in his own mind: 'were I to will it, sitting in this very hall, she could hear ... the ice-bergs grinding one against the other, in the polar seas'.⁷⁶ In contrast, Balzac's Ursule Mirouët (1841), exploiting the potential of mesmerism rather more superficially than some of the novelist's other works, takes the occultists' discourse at face value; mystical mesmerism is exploited as a means of legitimisation of religious ideology: 'Les miracles du somnambulisme permettent de pénétrer dans le monde spirituel'.⁷⁷ Dr Minoret, for most of his life a convinced atheist, is converted to Catholicism by witnessing an experiment in mesmeric clairvoyance (a female medium informs him in Paris about what is going on in a house in Nemours). As will be seen,⁷⁸ occult mesmerism forms the basis of Poe's 'Mesmeric Revelation'; the tale is closer to Ursule Mirouët than to The Blithedale Romance, in its unproblematic acceptance of mystical ideology.

More important for the materialist analysis of mesmerism is the concept, highly privileged in its discourse, of the will. If Mesmer himself emphasised the fluid above psychological factors, Puységur already gave greater stress to the will, in his motto 'Croyez et veillez'.⁷⁹ Later theorists went much further, identifying the will as the medium through which the magnetic fluid operated in the organism. Thus Fiske wrote in 1837: 'my experiments were made through the operation of the will';⁸⁰ while, in the same year, the author of 'The Philosophy of Animal Magnetism' (believed in some quarters to be Poe)⁸¹ claimed that the will was the motor principle of animal magnetism: 'It is the WILL which DARTS FORTH THE FLUID ... The will gives it motion. It controls its action; it regulates its momentum.'⁸² According to the same text, if the trance was successfully induced in the subject, this was thanks to the operation of the mesmerist's will; animal magnetism 'is transmitted the more easily in proportion as the will of the operator is real, strong, and determined ... in order to produce the desired effects, an adept has been obliged to learn to exert his will'.⁸³ If the mesmerist failed to induce a deep trance, the deficiency lay in his will: 'The reason why a magnetizer does not always act effectively, is because his will at the given moment, may be incapable of directing the fluid.'⁸⁴ These concepts of strength and incapacity of will are reproduced in 'Valdemar', where the narrator/mesmerist refers both to 'exertion of the will' (1237) and 'abeyance of the will' (1242); in TRM, similarly, the mesmeric rapport is presented as an interaction of wills: 'the will of the patient succumbed rapidly to that of the physician' (941).

In Balzac's work, too, the concept of the will is placed in relation to mesmeric ideology. In La Peau de Chagrin (1831),⁸⁵ the protagonist, Raphaël de Valentin, writes a book, Théorie de la volonté, in which he

argues that the will is a material substance, capable if properly exploited of totally altering nature: 'la volonté humaine était une force matérielle semblable à la vapeur; ... dans le monde moral, rien ne résistait à cette puissance quand un homme s'habitua à la concentrer, à en manier la somme, à diriger constamment sur les âmes la projection de cette masse fluide; ... cet homme pouvait à son gré tout modifier relativement à l'humanité, même les lois absolues de la nature'.⁸⁶ The lexis of concentration, fluids and material forces points to a clear convergence with mesmeric discourse, as expressed in 'The Philosophy of Animal Magnetism'; indeed, Valentin claims of his treatise: 'Cette oeuvre ... complètera les travaux de Mesmer, ... en ouvrant une nouvelle route à la science humaine.'⁸⁷ In Louis Lambert (1832), the protagonist writes a similar theoretical work, again with Mesmer's influence acknowledged, in which he presents the will as an instrument of domination: 'Ainsi la force entière d'un homme devait avoir la propriété de réagir sur les autres, et de les pénétrer d'une essence étrangère à la leur'.⁸⁸ In both cases, the will is associated with power, whether that of humanity over nature or that of one human subject over another. The references to fluids and penetration suggest a possible sexual dimension to this power, which is made explicit in La Fille aux Yeux d'Or (1835),⁸⁹ where the protagonist, de Marsay, is gifted with a quasi-mesmeric force of will, 'cette ferme volonté que les hommes vraiment forts ont seuls la faculté de concentrer'.⁹⁰ He is able to seduce all the women he desires, through what he himself calls an 'espèce de magnétisme animal';⁹¹ mesmerism and seduction are thus linked through the concept of the will. In Poe's works, the sexual connotations of the mesmerist's will-power recur in TRM, while the imposition of the will on nature is central to 'Valdemar'.

Indeed, the concept of social and natural transformation, implicit in the notion of the will, played a central role in some mesmeric circles. Mesmer himself predicted that the widespread application of his theories would lead to a kind of medical utopia, in which preventive medicine would become the norm: 'L'art de guérir parviendra ainsi à sa dernière perfection.'⁹² During the French Revolution, a brand of "political mesmerism" appeared, whose aim was to organise society according to "natural" principles based on Mesmer's theories; this movement was associated with the followers of the Girondin Jacques Pierre Brissot.⁹³ This tendency died an early death in France, but in the U.S., from the 1830s, many mesmerists became associated with reform movements and Fourierist utopianism.⁹⁴ Thus in Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables (1851), Holgrave, the daguerreotypist, has both 'spent some months in a community of Fourierists', and 'been a public lecturer on Mesmerism'.⁹⁵ In 'The Philosophy of Animal Magnetism', it is claimed that animal magnetism can be exploited to bring on the millennium, or utopia: 'We have the power to will - and if this faculty was properly improved, instructed, managed, and regulated, the human condition would soon undergo a change that would spread happiness and peace through the earth, and before long the millennial light will dawn upon our moral world.'; the author goes on to suggest that mesmerism is one of the 'pioneers' of utopia.⁹⁶ In spite of the obvious idealist and mystical elements in this kind of discourse, the association of mesmerism with "progress" links it with a certain ideology of science; the pioneering mesmerist, engaged in the mastery of nature through animal magnetism, may be seen as a version of the heroic, competitive scientist - the mythical figure examined above in relation to the detective.⁹⁷ The notion of the mesmerist as scientist is, as will be shown, a crucial element in 'Valdemar'.⁹⁸

The sexual dimension of mesmerism, unlike the utopian aspect, was rigorously excluded from its official ideology, but was nonetheless often pointed out, especially by its detractors. It should be noted that, in spite of the recruitment of eminent figures like John Elliotson and the interest of writers like Dickens, mesmerism/hypnosis was never fully accepted by the medical establishment, remaining generally "suspect" until at least the time of Charcot.⁹⁹ This lack of credibility was in part due to the overt and covert sexual associations of mesmerism. Almost all mesmerists were male (although the occasional woman mesmerist was found, such as the Mrs C. Park mentioned above);¹⁰⁰ while most, if not all, patients diagnosed as neurotic, and therefore most mesmeric subjects, were female¹⁰¹ (Poe's three male patients form a notable exception here). The mesmeric stereotype was thus one of a male/female power-relation. Indeed, the mesmeric rapport may be considered as frequently constituting a substitute sexual relationship, gratifying male sadistic desires for power, while offering a means of disguised expression for the female patient's repressed or frustrated desire.

In the clinical situation, the sexual relationship could, of course, easily become more than symbolic. Mesmer himself is not known to have seduced any patient, although false rumours circulated at times.¹⁰² Nonetheless, the report of a Royal Commission of Investigation into the clinic of Mesmer's follower Charles Deslon, in Paris (1784) contained a top-secret appendix on 'the erotic effects of Mesmerism': 'Ailing women ... were in danger of a moral breakdown because of their weakened physical condition, and curious women because their curiosity knew no bounds.'¹⁰³ Elliotson was forced to resign his chair of medicine at London University in 1838, partly owing to allegations of

sexual abuse;¹⁰⁴ in this context, a writer in The Lancet (August 1838) launched an attack on mesmerism as being 'immoral quackery' and a 'heinous enormity against ... female delicacy'.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in an anonymous U.S. work of 1845, Confessions of a Magnetiser, Being an Exposé of Animal Magnetism, by a Practical Magnetiser, the warning was made quite explicit: 'I cannot here refrain from warning young females and even married ladies, not to trust themselves alone with practical magnetisers.'¹⁰⁶ Whether or not actual seduction occurred, the potential, or substitutive, sexual character of the mesmeric bond was widely recognised. Hawthorne, for instance, seems to have seen even female mesmerists as symbolising the possibility of adultery; thus, in a letter (18 October 1841) to Sophia - by then his wife¹⁰⁷ - he urged her to give up her mesmeric treatment with Mrs Park, expressing his fears in a quasi-sexual lexis of 'violation' and 'intrusion':

'I am unwilling that a power should be exercised on thee, of which we know neither the origin nor consequence ... it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it; there would be an intrusion into thy holy of holies - and the intruder would not be thy husband!'¹⁰⁸

The sexual connotations of mesmerism are often visibly present in nineteenth-century literature. Thus, in Robert Browning's 'Mesmerism' (1855), the mesmeric relation is viewed as a means to seduction:

All I believed is true!
 I am able yet
 All I want to get
 By a method as strange as new ...¹⁰⁹

The speaker imagines himself using a mesmerist's concentration of will ('knitting an iron nerve')¹¹⁰ in order to summon the woman he desires

from her house to his, with 'controul' over her (and therefore seduction)¹¹¹ as the ultimate goal. Similarly, in Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870), Jasper's quasi-hypnotic gaze (his 'concentrated' look¹¹² and 'fixed' eye)¹¹³ is perceived as a sexual threat by Rosa Bud, the object of his unwanted attentions: "'He has made a slave of me with his looks.... When I play, he never moves his eyes from my hands. When I sing, he never moves his eyes from my lips. When he corrects me, ... he himself is in the sounds, whispering that he pursues me as a lover'"¹¹⁴

The sexual factor is also prominent in the mesmeric fictions of Balzac and Hawthorne. In Balzac's work, the quasi-mesmeric sexual attractiveness of de Marsay (La Fille aux Yeux d'Or; 1835) has already been noted;¹¹⁵ in Splendeur et Misères des Courtisanes (1847), mesmerism is invoked in the context of female desire. In Balzac's novel, Léontine de Sérizy breaks an iron bar in the gateway of the prison where her lover, Lucien de Rubempré, has hanged himself,¹¹⁶ under shock at his death and the pressure of her 'terrible passion' for him;¹¹⁷ the prison doctor, Lebrun, compares this episode to a mesmeric experiment he has recently taken part in. Dr Bouvard, a follower of Mesmer, persuaded him to have his hand grasped by the hand of a mesmerised woman; her grip proved to be like that of a vice ('cette main changée en un appareil de torture'),¹¹⁸ leaving him with a scar resembling a burn. In Lebrun's analysis, both cases show a woman displaying unusual physical strength, a 'terrible pouvoir physique',¹¹⁹ under the influence of 'passion' and mesmerism respectively. The convergence of the two episodes suggests that the female power released under mesmerism is ultimately or potentially sexual; the trance can facilitate the emergence of female desire. Lebrun further links 'passion' to mesmerism by presenting it as an instance of the will in

action: 'la passion, qui est la volonté ramassée sur un point et arrivée à des quantités de force animale incalculables';¹²⁰ indeed, Léontine's public expression of forbidden desire under extreme shock is comparable to the lifting of repression under hypnosis in, for instance, "Anna O."¹²¹

In Hawthorne's fiction, the role of the mesmeric bond in The Blithedale Romance (1852) has already been referred to;¹²² Westervelt's hold over Priscilla, his allegedly clairvoyant subject, is quite visibly the product of a quasi-sexual power-relation. The mesmerist does not appear actually to have seduced his protégée (the narrator believes she has 'kept ... her virgin reserve and sanctity of soul, throughout it all');¹²³ but it is clearly a master-slave relationship, with Westervelt playing a sadistic, dominating role. Priscilla declares: "'I never have any free-will'",¹²⁴ and a member of the audience sees the mesmeric rapport as an instance of 'the miraculous power of one human being over the will and passions of another'.¹²⁵ The mesmerist's victim is only able to escape his hold under the influence of Hollingsworth, the man she finally marries. The latter intervenes during one of the séances, and Priscilla runs off the stage to join him: 'the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto environed her'.¹²⁶ The quasi-sexual mesmeric bond can only be broken by the greater force of a consciously assumed desire.¹²⁷

In The House of the Seven Gables (1851), mesmerism is similarly associated with erotic control. The text constructs two mesmeric or quasi-mesmeric power-relations: that between Holgrave and Phoebe in the main narrative, and that between Matthew Maule and Alice in the

inset tale, 'Alice Pyncheon'. The two relations are intimately linked, since it is Holgrave who narrates (reads aloud) the inset tale to Phoebe. Maule, an artisan suspected of witchcraft in the 1720s, is reinterpreted for nineteenth-century readers as 'the mesmerizing carpenter';¹²⁸ Holgrave, a descendant of Maule, has inherited his ancestor's mesmeric powers. In the 'Alice Pyncheon' episode, Maule offers to put a young woman into a trance, in which she can receive messages from the spirit world; her father agrees in the hope of receiving certain information about a missing document through the medium of his daughter. In the 'experiment',¹²⁹ Alice is made to "see" a whole series of spirits, but the desired knowledge is not forthcoming; as in The Blithedale Romance,¹³⁰ the "visions" are obviously induced hallucinations, since Maule knows all along where the document is, and is therefore himself controlling the contents of Alice's perceptions, to make sure that they exclude that information. However, after the experiment, he retains a psychological hold over Alice, controlling her actions at a distance: 'A power that she little dreamed of had laid its grasp upon her maiden soul. A will, most unlike her own, constrained her to do its grotesque and fantastic bidding.... she was Maule's slave ... her spirit passed from beneath her own control, and bowed itself to Maule'.¹³¹ The quasi-sexual character of this bond is evident from the fact that Alice thenceforth becomes unmarriageable. A similar latent erotic bond is part-forged by Holgrave as he reads the story to Phoebe (who is herself a descendant of Alice). During the reading, he begins to mesmerise her, putting her into what is now called light hypnosis: 'a certain remarkable drowsiness ... had been flung over the senses of his auditors.... With the lids drooping over her eyes ... she leaned slightly towards him, and seemed almost to regulate her breath by

his. Holgrave ... recognized an incipient stage of that curious psychological condition, which ... he possessed more than an ordinary faculty of producing.'¹³² However, he refrains from completing the process and consolidating the mesmeric bond, and wakes her. The narrator praises Holgrave for not establishing a power-relation, not completing 'his mastery over Phoebe's yet free and virgin spirit';¹³³ however, since the two eventually get married, the text is here being disingenuous, as in all probability the mesmeric episode helps to establish the erotic relation between them.¹³⁴ It may be concluded that in the two Hawthorne novels in question, mesmerism appears, not in its therapeutic aspect, but in the context of fraudulent occultism and manipulative, quasi-erotic power-relations.

From all the above material, clinical, theoretical and literary, it may be concluded that mesmerism appears in nineteenth-century writing as, above all, and irrespective of the scientific truth of the doctrines, a source of metaphors - principally for power. The lexis and imagery of animal magnetism provided means of signifying the expansion of human control over nature, that process of "mastery" unleashed by industrial and scientific development; while the unequal power-relation between mesmerist and mesmerised symbolised exploitative power-relations in general, especially in the sexual area. - It is in this context of mesmerism and power that Poe's three tales will now be analysed.

ii. 'Mesmeric Revelation': Occultism

As was shown in Chapter 2,¹³⁵ Poe's writing is marked by the insistent signification of marginal or borderline psychological states, and his

fictional use of mesmerism should be viewed in this light; indeed, the mesmeric trance occurs in conjunction with other marginal conditions - with the drug-state in TRM, and, more dramatically, with the moment of death in both MR and 'Valdemar'. Outside the tales, his interest in mesmerism is demonstrated in his review (Broadway Journal, 5 April 1845) of William Newnham's Human Magnetism (H XII, 121-23); here, Poe refers to Newnham's book as 'a work of vast importance and high merit', (121) while also praising Chauncey Hare Townshend's Facts in Mesmerism (1840) as 'one of the most truly profound and philosophical works of the day' (123), and goes on to claim that a knowledge of mesmerism is essential to 'all who pretend to keep pace with modern philosophy' (ibid.).¹³⁶ Poe's association of animal magnetism with the development of 'philosophy' points to its appropriation in the tales in the name of "progress" (whether conceived in an occultist or a scientific sense), and therefore in reinforcement of triumphant bourgeois subjectivity; at the same time, however, the borderline character of the trance suggests that it may also become a privileged locus for the deconstitution of the "unified" subject.

'Mesmeric Revelation' (1844) is the least interesting of the three tales to the modern reader, since, like Ursule Mirouët,¹³⁷ it focusses on the occultist tendency within mesmerism; a dying medium explains the nature of the cosmos. Its status, however, is complicated by its hoaxical dimension; the medium's 'revelations' are presented with an appearance of verisimilitude, as a recent occurrence ('on the night of Wednesday, the fifteenth instant' - 1030). The tale has the appearance of an essay framed by a narrative, and was taken straight, as an authentic addition to the corpus of mesmeric knowledge, by some readers at the time; Poe wrote in 'Marginalia' (1845) (H XVI, 71):

'The Swedenborgians inform me that they have discovered all that I said in a magazine article, entitled "Mesmeric Revelation", to be absolutely true'. Other readers were deceived,¹³⁸ and the tale was reprinted as 'authentic' in the American Phrenological Journal for September 1845.¹³⁹ All this leads G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973) to conclude that the tale was written as a burlesque on mesmerism, a 'parody of occult metaphysics';¹⁴⁰ this is certainly possible, but the total lack of humour in the text gives reason for doubting whether the parody is successful. Besides, what is most important in the text, the summary of mesmeric theory in the first paragraph, reads not as a parody, but as a reasoned account of existing doctrine.

The narrator, P., has 'long been in the habit of mesmerizing' the patient, Vankirk (1030); the process was initiated for therapeutic reasons (alleviation of Vankirk's 'phthisis' (ibid.)), but therapy recedes into the background as, on the night of the narrative, the patient declares: "'I sent for you to-night, ... not so much to administer to my bodily ailment; as to satisfy me concerning certain psychal impressions'" (1031). These 'impressions' take the form of a conviction of the soul's immortality; P. agrees to mesmerise Vankirk in the hope of clarifying the matter to the satisfaction of both: 'I consented of course to make this experiment.' (1032). The role of the mesmerist is here minimal; he simply puts the subject into the trance, and asks questions so as to elicit the occult information. It is possible, of course, that P. himself has, in a previous session, put the ideas into Vankirk's head, and that he is eliciting them via posthypnotic suggestion; but, in contrast to TRM,¹⁴¹ the text does not provide the detailed history of the doctor-patient relation that would justify this contention.

As suggested above, the first paragraph of MR (1029-30) is of some importance, containing propositions that illuminate the two other tales. The mesmeric trance is presented as an objective reality: 'Whatever doubt may still envelop the rationale of mesmerism, its startling facts are now almost universally admitted.' It is seen as a borderline state, between life and death: 'an abnormal condition, of which the phenomena resemble very closely those of death'. The mesmeric rapport is emphasised: 'his (the patient's) sympathies with the person so impressing him are profound'; and it is seen as being brought about through the will: 'man, by mere exercise of will, can so impress his fellow ...'. The rapport, in fact, is viewed as a relation of dominance and submission; the verb 'impress' and its derivatives, occurring altogether four times in the paragraph, imply the forcible imposition of one will on another. This power-relation is the product of a cumulative process: 'his susceptibility to the impression increases with its frequency'. The 'laws of mesmerism' (1030), as here summarised, may be applied to both 'Valdemar', where the rapport permits the subject's consent to the experiment, and TRM, where an unequal power-relation is constituted through repeated mesmeric sessions.¹⁴²

The mystical 'revelations' themselves (which justify immortality by claiming that spirit is simply 'unparticled matter' (1033-36)) tend to reinforce the notion of the autonomous subject, since they would prolong its individual existence beyond death. The 'unorganized body' (without organs) assumed by the subject after death is conceived in terms of an undivided contradiction-free "unity": 'in the ultimate, unorganized life, ... the whole body vibrates, setting in motion the unparticled matter which permeates it' (1038). On the other hand, the

text is traversed by the insistent pressure of death, signified in terms which suggest finality rather than afterlife. The whole narrative moves towards Vankirk's death. The mesmeric trance is said to resemble death (1030); Vankirk declares: "I must die." (1032); and in the last paragraph, he is discovered to be dead: 'his corpse had all the stern rigidity of stone. His brow was of the coldness of ice.' (1040). P. imagines this may prove that Vankirk has actually been speaking from beyond the grave, 'addressing me from out the region of the shadows' (ibid.); but that speculation may only prove his own credulity. The textual imagery of stone and ice suggests death as a cold absence, not a full presence; the notion of triumphant linear progress, implicit in the self-confident mysticism of Vankirk's discourse (the "full" subject believes it can totally understand the universe), is undercut by a harsh reminder of the material limits to human consciousness. This subversive function of death will recur in 'Valdemar'.¹⁴³

iii. 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar': The Limits of Science

'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845) bears certain resemblances to MR; in both tales, a male narrator-cum-mesmerist works on another man who is dying of tuberculosis (Valdemar's 'phthisis' (1234) replicates Vankirk's illness), and both end with the patient's death. The hoaxical element recurs in 'Valdemar', even more prominently; as the title, with its "scientific", "objective" appearance, suggests, the text is constructed so as to give the impression of a "real" medical record. It was reprinted as authentic by, for instance, the London Popular Record of Modern Science (10 January 1846), under the title 'Mesmerism "In Articulo Mortis", an Astounding and Horrifying Narrative Shewing the extraordinary power of Mesmerism in arresting the Progress of Death';¹⁴⁴ and Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote to

Poe (April 1846): 'there is a tale of yours ... throwing us all into - dreadful doubts as to whether it can be true'.¹⁴⁵ Where 'Valdemar' differs signally from MR, however, is in the prominence it gives to the figure of the mesmerist. The narrator enters as an exemplary instance of the pioneering scientist, engaged in pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge and extending human control over nature; his aim is no less than to bring death under human domination. This ideological project is convergent with the cultural myth of linear, uninterrupted progress; it is, however, subverted in the letter of the text by the destructive return of death itself, in such a form as violently to shatter the bourgeois dream of limitless expansion. These two crucial dimensions of the text - the myth of science, and the disturbing insistence of death - are explicated in Roland Barthes' analysis of the tale, 'Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe' (1973),¹⁴⁶ on which the present discussion draws.

Like MR, 'Valdemar' is constructed around a mesmeric experiment; the narrator states that the patient's 'temperament ... rendered him a good subject for mesmeric experiment', and that he had previously 'yielded his person freely to my experiments' (1234). The experiment in question is that of mesmerising a subject in the moment of dying, with the aim of deferring (or even abolishing?) death:

... it occurred to me, quite suddenly, that in the series of experiments made hitherto, there had been a very remarkable and most unaccountable omission: - no person had as yet been mesmerized in articulo mortis. It remained to be seen, first, whether, in such condition, there existed in the patient any susceptibility to the magnetic influence; secondly, whether, if any existed, it was impaired or increased by the condition; thirdly, to what extent, or for how long a period, the encroachments of Death might be arrested by the process. There were other points to be ascertained, but these most excited my curiosity - the last in especial, from the immensely important character of its consequences. (1233)

The narrator constitutes himself as pioneering, competitive scientist, aiming to extend the corpus of mesmeric knowledge; on the level of generic strategy, 'Valdemar' is an instance of science fiction as extrapolation - the fictional extension of real, existing technical developments. In the words of Barthes, the text presents the scientifically curious reader with 'l'expérience qui n'a pas été encore faite - et donc, pour tout savant soucieux de recherche, qui est à faire'.¹⁴⁷ Mesmerism has already been employed to cure diseases and postpone death; now it will be used to (perhaps) abolish death.

Poe's tale may be inserted into a tradition of early science-fiction texts concerned with the "mastery of nature". Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), extrapolating from actual developments of the period, hypothesises the artificial creation of life by means of electricity; the text draws on existing theories of electricity as the principle of life, and on experiments in which the galvanic battery was applied to the legs of dead frogs, provoking convulsions, in order to give credibility to Frankenstein's animation of the monster's body via galvanism ('on the working of some powerful engine', he communicates a 'spark of life' to the inert mass of dead flesh).¹⁴⁸ Frankenstein even speculates on the possibility of resurrecting the dead by the same means: 'if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time ... renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption'.¹⁴⁹ Where Frankenstein raises the possibility of creating or re-creating life by artificial means, 'Valdemar' is based on the notion of the artificial prolongation of life.

Mesmeric ideology, as shown above, also promoted the notion of the transformation of (human and non-human) nature; Mesmer's own belief in a utopia of preventive medicine,¹⁵⁰ and Valentin's notion in La Peau de Chagrin (1831) that the will can modify 'les lois absolues de la nature'¹⁵¹ point in the same direction as the experiment in 'Valdemar'. In Poe's tale, the project of the deferment (or abolition) of death implies a belief in the physical "improvement" of humanity via animal magnetism - a notion paralleled in The House of the Seven Gables (1851), where Clifford Pyncheon, in the hymn to "progress" that makes up his railroad speech, declares: "'Mesmerism, now! Will that effect nothing, think you, towards purging away the grossness out of human life?'"¹⁵² The scientific project in 'Valdemar' is thus conceived under the sign of 'progress'.

The experiment is, in fact, entirely scientific in orientation; the therapeutic dimension has become irrelevant, since Valdemar knows his illness is terminal ('It was his custom ... to speak calmly of his approaching dissolution' - 1234), and occultism is specifically excluded: 'in regard to clairvoyance, I could accomplish with him nothing to be relied upon' (ibid.). Nor is there any question of the mesmerist exploiting his patient, as happens in TRM;¹⁵³ Valdemar accepts the narrator's dominance ('yielded his person freely' (ibid.)), but the power-relation is not abused, perhaps owing to a lack of competence on the mesmerist's part: 'His will was at no period positively, or thoroughly, under my control' (ibid.). Indeed, the text goes out of its way to stress the ethical legitimacy of the experiment; Valdemar is seen as freely and consciously giving his consent. To the narrator's question 'whether he ... was entirely willing that I should make the experiment of mesmerizing him in his then condition', the patient answers

unequivocally: "'Yes, I wish to be mesmerized'" (1236). As Barthes comments, the narrative is founded 'à la fois sur les préceptes de l'expérimentation et sur les principes de la déontologie médicale';¹⁵⁴ the experiment is both technically and ethically "correct".

Once assured of Valdemar's consent, the narrator begins to mesmerise him ('I commenced the passes' - 1236), bringing the will into action, as prime agency of the magnetic fluid ('with the fullest exertion of the will' - 1237).¹⁵⁵ The technique used is that of direct manual contact, through movements referred to as 'passes' or 'manipulations' (1237).¹⁵⁶ This term merits attention, given its potential ambiguity. According to the O.E.D., the original meaning of 'manipulation' was 'the method of digging silver ore'; this was the only sense recognised by English dictionaries up to 1818. For the sense: 'the handling of objects for a particular purpose ... in Surgery, the manual examination of a part of the body', the first example given is from 1826; while the figurative sense: 'the act of operating upon or managing persons or things with dexterity; esp. with disparaging implication, unfair management or treatment' is first recorded in 1828, and again in 1843. 'Manipulate' first appears, as a back-formation from 'manipulation', in 1827 in the context of chemistry, and in 1831 (in Carlyle) in the non-technical sense of 'to handle, esp. with dexterity; to manage, work or treat by manual ... means'; 'manipulative' is found from 1836.¹⁵⁷ It would seem, then, that in Poe's lifetime 'manipulation' meant primarily the application of manual techniques; but the modern sense of exploitation, or 'unfair management', was already in existence, if unusual. In the context of 'Valdemar', it should, then, be legitimate to find a double sense in the narrator's 'manipulations'. On the one

hand, he is applying standard mesmeric procedures; on the other, he is manipulating - trying to control and transform - if not Valdemar himself (since his consent is beyond doubt), then certainly physical nature and the place of humanity within it (at the same time, a third sense may be discerned - Poe the hoaxer is manipulating and fooling the naïve reader).¹⁵⁸

The experiment succeeds, up to a point; after his clinical death, Valdemar is kept in the mesmeric trance, in a state of suspended animation, for 'nearly seven months' (1241). The antithesis between life and death appears to be definitively transgressed; in Barthes' terms, life and death, two concepts which are normally found 'en opposition paradigmatique', are here forced into mutual encroachment ('empiètement').¹⁵⁹ Valdemar's "deadness" is emphasised by the detailed account of the dying process, and by his showing, as Barthes points out, all the clinically recognised signs of death accepted at that time ('eyes rolled ... open', 'swollen and blackened tongue' (1239), 'distended and motionless jaws' (1240), etc.).¹⁶⁰ Yet his "aliveness" is signified by the persistence of language, by the strange voice that issues from that blackened tongue. A conceptual scandal is thus produced; Valdemar is simultaneously alive and dead.

The narrator's project seems to have been realised, at least in part: 'It was evident that, so far, death (or what is usually termed death) had been arrested by the mesmeric process.' (1241) However, the expansive, affirmative character of the experiment is called in question by its production of fear. The arresting of Valdemar's death, far from being a reassuring spectacle, has a destructive and disorienting effect on the onlookers; the main element of fear is

located in the sleep-waker's language, for his discourse is itself a categorial scandal. His voice, perfectly "normal" before the moment of death, is resurrected in the life-in-death state as its own uncanny double; here as in 'Usher' and 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', the double voice undermines the speaker's coherence as subject.¹⁶¹

Valdemar's new voice is perceived as alien and terrifying: 'a voice - such as it would be madness in me to attempt describing.... it impressed me ... as gelatinous or glutinous matters impress the sense of touch' (1240). As Barthes points out, the idea of a 'glutinous' voice contradicts the physiological character of speech, since 'le discontinu est fondateur de langage';¹⁶² an utterance which is not discontinuous cannot logically exist, since the signifying chain is made up of separate elements, and Valdemar thus speaks a 'langage qui est contraire à la structure même du langage',¹⁶³ an impossible anti-language.

If Valdemar's voice is disorienting, the content of his utterance is even more so. To the narrator's question 'if he still slept', he replies: "'Yes; - no; - I have been sleeping - and now - now - I am dead.'" (1240). His answer spreads terror among the onlookers: 'No person present even affected to deny, or attempted to repress, the unutterable, shuddering horror which these few words, thus uttered, were so well calculated to convey. Mr L-I ... swooned. The nurses immediately left the chamber, and could not be induced to return.' (ibid.). Valdemar's "I am dead" is clearly a semantic scandal, since in the literal (rather than metaphoric) sense, it is quite simply an impossible message; as Barthes points out, it is a case of the disturbing 'retournement de la métaphore en lettre'.¹⁶⁴ Where in 'Tarr and Fether', in the "Hold your tongues" sequence, the return to the literal sense occurred in the disturbing context of madness, here it is in the

even darker presence of death.¹⁶⁵ The dead-alive speaker utters the unutterable; he signifies his own non-existence, thus abolishing himself and invalidating his own message. A message without an addresser clearly lacks one of the essential conditions for its own existence; it becomes, in Barthes' words, 'la parole impossible en tant que parole.'¹⁶⁶ Here as in 'The Imp of the Perverse', language takes on a destructive function, undermining rather than confirming the subject;¹⁶⁷ the onlookers are threatened in their subjective coherence - the student L-1 loses consciousness, while the rest are reduced to silence: 'we busied ourselves, silently - without the utterance of a word - in endeavors to revive Mr. L-1' (1241). The scandal of Valdemar's 'utterance' leads to the eclipse of language.

It is against this backdrop of fear that, after seven months, the narrator decides to de-mesmerise his patient - presumably in the hope of bringing him back from that transitional state into "normal" life, and thus confirming his own project of dominion over death: 'we finally resolved to make the experiment of awakening, or attempting to awaken him' (1241-42). After a partial de-mesmerisation, the will is invoked, this time unsuccessfully: 'I made an endeavor to re-compose the patient; but, failing in this through total abeyance of the will, I retraced my steps' (1242); the narrator oscillates between the ideas of waking Valdemar and putting him back into the trance, and, the latter attempt failing, finally strives to wake him definitively. He tries to keep up the role of heroic, infallible scientist; the notion of the unblemished, "full" subject is implicit in his lexis ('re-compose'; 'I soon fancied that my success would be complete' (ibid.)). The mesmerist believes that he can 're-compose' Valdemar - that is, put him back into the tranquil, "composed" state of the trance, but also

restore the coherence of his patient as organised, "composed" subject; similarly, his own "complete" success in the enterprise would reaffirm his self-image as "complete", equilibrated subject. The final act of awakening is thus aimed at consolidating both the myth of scientific progress and the illusory unity of the subject.

However, what actually happens is the reverse:

...his whole frame at once - within the space of a single minute, more even less, shrunk - crumbled - absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome - of detestable putridity. (1243)

Valdemar's body, the physical image of his coherence as subject, is dissolved into the undifferentiation of a 'liquid mass'; the text here takes to the letter the dead metaphor of 'dissolution', which has twice occurred earlier ('his approaching dissolution', 1234; 'his speedy dissolution', 1241). The illusory unity of his 'whole frame', laboriously maintained for seven months, is dissolved in 'a single minute'. As in 'The Man that was Used Up',¹⁶⁸ the disintegration of the body enters to symbolise the parallel disintegration of the unitary subject; as in the collapse of the house in 'Usher', the imagery of crumbling and rotting points to the violent shattering of that cultural myth.¹⁶⁹ The coherence of the narrator (and reader) as subject has already been undermined by Valdemar's discourse, with its subversion of language and its signification of death; it is now definitively ruptured, through a terrifying image of instant decomposition.

In fact, far from managing to 're-compose' Valdemar (1242), the narrator has decomposed him!¹⁷⁰ The ideological project of consolidation of the "full" subject thus issues in the reverse process, under the insistence of death. It may be interesting to compare a similar use of

'decompose' and 'recompose' - but with the opposite ideological effect - in Robert Browning's 'Epilogue' to Dramatis Personae (1864);¹⁷¹ the intertextual parallel may be no accident, given the Brownings' interest in mesmerism and in 'Valdemar'.¹⁷² The poem marks a desperate, last-ditch attempt to maintain Christian orthodoxy against the mid-century rationalism represented by Ernest Renan; its last stanza reads:

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.¹⁷³

Where the decomposition of Valdemar undermines the coherence of the subject, the recomposition of the divine face in Browning's poem tends to re-centre the subject, threatened by the objective collapse of ideological certainties.

No such reassurance, however, is forthcoming from Poe's tale; both the myth of the unitary subject and the ideology of "progress" are disturbingly called in question. As far as "progress" is concerned, the concept is subverted in 'Valdemar' from various directions. On the level of intention, the tale's hoaxical dimension (as noted above) was quite consciously assumed by Poe; he wrote to George W. Eveleth (11 March 1847): "'The Valdemar Case' was a hoax, of course." (O II, 349). This suggests that the carefully maintained (and often deceptive) air of verisimilitude across the tale may have been contrived to fool the naïve reader and mock his/her belief in "progress"; although, on the other hand, here as in Poe's other "scientific" tales,¹⁷⁴ the sheer density of the medical and mesmeric detail points to the seductive appeal of that same notion. On the textual level, the narrator's delusion of manipulating nature through the will is shattered by the disturbing irruption of death, as ultimate symbol of the material limits to human power; as Barthes suggests,

the tale's uncanny force derives from its lifting of the cultural taboo on death, the primordial repressed ('la Mort, comme refoulé primordial'):¹⁷⁵ 'il y a eu un tabou (qui va être levé, dans la plus profonde horreur)'.¹⁷⁶ The case of M. Valdemar serves to expose the limits of both the ideology of the "mastery of nature", and the parallel myth of the heroic scientist.

iv. 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains': Mesmerism and Power

'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844) is, like 'Valdemar', an instance of mesmeric science fiction, containing an extraordinarily complex and detailed hallucination induced from a distance; unlike the latter tale, however, it concentrates on the mesmerist-mesmerised relation, presented as visibly manipulative and sadistic. Mesmerism here, as in The House of the Seven Gables or The Blithedale Romance, permits the constitution of an unequal power-relation that is ultimately erotic in character. The figure of the mesmerist is in this tale presented from the outside, since the narrator is an onlooker, not, as in the other tales, the mesmerist himself. As noted above,¹⁷⁷ Poe's tales are unusual in the context of mesmerism, since in all three both operator and patient are male. The possible sexual implications of this situation remain untapped in the two earlier tales (although in 'Valdemar' the narrator clearly plays a dominating role, as the scientist engaged in the penetration of natural mysteries, and a possible sexual dimension is implied in Valdemar's docility: 'he had always yielded his person freely to my experiments' (1234)).¹⁷⁸ In TRM, however, there is, as will be shown, a visible homosexual undercurrent.

The narrative is constructed around the doctor-patient relation between the elderly physician and mesmerist, Dr Templeton ('a convert ... to the doctrines of Mesmer' - 941) and his client Bedloe. The latter

suffers, not this time from phthisis, but from neuralgia (940-41).

According to the 1974 Encyclopaedia Britannica, this disease takes the form of 'cyclic attacks of acute pain in the distribution of a peripheral sensory nerve'.¹⁷⁹ Its aetiology remains as obscure today as in 1844;

'cause is unknown, and pathological change in nerve tissue cannot be found'.¹⁸⁰

It has been established that, whatever the cause of neuralgia, it is a disturbance of function, not of structure; the hypothesis has been advanced that in at least some cases it may be a neurotic illness of psychosomatic origin: 'there are no significant lesions observable in the nerves ... it is possible that the pain in some of the sufferers is a neurotic manifestation (conversion hysteria)'.¹⁸¹ Bedloe's evident nervous temperament - 'sensitive, excitable, enthusiastic' (942) - makes it legitimate to read his neuralgic pains as neurotic symptoms. At all events, his illness is qualitatively different from Vankirk's and Valdemar's phthisis; it is not a terminal organic disease, but a functional disturbance. Valdemar's temperament is also described as 'markedly nervous' (1234), but only in the case of Bedloe does this constitutional element play a determining role in the narrative. Neuralgia was one of the nervous illnesses commonly treated by mesmerism, and in this respect Templeton's therapy is orthodox.¹⁸²

The physician's goal in this tale, however, is not purely therapeutic; as in the other tales, "experiment" is also involved.¹⁸³ The text describes the doctor-patient relation in some detail, laying stress on the mesmeric rapport:

It was altogether by means of magnetic remedies that he had succeeded in alleviating the acute pains of his patient; and this success had very naturally inspired the latter with a certain degree of confidence in the opinions from which the remedies had been educed. The Doctor, however, like all enthusiasts, had struggled hard to make a thorough convert of his pupil, and finally

so far gained his point as to induce the sufferer to submit to numerous experiments. By a frequent repetition of these, a result had arisen, which of late days has become so common as to attract little or no attention, but which, at the period of which I write, had very rarely been known in America. I mean to say, that between Doctor Templeton and Bedloe there had grown up, little by little, a very distinct and strongly marked rapport, or magnetic relation. I am not prepared, however, to assert that this rapport extended beyond the limits of the simple sleep-producing power; but this power itself had attained great intensity. (941)

The rapport between doctor and patient, then, has been reinforced by Templeton's 'experiments'; the central episode of the narrative, Bedloe's hallucination in the mountains, is an instance of the doctor's experimentation at work.

The text presents the reader with two enigmas, in the form of Bedloe's 'vision' (949), or hallucination (942-48), and his subsequent death. On a walk in the Ragged Mountains, in Virginia, Bedloe believes he is transported to an Indian city, where he takes part in the defence of the town by a group of white soldiers against an insurrection of the colonised; he is struck by a poisoned arrow, upon which he "experiences" his own death, before waking up to find himself once more in Virginia. Templeton explains that Bedloe has been re-living, in great detail, the last hours in the life of a British soldier and friend of his, Oldeb, with whom the doctor had taken part, in 1780, in the defence of Benares against the revolt of the Rajah, Cheyte Sing (Chait Singh).¹⁸⁴ A week later, Bedloe's death, from a poisonous leech applied in error by Templeton, is reported in the local paper, with the name misspelt 'Bedlo'.

This bizarre narrative has been subjected to both "étrange" and "merveilleux" readings. French readers may have been predisposed towards the "merveilleux" reading by Baudelaire's highly tendentious choice of title for his translation, 'Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe' (1852;

Histoires extraordinaires, 1856),¹⁸⁵ which implies that Bedloe's 'vision' is to be read as a sequence of authentic 'memories' of his previous self. Doris V. Falk ('Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism', 1969) argues that animal magnetism, conceived in Mesmer's original terms as a physical fluid, kept Oldeb artificially alive, prolonging his existence as 'Bedloe';¹⁸⁶ on this reading, Oldeb and Bedloe are literally the same person, and the 'vision' consists of actual memories. More naïve "merveilleux" readings in terms of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, are also found, as in Mabbott's discussion (1978);¹⁸⁷ on this kind of reading, Oldeb's soul would have been reincarnated after his death in Bedloe's body, in much the same way as, on the supernaturalist reading, Ligeia's spirit takes over Rowena's body.¹⁸⁸ In contrast, an "étrange" reading is offered by S. E. Lind ('Poe and Mesmerism', 1947), who argues that the 'vision' is an induced hallucination, 'a mesmeric trance transmitted from Templeton's mind',¹⁸⁹ and concludes: 'There is no metempsychotic basis in this tale';¹⁹⁰ the tale is thus seen as centring on the mesmeric rapport. G. R. Thompson (Poe's Fiction, 1973), following Lind, also reads the 'vision' in terms of 'mesmeric transference'.¹⁹¹ The second enigma, Bedloe's death, has also been given various interpretations, which will be examined below.¹⁹²

The relation between Bedloe and Templeton is actually only part of a triangular situation (Templeton-Oldeb-Bedloe); Templeton stands in an affective relation to both the dead Oldeb and the living Bedloe, while Bedloe doubles Oldeb, appearing to be physically identical to him (948-49). The double theme in this text merits close attention; as shown in Chapter 2, doubling and splitting of the subject was an attested phenomenon in the trance,¹⁹³ and here Bedloe "becomes" a second self, Oldeb, under the mesmeric influence. The two selves do not actually meet, as

in 'William Wilson', but there is a relation of substitution (Bedloe substitutes Oldeb in Templeton's affections; Oldeb substitutes Bedloe in the trance). Templeton shows his patient a 'water-colour drawing', which is the 'likeness' of Oldeb, but appears to be a portrait of Bedloe's 'own very remarkable features', and explains that his own interest in him was due to 'the miraculous similarity which existed between yourself and the painting' (948-49). The similarity also operates on the level of the signifier, since 'Oldeb' is an anagram of 'Bedlo' (the truncated form of 'Bedloe' which appears in the newspaper): "'Bedlo, without the e, what is it but Oldeb conversed?" (950).

Reference may be made here to another tale involving uncanny doubling, Heinrich von Kleist's 'The Foundling' (1811),¹⁹⁴ which also introduces an anagram. In this tale, Piachi, a middle-aged Roman, adopts a destitute orphan child, Nicolo. After some years, Nicolo becomes intrigued by an enigma concerning his benefactor's wife, Elvira; he discovers that every night she worships the picture of a young nobleman, Colino. Before her marriage, Colino had saved her life in a fire, and had eventually died from the injuries incurred. Not only are the two names anagrams of each other, but Nicolo resembles Colino physically; a child confronted with the painting declares: "'Signor Nicolo! but that's a picture of you!"¹⁹⁵ Taking advantage of this 'singular resemblance',¹⁹⁶ Nicolo one night, believing Piachi to be absent, tries to seduce Elvira by impersonating Colino in her room. Elvira, believing the picture has come to life, faints; Piachi arrives and his wife having died of shock - soon afterwards kills Nicolo.

Poe is not known to have read Kleist, but the two tales exhibit important structural parallels; in both, the anagram, or graphic distortion, is an uncanny signifier of the distorted return of repressed desire. Bedlo(e)

is to Oldeb as Nicolo to Colino; the reader's attention is drawn to the resemblance by the use of unusual names. 'Bedloe' is a possible surname (various historical Bedloes are cited by Mabbott),¹⁹⁷ but 'Oldeb' has every appearance of a made-up name; in the Kleist tale, 'Nicolo' is itself probably a (deliberate?) misspelling, since the normal forms are 'Nicola' and 'Niccolò', while the name 'Colino' is, as the text itself points out, 'a rather unusual one in Italy'.¹⁹⁸ In both cases, the strangeness of the names suggests a parallel strangeness in the symbolic role of the pairs of doubles. Besides, in the Kleist text as in TRM, the alter ego is the living character's dead predecessor, recognised through a portrait, and has preceded him in a close relation to a third person (Elvira, Templeton). The strangeness at the heart of the narrative is, a matter of, respectively, female heterosexual desire and male homosexuality.

In 'The Foundling', Elvira's marriage is clearly sexually empty. The couple sleep in separate rooms ('Piachi ... went to her room to see how she was'),¹⁹⁹ and the reader is told that Elvira 'had no prospects of bearing her elderly husband any ... children'.²⁰⁰ Either she is infertile, or Piachi has become physically or psychically impotent. Elvira's libido has remained fixated on the conveniently dead Colino, her rescuer; after his death, her desire is doubly frustrated, by the absence of the original sexual object and the impossibility of consummation within marriage. A 'walking model of womanly virtue',²⁰¹ Elvira takes the path of sublimation, worshipping the image of her dead lover in 'swooning ecstasy', whispering his name 'in the very accents of passionate love'.²⁰²

The physical doubling may be considered to signify metaphorically

Nicolo's potential status as love-object for Elvira. If Nicolo is the double of Colino, and if Elvira was attracted to Colino, then Elvira should logically also be attracted to Nicolo. It follows that one function of the doubling is to signify an unconscious attraction to Nicolo on Elvira's part. However, in the 'faithful, virtuous' wife,²⁰³ the possibility of sexual self-assertion remains so deeply repressed that towards a living person her affectivity can only manifest itself in distorted and reversed form, i.e. as fear and hostility. Hence when Elvira first notices the resemblance, she immediately faints, 'as if stricken by some unseen horror', and is reduced to temporary aphasia: 'Elvira, her tongue numbed by horror, could not speak';²⁰⁴ at the final crisis, after again fainting, she 'gazed with horror at her assailant'.²⁰⁵ The repeated emphasis on 'horror', and the aphasia, signify that the sexual opportunity/threat posed by Nicolo is too disturbing to be openly spoken. Elvira's organism is simply unable to sustain the prospect of a real, extramarital sexual encounter; the choice is sublimation or death.

In Kleist's tale, the anagrammatic double signifies the destructive return of repressed sexuality; Elvira's own desire confronts her, in Nicolo, in an alien, terrifying form. That destructiveness may be seen as the result of the intense degree of oppression and repression imposed on women, whether by the Italian society in which the tale is set, or the Prussian society within which it was written; Elvira is unable to see a potentially gratifying sexual encounter as anything but an unbearable threat. A comparable process of repression and distortion of desire is at work in TRM - but in the context of male homosexuality.

Latent homosexual elements have been located by critics elsewhere in Poe's

work. Marie Bonaparte (Edgar Poe, 1933) reads Eureka, with its climactic reunion of the universe with the divine Father, as a 'cosmic, homosexual phantasy'.²⁰⁶ Leslie Fiedler (Love and Death in the American Novel, 1960) finds a thinly disguised homoerotic current in Pym, in the Pym-Peters relationship; Peters, he argues, protects Pym 'with almost maternal tenderness ... and like a lover, holds him safe and warm'.²⁰⁷ TRM, another virtually womanless text, can be read in similar terms (the only female subjects mentioned in the tale are Indian women referred to in passing - the 'stately dames close veiled' and the 'solitary graceful maiden' (945)). Indeed, Bonaparte reads the text in terms of homosexuality, suggesting that Templeton's role for Bedloe is that of a substitute father, towards whom he stands in a relation of passive dependence. The tale is thus read as an instance of the 'negative', or 'inverted' Oedipus complex, in which the male child is erotically fixated on the father;²⁰⁸ to quote Freud ('The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', 1924): 'The Oedipus complex offered the child two possibilities of satisfaction, an active and a passive one. He could put himself in his father's place in a masculine fashion, and have intercourse with his mother ... or he might want to take the place of his mother and be loved by his father'.²⁰⁹ This is the process which Juliet Mitchell (Psychoanalysis and Feminism, 1974) calls 'the development of a feminine position - by men';²¹⁰ for Bonaparte, TRM is 'a classic delineation, in sado-phallic terms, of a passive homosexual relation to the father'.²¹¹ On her reading, Oldeb and Bedloe are symbolic brothers, both unconsciously attracted to Templeton; and in Bedloe's two 'deaths' (the first hallucinated, the second 'real') the arrow and the leech are both symbols of the 'piercing penis', while the electric shocks accompanying the hallucinatory death (948) signify 'feelings specifically erotic'.²¹² There would, then, be a latent homosexual relation between doctor and patient (with Templeton

playing an active/sadistic role), which is consummated symbolically in certain details of the hallucination, and also underlies Bedloe's death. Bonaparte's reading is certainly convergent with the recognised erotic dimension of the mesmeric bond, as described earlier in this chapter,²¹³ and with Freud's notion of hypnotic suggestion as ultimately sexual in origin.²¹⁴

Bonaparte's argument may be expanded, to suggest that there is a latent, mutual attraction between Templeton and Bedloe, which remains unconscious on both sides; and that the mesmeric rapport is a symbolic substitute for sexual relations (Falk, it may be noted, comes to a similar conclusion: 'If the "dearest friend", Oldeb, had been a woman ... we might have been less mystified. Love is conveniently described in terms of magnetism.');

²¹⁵ while Kaplan mentions the probable existence of homosexual relations between mesmerist and patient, in cases like that of Townshend²¹⁶ and his subject Alexis).²¹⁷ The unconscious attraction may account for the 'horror' to which Templeton admits in relation to both Bedloe and Oldeb; he tells Bedloe that his professional interest in him was partly dictated by "an uneasy, and not altogether horrorless curiosity respecting yourself" (949), and refers to "an unaccountable sentiment of horror" provoked by Oldeb's portrait (948), presumably owing to its resemblance to his patient. The 'horror', displaced on to the fact of doubling, is ultimately that of his own forbidden desires, which are so deeply repressed that his own reactions appear to him as 'unaccountable'. Like Kleist's Elvira, Templeton cannot accept his own desire. At the same time, he seems to believe that Bedloe is the reincarnation of Oldeb; but the notion of metempsychosis, like that of doubling, may be simply a less threatening cover for his hidden erotic interest in his patient. In Templeton's relations with Oldeb and Bedloe, what is really doubled

is - as in 'The Foundling' - less physical appearance than unconscious desire; and if anything is "reincarnated", it is that desire for the male other, making its insistent return in Templeton's own body. In this context, it may be suggested that the inversion of Oldeb's name into Bedlo(e), linked with homoeroticism, curiously anticipates the late nineteenth-century use of "inversion" to signify homosexuality (the 'Supplement' to the O.E.D. records "inversion" in this sense from 1896, and the noun "invert" from 1897);²¹⁸ Templeton's erotic preferences are inverted (turned inward, to his own sex), as Oldeb's name is inverted (written backwards).

In the context of this latent erotic character of the rapport, Bedloe's 'vision' merits more detailed examination. If the metempsychotic explanation is discarded, the incident can be read in terms of hypnotic suggestion, as an induced hallucination; Templeton would have mesmerised Bedloe at a distance, and the contents of the subject's hallucination would derive from the mesmerist's own mind. In terms of modern theory, hallucination is (as seen above) one of the phenomena that can be induced by hypnosis;²¹⁹ it can also be induced posthypnotically, and it may be hypothesised that in a previous session Templeton had put the Indian information into Bedloe's mind, and given him a cue to return to the hypnotic state and hallucinate that material later, in the mountains. Modern theory also allows for the action of hypnosis at a distance;²²⁰ this possibility was also provided for by Mesmer,²²¹ and, according to Buranelli, was emphasised by Townshend, one of Poe's sources for mesmeric doctrine,²²² who believed in 'thought transference over long distances'.²²³ Various critics have, as seen above,²²⁴ therefore read the 'vision' as an induced hypnotic phenomenon; it can be asked, however, whether such an elaborate hallucination, with Indian details reproduced 'with the

minutest accuracy' (949) could be produced in reality. An element of mesmeric science fiction may thus have entered the text's account of the trance. Nonetheless, it may be pointed out that the rapport between the two is unusually strong, to the point where, for instance, 'sleep was brought about almost instantaneously, by the mere volition of the operator, even when the patient was unaware of his presence' (941) - or, presumably, even when the operator was not physically present; and that Bedloe's hallucinatory propensities are increased by his use of drugs ('His imagination ... derived additional force from the habitual use of morphine, which he swallowed in great quantity' - 942) - again, in keeping with modern theory.²²⁵ It is clear enough that, here as in The House of the Seven Gables and the Blithedale Romance,²²⁶ the 'vision' originates not in some mystical otherworld, but in the mesmerist's mind. Templeton has been in India himself, and witnessed all the scenes and events that Bedloe describes; indeed, he admits that he was writing down his reminiscences at the same time as he transferred them to the mind of his patient: "'at the very period in which you fancied these things amid the hills, I was engaged in detailing them upon paper here at home'" (949). It may be concluded that, in the words of Mukhtar Ali Isani ('Some Sources for Poe's "Tale of the Ragged Mountains"', 1972),²²⁷ 'the mesmerically induced "dream" of India (is) only a reflection of the physician's thoughts'.²²⁸

In all probability, Templeton has deliberately imposed these hallucinations on Bedloe's consciousness. Thompson, however, thinks the thought transference is 'involuntary',²²⁹ and Falk sees it as 'the product of animal magnetism acting autonomously ('The magnetist himself is only a stage-hand.... He did not write the script.');²³⁰ but such readings are scarcely compatible with the textual emphasis on rapport, on Templeton's history of experimentation on Bedloe, and on the explicit reference to

the former's force of will: 'the will of the patient succumbed rapidly to that of the physician' (941). As 'succumbed', with its passive connotations, suggests, Templeton's relation to Bedloe is a markedly sadistic one, and the hallucinations are best viewed in that light; the patient is made to "experience" the unpleasant sensations of penetration, 'deadly sickness' (947) and quasi-electric shocks (948). It is in this context of sadistic domination that the enigma of Bedloe's death will now be considered.

Various theories have been advanced to explain what is ostensibly an accidental death, provoked by a poisonous leech. Falk believes that Templeton killed Bedloe, but benevolently, as an act of euthanasia, in order to put the neuralgic sufferer out of his misery;²³¹ Thompson, in contrast, reads the tale as a thinly disguised murder story: 'Templeton may have psychotically re-killed him (Oldeb) in the person of Bedloe',²³² and is followed in this respect by Isani, who argues: 'A physically weakening Bedloe fell victim to the designs of Templeton's troubled mind.'²³³ Bonaparte, as seen above, points out the doubling between arrow and leech, and sees Bedloe as a victim of the sadistic father, although she does not specify how.²³⁴ The text provides ample evidence for Templeton's role in his patient's death, although it is possible that the killing was wholly an unconsciously determined act. The hallucination can be read as a trial run for the murder. The arrow clearly anticipates the leech in its shape, colour, poisonousness and penetrative effect; it is 'made to imitate the body of a creeping serpent', and is 'long and black, with a poisoned barb' (947). The leech, similarly, belongs to the class of 'venomous vermicular sangsues' (950); and both arrow and leech attack Bedloe on the 'right temple' (947, 950). The punning link between 'temple' and 'Templeton' insinuates the doctor's

involvement in both 'deaths'; in Thompson's words, 'the submerged pun ... links both the supernatural dream and Bedloe's death to the hypnotist'.²³⁵

It is clearly possible that Templeton deliberately planned the murder (perhaps as a means of "killing" his own inadmissible homosexual desires); the hallucination, in which he makes Bedloe imagine the pains of death, would then be preparatory to the real thing. Bedloe declares: "'I struggled - I gasped - I died.'" and the narrator jokingly asks: "'You are not prepared to maintain that you are dead?'" (947); these "impossible" formulations do not have quite the same disturbing impact as Valdemar's "I am dead",²³⁶ since "'I died'" clearly refers to a dream, and "'you are dead'" is ventured only as a rejected hypothesis, but they do emphasise the inevitability of Bedloe's impending death. On the other hand, the 'accident' of the poisonous leech may have been, not a subterfuge for premeditated murder, but an unconsciously determined parapraxis.²³⁷

The newspaper report states that, Bedloe having caught 'a slight cold and fever' in the mountains, Templeton decided to bleed him: "'In a fearfully brief period the patient died, when it appeared that, in the jar containing the leeches, had been introduced, by accident, one of the venomous vermicular sangsues.... Its close resemblance to the medicinal leech caused the mistake to be overlooked until too late.'" (950) This apparent 'mistake' was, perhaps, determined by Templeton's unconscious desire to kill Bedloe; it would then be one of those 'errors of judgment ... in scientific work' which, according to Freud in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901), derive from repression, not ignorance.²³⁸

Whether Bedloe's death is consciously or unconsciously motivated, Templeton is directly implicated; it is the culmination of their sado-

masochistic relationship. The 'poisonous sangsue' doubles, not only the arrow, but also its life-preserving counterpart, the 'medicinal leech' (950); what appears therapeutic turns out to be murderous. As critics have pointed out, Bedloe is killed by a creature unknown to biology; Mabbott states: 'Neither in fact, nor in fable (before Poe's), can a poisonous sangsue (or leech) be found!'²³⁹ This "impossible" detail gives the text a hoaxical dimension, on the one hand; on the other, such a flagrantly non-realist intrusion into the narrative acts as a signpost to the reader, a warning to read the leech metaphorically. The conspicuously unusual French term 'sangsue' - appearing in its first recorded use in English²⁴⁰ - further draws attention to the leech on the level of the signifier, and its etymological meaning (blood-sucker) alerts the reader to connect the leech with other, metaphoric instances of blood-sucking in the text. Indeed, the signifier "leech" itself enters the text in a double sense, since it is also an archaic metonym for "doctor" (as the adjective 'medicinal' should remind the reader); and it can metaphorically signify "exploiter" (or blood-sucker). It thus simultaneously connotes both the benevolent and the malevolent possibilities of medicine - the good doctor as life-preserver, and the dangerous experimenter as life-destroyer. The leech-sangsue, then, signifies the ambivalent relation of Templeton towards his patient-victim; he is his personal physician, but also exploits him, both economically (Bedloe pays him a 'liberal annual allowance' (941); in Thompson's words, 'Templeton is like a leech on the wealthy Bedloe'),²⁴¹ and psychologically through sadistic experimentation (the economic factor links Templeton to Dupin, who similarly lives off his wealthy companion).²⁴²

A parallel here may be made with the figure of the scientist in the fiction of Hawthorne. The concept of the doctor-as-destroyer is

disturbingly signified in 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844), where Dr Rappaccini appears as a manipulative experimenter: "'His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment,'"²⁴³ In The Scarlet Letter (1850),²⁴⁴ more disturbingly, the "good" and "bad" doctor are signified in one subject, Chillingworth. The Chillingworth-Dimmesdale relation reveals interesting analogies with the Templeton-Bedloe relation.

It is significant that the two chapters (9 and 10) in which this relation is constituted are titled 'The Leech' and 'The Leech and His Patient' respectively. Chillingworth, then, is marked from the start by the signifier "leech", with the same ambivalence as characterises Templeton. Poe's literal leech-sangsue may indeed be the direct antecedent of Hawthorne's metaphoric leech. The doctor-patient relation in the Hawthorne text is not specifically mesmeric, but is nonetheless of a manipulative character comparable to the mesmeric relations set up elsewhere in Hawthorne's work, and in TRM. Chillingworth offers his services to Dimmesdale as a healer 'anxious to attempt the cure'²⁴⁵ for the pastor's mysterious wasting disease. This disease is clearly to be read as psychomatic; Dimmesdale displays an unusual degree of interdependence between mind and body.²⁴⁶ He is also, like Bedloe, hypersensitive; the text stresses his 'nervous sensibility'.²⁴⁷ Had he lived in the nineteenth century, Dimmesdale would have made a suitable subject for mesmeric experiment, and there is clearly a quasi-mesmeric element in the hold that Chillingworth comes to exert over him; the doctor confronts his patient with 'intense and concentrated intelligence',²⁴⁸ and is said to possess 'the power ... to bring his mind into ... affinity with his patient's'.²⁴⁹

Chillingworth's true motive in establishing the relation is not therapeutic at all, and only secondarily is it "experimental"; his main interest in Dimmesdale is personal revenge, since he (correctly) suspects the pastor to have seduced his wife, Hester Prynne. There seems also to be a further, homosexual colouring; if Chillingworth is read as being unconsciously bisexual, then there is a sadistic homosexual element in his pleasure in controlling and torturing Dimmesdale: 'He could play upon him as he chose.... arouse him with a throb of agony ... it needed only to know the spring that controlled the engine'.²⁵⁰ At the same time, given the age-difference between the two men, Dimmesdale's relation to the 'paternal' Chillingworth²⁵¹ can be read as partly determined by an unconscious homosexual masochism originating in the "negative Oedipus complex".²⁵² Frederick Crews (The Sins of the Fathers, 1966) suggests that 'this relationship of investigator to investigated, of tormentor to tormented, is a kind of mock-marriage, a substitute for more normal (sic) sexual feeling in both parties';²⁵³ certainly, the lexis of more than one passage has clear sexual connotations: 'Chillingworth ... strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, ... probing every thing ... like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern';²⁵⁴ 'to burrow into the clergyman's intimacy'.²⁵⁵ The lexis of penetration recalls the arrow and leech of TRM.

The convergence with TRM is certainly striking; Chillingworth's role as doctor and quasi-mesmerist, and as metaphoric father, Dimmesdale's hypersensitivity, and the latent homosexual factor, all form points of correspondence with the Templeton-Bedloe relation. Both texts, it may be concluded, constitute the doctor-patient relation as potentially manipulative and destructive, with a hidden but explosive sexual charge. However, Dimmesdale, unlike Bedloe, manages to extricate himself from

the affective grip of the physician, and breaks off the connexion.²⁵⁶ Poe's text, in contrast, takes the destructive element in the relation to its logical conclusion, in the patient's death at the hands of the doctor. At all events, in both texts the figure of the physician, or "leech", emerges as highly problematic and ambivalent; the notion of the disinterested experimenter is thus called in question.

Mesmerism, then, enters TRM as a metaphor for unequal power-relations of an erotic character. A further dimension of power in this tale remains to be discussed: the Indian content of Bedloe's hallucination raises the issue of colonialism and imperialism. As shown in Chapter 1,²⁵⁷ Poe's writing is not innocent of reference to this political factor; indeed, apart from the Indian dimension, the text of TRM contains indirect references to the colonial history of the United States themselves. Virginia, where Bedloe has his 'vision', was the first English colony in North America;²⁵⁸ and, as Beaver notes ('Commentary' to The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, 1976),²⁵⁹ Saratoga, where Bedloe first met Templeton (941), is the site of a major battle in the American Revolution. Colonialism is further signified in the reference to the 'Indian Summer' (942) with its associations of Native Americans ("Indians"); a structural parallel is thus suggested between the two kinds of "Indians", the colonised of India and the dispossessed of North America.²⁶⁰

As already noted,²⁶¹ Bedloe's hallucination centres on an actual historical episode, the insurrection led by Chait Singh, Rajah of Benares, against Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal. The account of India in the tale derives - as Mabbott shows²⁶² - mainly from Thomas B. Macaulay's 1841 review of G. R. Gleig's Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings²⁶³ (Poe reviewed Macaulay's Critical and Miscellaneous

Essays, which included this text, in Graham's Magazine (June 1841) (H X, 156-60), although he did not specifically mention the essay). Certain other elements - as Rubén Darío ('Edgar Poe y los sueños', 1913) suggests²⁶⁴ - are traceable to De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821), and, specifically, its "Oriental dreams" sequence.²⁶⁵ The Indian portion of Bedloe's 'vision' will now be examined in detail, in its intertextual relation with the the above two texts, and their constructions of East-West relations and the "Orient".

It is worth making a close comparison of the Poe (P) and Macaulay (M) texts (especially for the four passages which Mabbott lists as having been 'chiefly used by Poe');²⁶⁶ it will be seen that, although Poe's text follows its source very closely, the lexical additions and changes made are all in the direction of intensifying certain specific connotations. The labyrinthine character of the city of Benares receives greater emphasis; the phrase 'labyrinth of lofty alleys' (M)²⁶⁷ is expanded into: 'The streets seemed innumerable, and crossed each other irregularly in all directions, but were rather long winding alleys than streets' (P, 945), while 'His troops were entangled in narrow streets' (M)²⁶⁸ becomes: 'we ... became bewildered and entangled among the narrow streets' (P, 947). The element of confusion is also reinforced; the tale adds the words: 'amid the crowd, and the clamor, and the general intricacy and confusion' (P, 945), which are not found in the source. A further dimension given greater stress is that of infiniteness, or the loss of limits. Already present in 'an innumerable multitude of worshippers' (M),²⁶⁹ this connotation is extended via the phrases: 'The streets seemed innumerable' and 'innumerable flights of steps' (P, *ibid.*); while 'rich merchandize' (M)²⁷⁰ becomes 'rich wares in infinite variety and profusion' (P, *ibid.*), and, similarly, 'holy bulls' (M)²⁷¹ is expanded into 'a countless multi-

tude of holy filleted bulls' (P, *ibid.*). The related connotation of vastness is also more prominent in the tale. The 'immense multitude' (M)²⁷² remains, becoming an 'immense populace' (P, 946), while, in addition, adjectives indicating vastness appear several times: 'the sacred apes clung by hundreds' (M),²⁷³ 'vast legions of the filthy but sacred ape' (P, 945); 'great fleets of vessels' (M),²⁷⁴ 'vast fleets of deeply-burthened ships' (P, *ibid.*); 'the huge trees, older than the Mogul empire' (M),²⁷⁵ 'gigantic and weird trees of vast age' (P, *ibid.*). Finally, the dimension of grotesqueness is markedly increased, through the addition of the sentence: 'The houses were wildly picturesque.' (P, *ibid.*), and various lexical modifications: 'weird trees', as quoted above; 'fantastically carved oriels' (P, *ibid.*) for 'carved oriels' (M);²⁷⁶ and 'idols grotesquely hewn' (P, *ibid.*) for 'gaudy idols' (M).²⁷⁷ The element of lexical transformation and conceptual modification of Macaulay's text is, then, substantial; something more than plagiarism is at work here.

The sum effect of the changes in Poe's text is to reinforce the connotations of strangeness and distortion in the view of India presented. On the one hand, this indicates the hallucinatory character of Bedloe's perceptions, and thus intensifies the drug element in the text; on the other, it serves to harden a certain cultural stereotype of the "Oriental", ideologically presented in terms of "teeming millions", "luxury", "mystery" and "inscrutability". Poe's tale evokes what Barthes (S/Z, 1970) calls the 'code littéraire', the nineteenth-century received idea, of orientality;²⁷⁸ indeed, it does so more than the Macaulay text, where, if certain stereotypes are perpetuated (e.g. the 'effeminacy' (sic) of Indians,²⁷⁹ reproduced in TRM in the description of Chait Singh as 'an effeminate-looking person' (947)), others - for instance the false notion of the 'wealth of India'²⁸⁰ - are openly rejected.

The elements of vastness and infiniteness introduced into Bedloe's Oriental 'vision', with their obvious drug connotations, immediately suggest the intertextual pressure of De Quincey's Confessions, where (as seen in Chapter 2),²⁸¹ the opium trance is associated with the loss of physical limits: 'Buildings, landscapes, &c. were exhibited in proportions, so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive.'²⁸² More specifically, De Quincey's text also supplies a concrete instance of the literary construction of the "Oriental", which functions as an important antecedent for that found in Poe. In the 'Pains of Opium' section, the narrator refers to a series of 'Oriental dreams'.²⁸³ These take their cue from an earlier episode, the unexpected appearance of a Malay in the Lake District:²⁸⁴ 'The Malay has been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes.'²⁸⁵ The 'dreams of Oriental imagery'²⁸⁶ that follow are a secondary textual determinant of Bedloe's similar transportation to 'Asiatic scenes'.

The narrator of the Confessions, under the influence of opium, undergoes Oriental dreams characterised by 'a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness'. He hallucinates a series of bizarre persecutions, punishments, deaths and burials: 'I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas: and was fixed, for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms; ... I was sacrificed ... I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins'.²⁸⁷ There is a clear convergence with TRM, where morphine combines with mesmerism to provoke exotic hallucinations culminating in a fantasised death; the dreams in De Quincey's text include multiple deaths ('I was sacrificed', 'I was buried') and sadistic penetration (the impalement parallels the arrow in TRM). The sado-masochistic element in Poe's text may thus be seen as deriving,

in part, from the grafting of De Quincey on to Macaulay.

Besides, both texts reveal an ambivalent reaction to the "Oriental", seen as simultaneously exotic/fascinating and threatening/alien. De Quincey's text refers to the 'horror' induced by the idea of Asia:

'Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful images and associations The vast empires also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all Oriental names or images. In China ... I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, and the barriers of utter abhorrence, and want of sympathy, placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyze.'²⁸⁸

Asian cultures are thus perceived with both awe at their 'sublimity' and 'abhorrence' at their strangeness. Bedloe is similarly overwhelmed with a sense of difference, 'stupified ... with astonishment' by 'a world of novel and singular sensation' (944); and, at the same time, feels hostile towards his Asian surroundings: 'Against the crowd which environed me, however, I experienced a deep sentiment of animosity.'

(946). Both the strangeness and the 'animosity' require further examination.

De Quincey's narrator's 'want of sympathy' may be read as, in part, a legitimate perception of real cultural differences. But it is not only that; the stereotyping of Asia and Asians as exotic/sinister is the product not just of differences but of inequalities - of the power-structures of imperialism. There is a general tendency in nineteenth-century Western literature to appropriate a received idea of the "Oriental" for use as a signifier for all that is exotic, voluptuous, luxurious, etc. Asian cultures (as De Quincey's text admits) are minimally known or understood in the West: 'Englishmen (are) not bred in any knowledge of such institutions'.²⁸⁹ Ignorance does not, however, prevent them being plundered, both economically and ideologically; the imagery of "Oriental"

phantasmagoria comes to signify a borderline, oneiric area of experience. The exotic connotes the erotic; the oppressed signifies the repressed. Hence Balzac's 'Sarrasine' (1830) describes a sexually attractive woman in oriental terms: 'Qui n'aurait épousé Marianina, jeune fille de seize ans, dont la beauté réalisait les fabuleuses conceptions des poètes orientaux!'²⁹⁰ Baudelaire's 'L'Invitation au Voyage' (1855),²⁹¹ constructing an erotic utopia, similarly invokes 'la splendeur orientale'.²⁹² The same kind of stereotyping recurs in Poe's work, as in the decor in 'Ligeia' (1838) (the 'Saracenic' censer, the 'candelabra, of Eastern figure', etc. (M II, 321)),²⁹³ or 'The Domain of Arnheim' (1847), with its 'Eastern trees' and 'semi-Saracenic architecture' (M III, 1283); it also underlies the recurrent concept of the 'arabesque', to be discussed in the next chapter.²⁹⁴

That such appropriation is, in some measure, the product of imperialism is indicated by a further element in De Quincey's text. The description of the Malay, preceding the dreams, is marked by condescension and stereotyping; the text contrasts the 'beautiful English face' of the narrator's maidservant with 'the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, ... his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations'. The 'ferocious looking Malay' thus presents a 'picturesque exhibition'.²⁹⁵ This kind of representation belongs to the discourse of racial superiority. Much the same may be said of Bedloe's encounter with the Indian courier; the 'dusky-visaged and half-naked man' (943) is presented as an exotic curiosity. Once on the scene of the fighting, he instantly finds himself identified with the colonists: 'I joined the weaker party, arming myself with the weapons of a fallen officer' (946). That the dream-transformation of Bedloe into Oldeb, an officer in an imperialist army, should become complete at the precise moment of

joining battle against the "natives" reveals the determining presence in Bedloe - as in Oldeb, as in Templeton, as in the entire text - of the standardised, "natural" ideology of imperialism.

Similar racist preconceptions are present in Macaulay's text, as shown above;²⁹⁶ it is therefore unsurprising that the rebels should be contemptuously described as a 'rabble'²⁹⁷ - a notion taken over in TRM in the phrase 'swarming rabble' (946). Thus when Bedloe instinctively identifies with the colonists, Poe's text is reproducing an ideological process already present in the main source. Macaulay's text records the indisputable material supremacy of the British in the subcontinent: 'neither tenfold odds, nor the martial ardour of the boldest Asiatic nations, could avail ought against English science and resolution'.²⁹⁸ From this de facto supremacy, the text derives a de jure superiority; the learning of the West is compared favourably to 'the dotages of the Brahminical superstition'.²⁹⁹ The conflict in Benares is thus, automatically, presented as a case of superior "gentlemen" versus inferior "rabble": 'The English officers defended themselves with courage against overwhelming numbers, and fell ... sword in hand.'³⁰⁰ Bedloe's sentiment of 'animosity' in TRM falls; then, into a general pattern of cultural stereotyping.

Chait Singh was quickly defeated by Hastings; the insurrection resulted in the loss of Benares' semi-independent status and its incorporation into the East India Company's possessions: 'The unhappy prince fled his country forever. His fair domain was added to the British dominions the Rajah of Benares was henceforth to be ... a mere pensioner'.³⁰¹ The drive against Benares was, then, part of Hastings' career as a successful imperialist. Macaulay's text, summarising that career,

concludes that 'the power of our country in the East had been greatly augmented',³⁰² since Hastings 'had preserved and extended an empire'.³⁰³ Thus when Poe's narrative has Bedloe join 'the weaker party' (946), the text is, in all but the most immediate sense, lying; ultimately, the more vulnerable party proved to be, not the East Indian Company's army at all, but the people of Benares, and beyond that, of all India.

Macaulay's presentation of Hastings himself provides an interesting link between the notion of the will and the colonial context. In the text's account of the British imperialist dynamic, the dominant concepts are precisely those of 'will', 'energy' and 'power', suggesting a point of convergence with the mesmeric ideology.³⁰⁴ It is claimed: 'The superior intelligence and energy of the dominant class (i.e. the British) made their power irresistible',³⁰⁵ while Hastings' career is considered a monument to the power of his mind ('one of the most fertile minds that ever existed').³⁰⁶ The expansion of the British hegemony in India is thus viewed in terms of the ideology of the will. Most notable in this context is the claim that Hastings was marked by a 'calm but indomitable force of will which was the most striking peculiarity of his character'.³⁰⁷ The concept of the will thus appears in the context of the unequal power-relations of imperialism; given the intertextual relation of 'Warren Hastings' and TRM, it may be argued that the mesmeric power-relation, mediated through the will, runs parallel to the colonial power-relation in the latter text. As the British dominate India, so Templeton dominates Bedloe.

TRM may, then, be read as an exploration of various types of exploitative power - of humanity over nature, of doctor over patient, of sadist over victim, of colonist over colonised. Yet another type of power-relation

is also hinted at in the text - that of writer over reader. Templeton is not only a mesmerist, but a writer. In this context, it is worth returning to the passage where he tells Bedloe: "'You will perceive by these manuscripts ... that at the very period in which you fancied these things amid the hills, I was engaged in detailing them upon paper here at home.'" (949).³⁰⁸ The induced hallucination thus not only coincides with the act of writing; it may have been induced via the writing, which may have facilitated Templeton's concentration for the act of long-distance mesmerism. The manipulative mesmerist can be read as symbolising the writer, controlling the imagination of the reader at a distance (one may compare The House of the Seven Gables, where Holgrave semi-mesmerises Phoebe while reading out a tale from a 'manuscript' in his own hand).³⁰⁹ Indeed, a parallel may be drawn with Poe's own theory of writing as domination, as expounded in the 1847 Hawthorne review. The writer's aim, according to Poe, is to submit the reader to certain 'impressions' (H XIII, 153) (the term recalls the use of 'impress' in the lexis of mesmerism, as seen above in MR);³¹⁰ literature is thus a means of dominating the other; 'the soul of the reader is at the writer's control.... a picture is ... painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it ..., a sense of the fullest satisfaction' (ibid.). The reading-process, as described by Poe, is curiously similar to the mesmeric trance induced by Templeton in Bedloe, in which a series of "pictures" is painted in the mind of the patient, whose will is under the control of his physician. It may be suggested that the mesmerist is, among other things, a disguised manifestation of the artist as dominator - a figure which will be analysed at length in Chapters 5 and 6, both for Poe's aesthetic theories and for the tales.³¹¹

From the above examination of Poe's mesmeric tales, it may be concluded that mesmerism and the will function in them primarily as metaphors for

power - above all, the human 'mastery of nature' and the psychological and erotic hold of one subject over another. Given the ample textual evidence afforded by the tales, especially by TRM, it is scarcely possible to agree with Tatar that 'Poe ... expressed little interest in animal magnetism as the medium of psychic control';³¹² rather, TRM privileges the control of mind over mind, and 'Valdemar' the control of mind over nature. If the occultism of MR has little to offer the modern reader, the other two tales, in contrast, contain a disturbing critique of the progressivist ideology of science. In 'Valdemar', the scientist's project of transforming nature is cut short by the irruption of death; in TRM, the experimenter appears as a manipulative and destructive figure. Like the detective, the mesmerist is presented in highly ambivalent terms; Dupin's doubleness, his affinity with ape and conspirator, is paralleled by Templeton's two-sidedness as "leech". The creative/destructive dialectic of the will in the mesmeric tales has its counterpart, as will be shown, in 'Ligeia'; while the ambivalent status of the scientist, whether detective or mesmerist, is paralleled in the various constructions of the artist, and his/her work, which will be examined in the remaining chapters of this study.