

Illuminating Poe

The Reflection of Edgar Allan Poe's Pictorialism
in the Illustrations for the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*

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For my parents

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“These volumes present a succession of richly-coloured pictures
in the magic lantern of invention.”

The *New-York Mirror* of December 28, 1839
about the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*.

1 INTRODUCTION

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most frequently illustrated authors of world literature. Several hundreds of visual artists illustrated the works of Edgar Allan Poe in the course of the last 170 years.¹ Undoubtedly, one reason for this quantity of illustrations is a continual demand for images that began to grow during Poe's lifetime, especially in its last decade. When Poe was employed in the office of *Graham's Magazine* he was part of the mass-market publication industry that exploited the contemporary readers' seemingly insatiable hunger for images. Poe's employer, George R. Graham, knew well how to appease and stimulate this desire at the same time and he understood to make the most of it economically. In the 20th century, Poe has become an author who sells well, especially after World War 2, as the countless editions of his works in all major languages testify. And Poe seems to sell particularly well, when his works are published in illustrated editions. Apart from mass-market publications, a substantial number of illustrations for Poe's works appeared in limited editions that were directed to a small number of book collector's rather than millions of common readers.² Obviously, there are more reasons for the illustration of Poe's works than large-scale advertising and marketing aspects. This study posits that there are specific visual qualities in Poe's works that have been attracting artists for now more than a century and a half.

Unfortunately, these phenomena, Poe's pictorialism and his influence on visual artists, have been largely neglected in Poe studies, and the abundance of pictures has almost been ignored. In relation to the thousands of illustrations for Poe's texts, the existing number of critical works about this topic is surprisingly low. There is a scarcely a score of studies, and most of these approach the topic narrowly, focussing on small numbers of illustrations and/or artists only. The only full-fledged analytical study about Poe illustrations was not published before 1989. In her dissertation, Ina Conzen-Meairs tracked Poe's influence on 18 European "Symbolists", examining 86 illustrations by artists such as Gustave DORÉ, Odilon REDON, James ENSOR, Aubrey BEARDSLEY and René MAGRITTE. In the same year, Burton Pollin published his extensive descriptive bibliography of illustrated editions, *Images of Poe's Works*, which was the result of almost two decades of research in several countries. Although Pollin's book documented the amount of material exhaustively, little use has been made of it until now in critical articles. Symptomatically, most relevant articles are concerned with famous artists only, and that in a rather general way. Art historians and bibliophiles have shown more interest for Poe than Poe scholars for illustrations of the author's works.³ In Poe studies, even such acclaimed illustrators as Harry CLARKE or Arthur RACKHAM are only casually mentioned if not banned to the footnotes at all. As yet, the illustrations for Poe's works have only been touched superficially, just as if there has been no awareness for the depth of material.⁴ As a result, considerate but obscure artists like Pierre FALKÉ, Carlo FARNETI, Fritz EICHENBERG or Hans FRONIUS have remained in the shadows, and the same counts for hundreds of other "nameless" visual artists who contributed thousands of illustrations. This state of affairs is

deplorable, because illustrations not only afford new insights into Poe's texts, they may also help to create new perspectives in Poe studies. Therefore, it is the aim of this study, to unfold the great variety of illustrations. They will be analyzed as responses to Poe's peculiar pictorialism and as visual interpretations of his texts.

The lack of attention to the "pictorial Poe" is surprising, since Poe's concern in images is revealed in many different ways. Besides his biography, Poe's frequent critical comments about the fine arts in general, and about text illustrations in particular, but also about stage design and optical experiments, expose a keen interest in images. Moreover, his critical jargon shows that Poe tended to visualize his ideas about proper literature. He used to analogize texts with pictures and he considered descriptions as particularly praiseworthy when they were "artist-like", "graphic", "picturesque" or "admirably drawn". Poe's pictorialism is a distinguishing element in his literary aesthetics. Thus, images and visual spectacles play a significant role in many of Poe's works, and often they are of crucial importance for the comprehension of his texts.⁵

In particular, Poe had a predilection for "sketchy" images, and he often turned against "unnecessary detail" and "elaborate painting" in his literary reviews.⁶ Poe's notion of indefinitiveness, which he already emphasized at the very beginning of his career, not only shaped his ideas about good writing but also the imagery of his works. T. O. Mabbott, the great Poe scholar, once wrote: "That Poe valued pure beauty of sound and image is indisputable, but this is the business of a lyric poet. Where his poems are obscure it is usually because he sought for a vague effect" (M I: xxiii). This statement may apply to Poe's poetry, but the images in his prose works are usually neither pure nor beautiful, especially in the so-called Gothic stories, but often vague and obscure. The images in Poe's short stories are characterized by indefinitiveness, they are presented in a state of ambiguity and they often cause that very "vague effect" mentioned by Mabbott. Although the 18th century heritage of the landscape and the character sketch is obvious in Poe's short stories, which often abound with long descriptions, most of his images remain literally unimaginable. Poe's descriptions are stimulating but not completely satisfying. This characteristic is considered responsible for the great amount of existing illustrations for Poe's prose works. Visual artists must have felt challenged to concretize Poe's shadowy images, to portray the bizarre beauty of Poe's heroines and to give shape to his inconceivable fantasies.

Just like illustrators, readers have to cope with numerous ambiguities in Poe's works. Resolving these ambiguities is an act of interpretation, the outcome of which conditions the meaning of Poe's texts, that is how readers make sense out of them. Since ambiguities can be determined in a variety of ways, Poe's texts have the potential of multifold meanings. To a great extent, this polysemy is due to the ambiguity of Poe's images. Interpreting Poe's texts means to picture his images, for illustrators and readers as well. This study surmises that Poe's ambiguous images are largely responsible for the richness of possible meanings his texts offer to his readers. While reading Poe, the generation of meaning depends on how his literary depictions are visualized mentally. The answers to "visual" questions like how does Ligeia look like, what kind of place is the house of Usher or what is the

true nature of King Pest are essential for the reader's understanding of Poe's texts. Poe's fragmentary, vague and incongruent descriptions of situations, settings and characters create indefinite rather than distinct images. Thus, Poe's texts are characterized by what phenomenologists like Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser called "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" (indeterminacies). Ingarden thought that the reader's imagination is an image-producing mental process stimulated by certain qualities inherent to the object of art. Likewise, Iser, although less visually oriented than Ingarden, regarded the reader's generation of meaning to be conditioned by the occurrences of indeterminate text passages. In order to make sense out of a text the reader has to generate connections where the text renders no coherent information. In chapter 2, Iser's reader response theory is adapted for the comparative analysis of texts and illustrations in chapter 4. Chapter 3 will not only reveal Poe's intense interest in images but also a basic correspondence between Iser's reader response theory and Poe's concept of (visual) indefinitiveness.

In the main part of this study (chapter 4), illustrations are discussed under various aspects, in their relation to the text and to the reader. Firstly, illustrators are regarded as co-authors. Their pictures render information where the text is indeterminate or obscure, thus offering the reader additional material to resolve textual ambiguities. Secondly, and more important, illustrations are treated as interpretations, as soon as they transcend the textual boundaries by inserting information, adding new contexts, rearranging details or by ignoring obvious textual elements. Illustrations modify the readers' understanding of texts in that they (de-)emphasize text passages and channelize awareness into specific directions. At first sight, some illustrations discussed in this study may appear as meaningless, arbitrary or inept, so that paying attention to them seems to be a waste of time. In this study, however, the question of appropriateness is only important as a starting point of discussion, since, as will be seen, illustrations which are obviously at odds with Poe's texts, at least from a traditional point of view, are capable of stimulating the reader's hermeneutic activity productively.

This study makes extensive use of interpretation. Illustrations are regarded as interpretations, and the same counts for the acts of reading and viewing and the overall process of ideation that originates from the reader's/viewer's generation of meaning from illustrated texts. As a result, this study delivers interpretations of Poe's texts, interpretations of illustrations (that are interpretations themselves), "combined" interpretations of illustrated texts (so-called "image-texts", see below) and, finally, interpretations which are built upon all these intercommunicating and interdependent interpretations. In sight of the abundance of literary studies on Poe's works, the question why we need even more interpretations is legitimate, especially because hermeneutics have come somewhat out of fashion in the past decades. But interpretation is only old-fashioned when it comes along with the reductionism, as, for example, practised by the New Critics, or when it is coupled with the question of authorial intention. Poe himself turned against "the heresy of the Didactic", he despised the pedantic seed and harvest of truth and definite meaning on the field of literature. Poe's works are not without meaning, of course. Quite the contrary, he mentioned upper- and under-currents of meanings, which

spells out that any attempt to pin down any of his texts to a specific and exclusive significance ignores the polysemy of his works. With reference to Poe's ambiguity, my multilevel, interlaced interpretations should be imagined as a kaleidoscope of possible meanings that uses pictorial material of different types.

2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

2.1 Issues of the analysis of text-picture-relations

This chapter refers to several critical works about text-picture, text-reader and picture-beholder relations in order to explain the foundation of this study in different theoretical concepts, and in order to point out to the various sources which shaped the approach employed by this study.

The main source of influence providing the theoretical and methodical backbone of my study is Wolfgang Iser's reader response theory. The reference to Iser's reader-oriented approach is one reason for the eclecticism of this study, since his theory is itself a fusion of works from different disciplines: philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, cognitive sciences, system theory, and speech-act theory. Another reason is that Iser's theory had to be adapted to the aim of this study, so that in the following the works of W. J. T. Mitchell, Mieke Bal, Ellen Esrock, and James Elkins are also consulted, and additionally some historical data and the findings of the cognitive sciences are marginally mentioned. I have deliberately renounced strict subdivisions in order to allow for flexible cross-references, and to avoid the impression that this chapter claims to be more than a fluctuating discussion of relevant theoretical concepts. The following does not submit a formulated theory of its own: it is to be understood as "instead of a theory".

In his book *Picture Theory* Mitchell stated that "comparison itself is not a necessary procedure in the study of image-text relations" (89; italics original). While the approach with which Mitchell explored the function and impact of images in late 20th century mass media culture, allowed him to shift his analysis towards the investigation of the different media, including printed works, radio, television and cinema, a critic who analyzes the specific relationship between literary texts and their illustrations has to face the basic problem of comparison. The problem is not that texts and pictures cannot be compared with each other at all, but what exactly can be compared. The increasing number of articles and books, in the last twenty years, which have been dealing either theoretically or specifically with the side by side of literary texts and graphic images, does not only demonstrate that comparison has become a prominent topic in literary and art historical studies, but that it can be achieved in a variety of ways. Although these studies can be subsumed under a general heading it is difficult to outline what they have in common beyond the analyses of text-picture relations. Despite the amount of studies there has been little agreement about how the relationship has to be examined. While there is a widely acknowledged methodological problem, which has brought forth several efforts to define the code that regulates text-picture relations, the various perspectives available as the channels of analysis further complicate the critic's dilemma. This predicament is especially awkward in a study in which the material is not *a priori* homogenized by means of narrow chronological limits, by a confined spotlight or by the exclusive reference to a few specific works or artists.

A study about the illustrations of Poe's works undoubtedly is a task confronting the critic with several problems of heterogeneity. Apart from the eclecticism, the different topics and the various styles which characterize Poe's works, the historical range of more than 150 years as well as the diversity and the incompatibility of promising approaches make it difficult to bundle the huge amount of Poe illustrations, produced by approximately 1000 artists, under one perspective that does justice to at least a majority of these pictures. Surely, this problem of heterogeneity can be circumnavigated by confining the scope of analysis on all levels, but for a survey study like this the diversity of the texts as well as the variety of illustrations are too fascinating to be reduced to a narrow selection. The main problem is to find a perspective from which the images in question can be uniformly viewed without totally sacrificing their ideographical relevance. However, such a viewpoint on a corpus as heterogenous as Poe's works, and the illustrations produced for them, brings along several problems.

Among the many approaches which have been applied to intermedial studies, semiotic methods seem to commend themselves for analysis. There are, however, several reasons why this study only informally and selectively refers to the various semiological and semiotic approaches to text-picture relations, as, for example, provided by Winfried Noeth, Manfred Titzmann, Claus Clüver or Günter Kerner and Rolf Duroy. First of all, this study is intended as a contribution to Poe studies, in that it wants to unfold the historical and stylistic diversity of Poe illustrations produced in the course of a century and a half. Because this study strives for a crosscut through the huge quantity of Poe illustrations, it accepts that the relation of text and images must necessarily be discussed in breadth rather than in depth. I consider semiotic analyses of the intermedial relationship as unmanageable for a study like this, since such methods produce their full impact much better in detailed comparisons. Besides, one must pay attention to the danger that is, in particular, an attending phenomenon of the application of linguistically oriented theories on the examination of text-picture relations. As Mieke Bal warned, such approaches tend to "colonize" pictures, in that they deny images their visual specificity and read them solely as bearers of meaning (177). Analyses which adopt semiotic methods to pin down the meaning of illustrations invade the images' visual territory. Bal complained that such a method "subordinates the visually represented element to something else, thus privileging the symbol at the expense of the icon, while displacing the indexicality that allows the semiosis in the first place" (178). If a picture's significance is reduced to a verbal utterance, illustrations are denigrated as mere embellishments. If, in the analysis of illustrated editions, the visual specificity of illustrations is rather suppressed than allowed to unfold, the versatile combinability is reduced to a binary set of oppositions: illustrations either submit to the text or they rebel against it. The dualism, which is the result of such a logocentric colonization, keeps text illustrations either in a state of inflexible dependency or it blocks any communication at all. In the latter case the categorical refusal impedes a productive exchange which may easily result in a state of symbiotic coexistence.

As a result, in some studies the relationship of literary texts and their illustrations is not even regarded as a dualism but as a hierarchy, in which the picture is at best attributed a role of neat subservience (e.g. Lehmann). However, illustrations are more than just embellishments, where verbal signs are orderly transformed into a homogeneous iconic utterance. Moreover, illustrations do not lose their relevance or miss their aim as soon as this transformation brings forth “independent” signs which do not correspond to those of the text. To evaluate the quality of an illustration exclusively with respect to its faithful transformation of verbal into iconic signs is one of the “trap[s] of comparison” which Mitchell pointed out. To elucidate the relationship between text and pictures by the import of the one sign system into another medium is an indication of the accepted and unchallenged dominance of word over image. In order to find a possible solution to the methodological dilemma in the analysis of text illustrations, one might first turn to a semiotic examination of the pictures before the literary works and the intermedial relations are scrutinized. Peircean semiotic theory, to which Bal referred in the passage quoted above, is much better suited than the linguistically oriented models in the tradition of Saussure. Peirce’s triadic sign model, his relational typology of signs and the threefold differentiation of the sign as *quali*-, *legi*- or *sin*-sign, or as *tone*, *token* and *type*, respectively, does not only refine the methods of analysis but also seems to warrant its universal applicability. The crucial point is, however, that the aesthetic relevance of text-picture relations is not to be found inside the intersection of verbal and iconic propositions, but mainly outside of it, on its borders. When Mitchell mentioned the irrelevance of comparison, he also proposed the importance of difference. There seems to be a no-man’s-land between the word and the image, a white spot on the map, which defies semiotic exploration despite its demarcation with qualified icons, indices, and symbols on both sides. The phenomena that occur between text and illustrations resist integration into the unificatory semiotic system, since not even the most “unlimited semiosis” (Potts in Nelson 19) is able to categorize their quasi character as iconic, indexical and/or symbolic.

In her own study, subtitled *Beyond the Word/Image Opposition*, Bal chose a flexible approach to her topic. She adopted a set of different perspectives which are adjusted to each other across the borders of semiotics, art history, psychoanalysis and feminist studies. Bal’s decision to scrutinize “Rembrandt” from various angles was not motivated by the heterogeneity of her verbal and pictorial material, but by her interest in general theoretical and methodological problems. Bal is eager to demonstrate how the traditional opposition of word and image, which she considered an obstacle for the analysis of the intermedial discourse, can be overcome by various means. Quite contrary to *Reading “Rembrandt”* my study offers the solution to such problems rather informally, as a by-product, and it does not develop a visual poetics at all. In keeping with Bal, however, I consider the dualism between text and pictures as a hindrance which can easily become a stumbling block during the analysis of this relationship. It is true that at the end of an evaluation in which the importance of words and images has been held in a state of equilibrium, the visual has to surrender before the overpowering dominance of the verbal, namely

as soon as these pictorial conceptions have to be transformed into a text. In this study, I am eager to counterbalance the verbal dominance by a decidedly visually oriented analysis, in regard to the illustrations as well as in regard to Poe's texts. To return to my favorite metaphor in this chapter, I obstruct the colonization of the illustrations from the territory of the text. In my analyses, the direction taken will be the other way around. I will primarily look for the pictures' visual stories and for the texts' visual properties and what kinds of image-text result from the mutual reflection. I will inspect the various forms of reflection, whether they are polished, sharply outlined doubles, distorted images, pictures turned upside down or whether they are no reflections at all.

One might argue Poe's texts are reduced to their pictorial qualities at the cost of their meaning in this study. Besides the fact that none of Poe's texts can be pinned down to one specific meaning, the analyses in the main part of this study will show that in many texts visual sensations and spectacles play a vital role for the stimulation of interpretation. Moreover, this procedure accounts for the immediacy which characterizes the affective qualities of images in the course of reading, and, that is, in the process in which meaning is generated. It is a paradox situation that, in sensual perception, images have a head start before the text, but in the long run of analysis they are overtaken and finally left behind somewhere in the background, still visible but unable to make themselves heard on their own.

As has already been stated, it is not the comparison or the degree of correspondence between text and image which elicits my primary attention, but the phenomenon that is created between them. This phenomenon is of a hybrid character, since it is neither wholly verbal nor wholly pictorial, and can be best labelled with Mitchell's term "imagetext" (*Picture 89, passim*), an elusive species which inhabits the blank spot on the above-mentioned map. Thus, the versatile combination of texts and images, the crosswise importation and reimportation of verbal and pictorial material delivers the substance for the constitution of the sought-after imagetexts.

I agree with Mieke Bal that a reader-oriented approach is the best means to grasp the intermedial phenomenon, since the specific quality of literary texts and their illustrations cannot be exclusively located in either the texts or the pictures. It is something that comes into being between them, and this phenomenon is a result of the reader's imagination. In his book *Iconology*, published in 1986, Mitchell projected a sort of study, in which the "transgressions of text-image boundaries [would be] the rule rather than the exception" (154). This study understands itself as part of this tradition, and with its help I try to gain new territory in Poe studies, in that new perspectives on the meanings of Poe's texts are generated by means of visual interpretation.

My study might be understood as a reaction against a development in which the importance of the image in literary studies has steadily decreased since the rise of formalist approaches about 80 years ago, especially since New Criticism began to dominate the critical discourse in the Anglo-American world. Though far from being an advocat of a visually influenced reorientation in literary studies, I agree with others that the specificity and the importance of the image has been margin-

alized too strongly. New Criticism has established some sort of iconoclasm into literary studies, a tendency which, despite the decline of this critical tradition, has held its ground but which is now counterweighted by the interdisciplinary studies of critics like Norman Bryson, Mieke Bal and James Elkins.

The iconoclastic bend is persistent, since it has a long tradition, not only among critics, but also among creative writers. In the literature of the late 17th and early 18th century visual imagery saw its heyday. Neo-classicist poets were peculiarly fond of visual imagery, since they thought it to be the best means to reflect “reality”, to mirror the world to the readers so that they could detect their deficiencies by means of self-reflection. These socially formative properties of imagery were neglected in the Romantic period, when writers stressed the importance of the individual rather than the conservative education of the masses. Subsequently, the conception of the visual changed from the passive reflection of the outside world towards the idea of creative illumination, an emanation of light from within. This paradigmatic turn is manifested in the title of M. H. Abrams seminal study about romantic imagination and poetics, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Abrams demonstrated that the venerable parallel between painting and poetry had lost its importance in late 18th and early 19th century thought. In the rhetorics of Romantic literary theory the visual was substituted by metaphors and analogies drawn from organic life and music.

The painting-poetry analogy has always been a barometer in the discussion of the interartistic relationship. It is loaded with arguments and catch-phrases partially and allegedly more than 2500 years old. Usually Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–466 BC), as quoted by Plutarch (c. 45–125), is led to the field to start the debate with his aphorism that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture (see Lessing 10, Steiner 5). Whereas the real source of this phrase lies in the obscurity of the past, the origin of Horatius’s famous line *ut pictura poesis* can be traced back to his “Ars Poetica”, the last didactic hexameter poem in the second part of his *Epistulae*. In early 18th century poetics the statement was isolated from its context to justify the neo-classical mimetic concept as an antique heritage (Wölfel in Lessing 216f). But even before, Horatius’ phrase had become a slant signpost at the crossroads of the interartistic debates, among which Leonardo’s *Paragone* and Lessing’s *Laokoon* (1740) are only two outstanding critical treatises. Wendy Steiner aptly analogized the historical discussion about the correspondence and the hierarchy of the arts as a pendulum that “swings back and forth [...] between eager acceptance and stern denial” (xiff). On average, the debate favored painting and poetry equally for several centuries. While at one time the “sister arts” were united in perfect harmony, at other times the one was thought to outshine the other. Mitchell was not the only scholar who ranked the works of the leading English Romantics as antipictorial, a thesis which can be hardly better illustrated than by Wordsworth’s verdict on the despotism of the visual sense (cf. Mitchell, *Picture* 114f). Wordsworth’s harsh sentence also stretched beyond the dominance of the visual in sensual perception, since it also encompassed graphic images: “Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!” was his summons to turn away from the visual attraction of the newly established illustrated magazines, in order to favor “the

tongue and ear” (383). The indignation of the Lakeside poet reveals a good deal of iconophobia. Wordsworth, like other 19th and 20th century poets, had a resentment against images, an anxiety that the pictures in the illustrated magazines and textbooks would one day not only rival but subdue poetic art. About a century and a half after the first publication of Wordsworth’s iconoclastic sonnet, the writer William Gass acknowledged a similar uneasiness in an interview with Ellen Esrock. Gass complained that the visual overspecification in verbal descriptions is insofar “anti-literary” as its emphasis conditions an impoverishment of the multi-sensory appeal and the holistic experience conveyed by literary texts (152ff).

In regard to the shifting relation of text and pictures, Poe represents the split attitude characteristic for his times. He worked in the first half of the 19th century, a time in which the literary life of his nation is generally labelled as the American Renaissance, which is a peculiar New World mould of Romanticism nourished from English and German sources. Some critics consider Poe a Romanticist, but others, especially Robert D. Jacobs (1969), see Poe in the tradition of the 18th century aesthetic discourses of Lord Kames and Archibald Alison. While my rough survey on the ups and downs of visual imagery in literature could well do with some commonplaces, Poe’s attitude towards images needs further specification, which I will provide in the next chapter. It will be shown, that Poe’s changing attitudes reflect the dissension of the whole debate.

The linguistic turn received a new impetus at the end of the 1960s, when especially French structuralists were directing their attention towards literature. Another approach to literature, which emerged at about the same time, are reception theories of mostly European and especially German origin. Reception and reader response theories have added a new participant who plays a formerly unnoticed trump in the interpretative game, namely the reader. While reception theories are primarily interested in recording historical readers’ reactions in order to reconstruct the changing apprehension of texts, reader response theories focus on the affective capacities of literary works and on the ways in which “meaning” is generated during perusal. This kind of reader-oriented criticism heavily draws on phenomenological aesthetics, which will be roughly outlined, since this study employs a similar approach to text-picture relations.

The phenomenological approach to art is based on the assumption that the aesthetic experience is always constituted in the relation between a subject and an object. In an unitary act of consciousness a work of art and the individual are connected in that the former is re-experienced by the latter. Thus, the phenomenological approach overcomes the traditional division of subject and object. Rather than analyzing a work of art by itself or as a historically determined entity it focusses on the “product” which is generated by the communication between the two poles and on the process which brings forth this product.

Roman Ingarden, who developed Husserl’s phenomenology into a theory of art, defined the outcome of this involvement of object and subject as the constitution of an aesthetic object (*ästhetischer Gegenstand*).⁷ Ingarden emphasized that an essential characteristic of a work of art is its organization in a schematic structure

which is wholly determinate. According to Ingarden, however, any work of art must also have certain places of indeterminacy (*Unbestimmtheitsstellen*) as well as potentialities (*potentielle Momente*), both of which have to be either concretized or actualized, respectively, in order to ideate the aesthetic object. This concretization, however, requires an active recipient who is willing and able to grasp the work's inherent determinate and indeterminate elements and their relation to each other. Moreover, the recipient must be capable of building some sort of determinacy where the work of art does not render it directly. The removal of such indeterminacies and their replacement through newly created elements leads to the concretization of the aesthetic object.

The aesthetic object, however, is no fixed entity, because the multifariousness of the determinate and indeterminate aspects in a work of art as well as their realization, selection and combination at least partly depend on the subject. For Ingarden it was important whether the subject removes the indeterminacies on the grounds of those determinate elements which are characteristic of the work of art and whether the elements with which the indeterminacies have been replaced lie within the confines of variability (*Variabilitätsgrenzen*), which are outlined by the "spirit" of the work of art. Over-determination, for example, may result in a distortion of the work of art in its concretization as an aesthetic object. Ingarden acknowledged, however, that even such misrepresentations of the work of art in an inappropriately constituted aesthetic object can contain some aesthetic value, and that it is even capable of exceeding the aesthetic value of the work itself.

A faithful concretization (*"getreue" Konkretisation*) of the aesthetic object must comply with the following provisions. First, the aesthetic object must be built on the reconstruction of those determinate elements which evidently exist inside the work of art. Second, the indeterminacies must be removed by filling in new elements which lie within the confines of variability and which agree with the "spirit" of the work as well as with its general style. Third, the concretization has to actualize those potentialities which the work offers for this purpose and all actualized elements must be interrelated in the same way as in their potential status. If the aesthetic object fulfils these conditions only to a small degree, it is likely to become the result of a mere suggestion of the work's artistic quality.

Any phenomenological approach to art and aesthetic experience runs the risk of being charged with subjectivity and guided by mere intuition. In 1948, Wimsatt and Beardsley coined the catch-phrase of the "affective fallacy" with which the then established critics labelled the alleged error of confounding the aesthetic, psychological and emotional effects of a work of art with the work of art itself. In sight of the implied antithesis one has to ask what constitutes a work of art, whether this question can be positively answered, and who it is who decides about such issues. The New Critical approach, for example, assumed that meaning had to be sought after exclusively inside the text. The New Critics considered a thorough formal analysis of a text's tropes as the only proper means to reconstruct the meaning of a literary work. Thus they did not only limit the value of a work of art to one exclusive interpretation (which itself was only to be restored from within the text, and that without regard to any extratextual constituents), they also assigned

the evaluation of literature to a critical elite. In the second half of the 1960s New Criticism and later traditional hermeneutics were criticized for their reductionism. This accusation was mainly directed towards the alleged positivism and exclusivity of their methods of interpretation, but the reductionism also referred to the individual critic. Professedly, both critical schools granted intersubjectivity, since interpretation was based on a verifiable formal analysis or, in the case of Hirsch's hermeneutics, on a circumstantial collection of data which was thought to be relevant to explain the origin and growth of the text. Despite all the strive for a well-grounded base of analysis, even the most thorough and detailed interpretation, such as Cleanth Brooks' study of *Macbeth*, was still the work of a single person, who selected and utilized the information regarded as relevant according to his own personal discretion. Finally, the charge was not mainly directed towards interpretation itself, but to the circumstances under which interpretation was produced. The progressive critics of the 1960s regarded the established methods of interpretation as reactionary and elitist and the self-asserting intersubjectivism as questionable. The charge against the New Critical as well as the hermeneutic approach was that both repressed subjectivity without being able to eliminate it, and thus projections of the interpreting individual were extrapolated as the constitutive substance of the literary work, as its positivistic meaning or as the intention of the author (Sontag 98ff). In the wake of the reorientation in literary studies, subjectivity itself became a topic of investigation. For his psychoanalytically oriented studies Norman Holland explored individual readers' responses to specific texts in order to test whether it is legitimate to make generalizations about the affective properties of literary texts at all. From his peripheral position in the field of literary studies, Holland did not only question the intersubjective significance of the outcome of the New Critical and hermeneutic analyses but also the relevance of intersubjectivity itself. Like Holland, Wolfgang Iser emphasizes the crucial role of the reader in his theories about the *Act of Reading*. However, Iser's eclectic approach, which fuses conceptions from psychology, philosophy, semiotics, as well as information and general system theory, is not oriented towards the literary experience of the individual reader but towards the analysis of the intratextual structures and the communicatory conditions stimulating the reader's hermeneutic activity.

Iser acknowledged Ingarden's achievement to have overcome the dualism between the object of art and the reading subject in that he had shifted the focus towards the intermediary aesthetic phenomenon to which both sides mutually contribute. Iser, however, disagreed with Ingarden on the location and function of the places of indeterminacy, on the conditions which regulate the formation of the aesthetic object, on the nature of the aesthetic object itself and, finally, about the reader's degree of contribution. Iser's starting point was that the formal restrictions of a literary text do not allow to present objects as a whole, but that they have to unfold them successively in a series of various views. He called these facets "perspective segments", a term that approximately corresponds with Ingarden's "schematized aspects". According to Iser, indeterminacy in literary text results from the unconnectedness of the single segments. Although the text offers various aspects which contribute to the presentation of an object, it does not give any account of

how these segments have to be linked with each other. Consequently, indeterminacies are located between the various aspects (Act 169). But there are more reasons for the existence of indeterminacies than the specific technical limitations of a literary text. A crucial point is the presentation and the experience of “reality”. Although literary texts at least partially draw their material from the “real” world, they represent familiar objects in an unfamiliar way (cf. 65). Since the text is unable to reproduce the simultaneous and holistic comprehension of objects which characterizes human cognition, the presentations of objects must be necessarily organized in a way that stimulates human experience and sensual perception. As a result, the literary objects do not exist independently from the text, but they come into being by the constitution of a “reality of fiction”. The general indeterminacy, which is generated by the lack of identification between the external world and the intratextual reality, is compensated by the reader in that he/she reconciles his private knowledge of the text’s “reality” with his/her view on the world of objects outside the text. Subsequently, perceptual data from two different domains are interfused, namely from the reader’s reality and the reality of fiction which the reader experiences in the act of reading. At this point, the traditional dichotomy of subject and object begins to fade. Iser acclaimed Ingarden for having initiated this central reorientation of the aesthetic discourse towards a more communicatory apprehension of the relationship between text and reader, but he criticized him for a too limited notion of the indeterminacies. The German critic thought that Ingarden’s illustrations of his concept reveal the classical roots of his aesthetics, which are directed towards the concretization of the object as a polyphonic and essentially harmonious composition. Iser believed the indeterminacies in Ingarden’s system to be rather mechanistically operating stimuli, which are to promote the finalization of the intentional object of art. Therefore, Iser went on, indeterminacies are considered as mere gaps in the representation of the object, and these gaps have to be filled in order to bring forth the concretization of the aesthetic object. As a consequence, indeterminacies are regarded as partially deliberately undefined facets of the intentional object within a pre-determined range. Iser thought the indeterminacies to be all too similar to, although not adequately distinguished from, Ingarden’s notion of the potentialities (173).

Iser questioned whether Ingarden was successful in systemizing the involvement of subject and object as a communicatory process. He considered the ultimate function of the indeterminacies in Ingarden’s system as the stimulation of the completion of a mostly prestructured object. This is why Iser characterized Ingarden’s concept not as a model of communication, but as “a one-way incline from text to reader” (*ibid.*). Moreover, Iser complained about the hybrid character of the indeterminacies, which, on the one hand, are considered as immanent elements of the work of art, and, on the other hand, as unspecified functions that involve object and subject (*ibid.*).

Besides the already mentioned aspects, Iser put more weight on the communicatory conditions which characterize the relationship between text and reader to account for indeterminacies of a different kind. He analyzed the modes of intercourse between text and reader in that he analogized them with the conventions

that govern social interaction. With reference to Austin's speech-act-theory Iser outlined the literary procedures that provide normative stability in the interaction of text and reader (60ff). According to Iser, the text has to regulate the communication with the reader insofar in that it has to embody indeterminacies in order to provoke the reader's participation. If literary texts were able to present objects in a wholly determinate way, communication would be superfluous. While he supposed Ingarden to regard indeterminacies as aesthetic defects, which make the finalization of aesthetic objects impossible and impair their artistic value, Iser ranked them as the vital precondition for any intercourse at all (169). In contrast to social interaction, however, indeterminacies in a literary text cannot be removed by a direct interchange of questions and answers, by gesticulation or intonation. Consequently, the text must incorporate pragmatic strategies which guarantee something comparable to conversational consistency as well as they must offer the possibility to build a situational context (66ff, 166f). Iser complained that Ingarden, in his overall classical strain, referred to some aesthetic values and metaphysical qualities without specifying any of these two norms. Consequently, the aesthetic function of the indeterminacies must remain vague, since the framework within which they must operate remained virtually unspecified (172).

Iser's functionalist approach to literary texts required a two-sided examination of the circumstances which establish the guidelines for the interaction between text and reader. It must not only account for the nature of external norms which are transplanted into the text, but also how these norms are mediated by means of narrative techniques. At the intersection between fictional text and factual world Iser introduced his concept of the "repertoire". The repertoire can be roughly defined as the common ground for communication between text and reader. It is a familiar background consisting of social norms, cultural conventions and literary traditions, and thus it provides a basic frame of orientation within the text (68ff). While this referential system negotiates the inner reality of the literary work with the extratextual reality of the recipient, so-called "strategies" unfold the diverse aspects of the reality of fiction. Moreover, the strategies organize the representation of the aesthetic objects and they map out the various ways in which they are communicated to the reader (86ff). Distancing himself from Ingarden, however, Iser did not want to have the prestructuring devices understood as impulses to determine a static but incomplete illusion. As has already been pointed out before, indeterminacies inevitably arise through the modes of textual representation. Additionally, the components of the repertoire that import a familiar framework into the text, lose their determinacy as soon as they are absorbed and transformed by the fictional reality. Even if it was possible to avoid any kind of indeterminacy in the text, the literary work would lose its effect, that is to stimulate the reader's imagination and combinatory activity. As it is, the indeterminacies open up a "network of possible connections" (96, 116) within the framework of the repertoire. The repertoire as well as the textual strategies prevent the text from being concretized along altogether arbitrary routes, or from being dissolved into exclusive subjectivity.

According to Iser the repertoire and the textual strategies supply one part of the overall communicatory conditions to which the reader responds in his concretization of the text. The “meaning” of a text, which is not to be mistaken with the term’s significance in literary hermeneutics or New Critical theory, is generated by means of the reader’s operation to complement the literary text on the basis of the intersubjective structures which are circumscribed by the text’s indeterminacies. This activity of the reader constitutes the dynamics in the interactive process of reading at the end of which meaning is produced in the form of a concretized aesthetic object.

This process begins with the reader’s recognition of the gaps between the unconnected perspective segments in the text. More than just interrupting the coherent flow of the text, these “blanks” challenge and organize the combination of juxtaposed aspects. The lack of an equivalence that allows to combine the segments from within the text leads towards the building of a referential field, within which the segments mutually affect each other by means of reciprocal projection (183). This basic function of the blank is indispensable for the concretization of the aesthetic object, since no segment can be determinate on its own. Its combination, however, with another segment brings forth a configurative meaning which replaces the previously existing indeterminacy. The production of this determinate structure, however, relies on the existence of a shared framework within which the provided equivalence is accepted as a common denominator. This framework is at best only roughly outlined by the repertoire, so that its generation mainly depends on the reader’s ideational activity which establishes the connection between the suspended segments.

The tension which is due to the heterogeneity of the segments is resolved by their organization into a “theme-and-horizon structure”. The theme is the particular segment of the text on which the reader momentarily focuses. When a theme loses its immediate relevance it drifts back into the horizon, which, consequently, consists of all previously grasped themes (97). In the adjustment of two segments one of them is singled out as the theme which is viewed from the standpoint of the horizon, and by this process the internal consistency of the reader’s successive concretization of the text is guaranteed. In the time-flow of reading the combination of disparate segments into determinate relations makes the reader’s so-called “wandering viewpoint” (116ff) continually switch from foreground to background. The themes are always grasped from the horizontal perspective of thematically vacant positions. The continual movement of the wandering viewpoint modifies what already has been read, and it also prefigures the expectation of what comes next (111, 118f). In contrast to the basic function of the blank, which is to tag the interrupted coherence between two specific segments and to stimulate the constitution of a referential field, a vacancy arises through the juxtaposition of theme and horizon within this very framework. Whereas the blank stimulates the provision of a link between two disparate segments, the vacancy conditions the reader’s comprehension of the text in both directions, since it affects the concretization of the aesthetic object in a synthetical operation consisting of retrospection and projection (198, 202f).

It has been doubted whether Iser's theory is sufficiently encompassing to provide an approach to texts older than the "modern" period, that is texts written before the 18th century (Newton 140). Another reproach is that Iser's theories are mainly directed towards the analysis of long prose works, and that they are not suited for the examination of short stories and poetry (Holland in Iser 1989 47f, see 54f). The analytical part of this study, however, will not examine the universal applicability of the theories in question, but it will be tested whether Iser's model can be employed to grasp the phenomenon created by illustrated texts.

Here, a starting point is provided by Iser's reference to Husserl's notion of passive synthesis, a supposedly subconscious process which phenomenologists consider responsible for the development of conceptions by means of "image-building". Although Iser regarded this process as the basic act of imagination, his critique of Ingarden reveals that he considered the role of visual imaging in the process of reading as an initial but subordinate stage of a finally conceptual ideation.⁸ Ingarden and Iser disagree about the conception of the work of art, probably, because the former was inclined to visualize his notions while the latter tended to abstract them, a fact that is also reflected in their different prose styles. Such divergent inclinations, which do not only affect the approach to works of art but also to our whole environment, seem to be a matter of individual disposition.

Modern psychology has refuted the traditional assumption that verbal, that is supposedly analytical, thinking is superior to visual thinking. Visual thinking, however, is related to fantasy and creativity, but it operates by means of intuition rather than by logical linearity like verbal thinking. However, even an universally acclaimed natural scientist as Albert Einstein conceded that he solved many problems through spontaneous visual precognition (Maffei/Fiorentini 174). In her two chapters about various studies of cognitive psychologists, among them Allan Paivio, John Richardson, and Mark Marschark, Ellen Esrock pointed out to the contradictory propositions about the imaging effects in reader response (81ff). Some of these findings correlate with the research results of modern neural sciences. One of the efforts of contemporary neural science is that it is testing the brains' processing of visual stimuli – a supposedly multi-stage synthetical process –, as a determining factor for human consciousness. At the end of the 1960s, Roger Sperry and others proved empirically that the brain computes language and vision independently from each other (see Kandel/Schwartz/Jessell 505, 364f). Modern neurologists believe visual perception to be a basically creative, though subconscious process, which requires from the brain much more than a passive intake of optical sensations (492f). The method of PET scanning (positron emission tomography) has made it possible to visualize that thinking is not necessarily connected to the use of language, and that verbal and visual working memory activate different areas of the brain (see 360, 1169f). According to Marschark and Cesare Cornoldi, visual imaging affects the reader response by its impact on transient short-term memory and by its more durable influence on isolated semantic aspects, such as the description of a character or a setting (see Esrock 110). If visual short-term memory affects the comprehension of a so-called "connected discourse", a string of semantically interrelated sentences from the length of a narrative passage up

to a whole short story (102), a synthesis of perspective segments, mental images affect the process of this synthesis, and they must even be supposed to be capable of adding an essentially visual meaning to a text.

These findings of neural sciences and cognitive psychology have some bearing on the applicability of Iser's theory for the analysis of the word-image relations in illustrated texts. First, neurophysiological and psychological investigations show that the reader's response is a process in which the visual intermingles with the verbal much more than Iser is inclined to acknowledge. Despite this involvement, they are initially independent mental processes, working on different cerebral pathways before they are most probably united in a multi-stage synthesis, in which the verbal does not dominate the visual. Therefore, an elucidation of the verbal from the perspective of the visual is as legitimate as the traditional other way around. Second, the propositions about the effect of imaging on short-term memory is of great importance to the comprehension of literary works. Moreover, they legitimize the modification of Iser's theme-and-horizon structure towards a more visually oriented guideline for the wandering view-point. And third, it can be justly inferred that materially existing graphic pictures affect the reader's reception as well as the hermeneutic activity even stronger than elusive mental images.

I do not want to conflate mental processes with the cultural conventionalization of looking, reading and thinking. I want to turn against the established procedure, in which images, and especially text illustrations, are semanticized linguistically.

However, my emphasis on the visual properties of Poe's texts and the visual stories of illustrations is not intended to make illustrations autonomous from the texts they were made for. I am not interested in the outcome of separate analyses and a subsequent comparison of the results, but in the mutual import of meaning from text to illustration and vice versa, a process which is the result of the reader's simultaneous involvement with both. Ralph Cohen, author of *The Art of Discrimination*, whose chapter about illustrations as critical comments on James Thomson's poem "The Seasons" is regarded as a pioneering reorientation in text-pixture relations, stated that the "insistence upon the independence of the arts has neglected the value of their interrelation." He went on:

The consequence of this limitation has been to reduce the range of criticism, to misunderstand past criticism and to neglect or misconstrue interrelations between the arts because the tests for such premises have been abandoned. (258)

On first sight, the fact that Iser's theories were adapted by the German art historian Wolfgang Kemp, may be one more evidence for the intrusion of literary studies into art history. But Kemp managed to use Iser's model for the analysis of pictorial artworks without sacrificing their visual specificity, as, for example, his inspection of Léon Gérôme's painting *The Death of Marshal Ney* demonstrates convincingly (Kemp, *Verständlichkeit* 262–73). One might argue against Kemp's analysis by saying that the findings of his study were prefigured by his knowledge of the historical circumstances. Nevertheless, Kemp achieves to construct a visual story from within the picture. The arguments he uses are all visual: the analysis of compositional lines, of illusionary and real space, Gérôme's knacks to convey movement, his painterly handling of details and large areas, the collusion of color

and form. In fact, Kemp's reading did anything but conform with earlier interpretations of the picture, which had been done away with as tasteless, as unintelligible, and as a typical boring specimen of reconstructive history painting, a conservative and ideologically accommodated piece of Napoleonic restoration. Instead, Kemp liberated the picture from these verdicts, though, it must be mentioned, by doing so he must refer to additional historical data. It is here where his viewer's response approach interfuses with reception aesthetics and traditional art historical hermeneutics, but I do not consider this a dilution of interpretative techniques. Kemp's method is rather a demonstration of how methods can be combined productively.

Kemp's interpretation, against the background of the historical "facts" as a pre-text, can be understood as analogous to the hermeneutic activity of the reader/viewer of illustrated editions. In an illustrated book the text is, of course, much more present, in its discursive details as well as in its visual materiality, so I do not want to push my analogy too far, but the differentiation of these two types of pre-texts is well worth making. The historical data about the Ney have been documented, processed and established by historians, so that the information is available in a state of determinacy.⁹ If Gérôme's painting, a piece of visual narrative, is able to perturb this determinacy, it must be supposed that an illustration for a literary work, the data of which are fictional and necessarily presented with many indeterminacies, is capable of affecting a verbal narrative even stronger. The bleak wall in Gérôme's painting provided Kemp with a formidable opportunity to illustrate Iser's notion of an indeterminacy as a "pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves" (Iser 169; cf. Kemp, *Verständlichkeit* 263f). The visually prominent "emptiness" of the wall is at once a stimulus to collect data which help to explain its central position despite its apparent unintelligibility, as well as it is a field of projection for the beholder's imagination.

However, the analysis of illustrations by means of a reader/beholder response approach differs from the interpretation of a canvas. Kemp analyzed the "perspective segments" of the painting, but a reader's/viewer's response approach to illustrated texts must also take into account the blanks between text and picture.¹⁰ From this perspective, one approach to illustrations is to reconstruct the constitution of the aesthetic object of the text. It must be noted that the illustrator plays a double role in the interpretative game. He is at once the reader of the text and its co-author. I will inspect the illustrator's involvement as a reader at first. Ingarden differentiated between two forms of concretization: aesthetic response and aesthetic judgment (*Wertantwort* and *Werturteil*). I do not want to discuss whether Ingarden's categories are conclusive or not, – a discussion which would necessarily have to revolve around the term *Wert* (aesthetic value) – but his awareness of a problem which has led to this differentiation. According to Ingarden, the concretization of the aesthetic object results in an aesthetic response, which itself, for two reasons, is characterized by indeterminacy. First, it only exists as an assemblage of ideas inside the mind of the reader, and, second, these ideas can be interconnected in different ways (25f). Although Ingarden specifically points to the state of concreteness of the constituted object in the mind of the reader (21), his differentiation between

response and judgement suggests that the former is rather a selective reduction of the multiple determinate and indeterminate aspects of the works of art. The aesthetic judgement, however, is much more concrete and determinate in that it formulates the aesthetic response. Ingarden questioned whether the aesthetic value can be determined adequately, and whether language, as a means of communication, is capable of rendering the aesthetic value concretely. An illustrator's work to a text can be equated with the concretization of the aesthetic object in a graphic formula, because an illustration reflects the outcome of the artist's ideational process. As such, an illustration can become a subject of analysis for a reader response approach, in that it is examined as a specific response to the text. For the literary critic the problem is how this graphic response can be faithfully translated into words, and it is this issue in which most theoretically oriented studies about text-picture relations, especially those influenced by semiotics, were interested in. A second problem is whether the illustrator was able to transform his mental "concretization" into a graphic picture without sacrificing the semantic and pictorial richness which, according to Iser, characterizes our mental images (147). Despite these problems of transformation, an illustration can be legitimately considered as an interpretation of a complete text or a specific text passages. As a starting point, one important criterion for the evaluation of the illustration is its faithfulness to the text, its appropriateness, its adequacy and the degree of correspondence between the two. But these criteria must not be understood as yardsticks for the quality of illustrations. The search for reasons to explain for incongruities between text and illustrations, that is to elucidate the lack of faithfulness etc., must be considered as the stimulus that involves the reader with the text and the illustration simultaneously. This commitment finally leads to the creation of an imagetext, and that is nothing but the generation of meaning.

More criteria for the comparative analysis are, for example, the visual reflection of the writer's imagery, or the examination of the artists' response to the author's aesthetics. In my article about illustrations for Poe's early poem "To Helen" some contextual factors like these are inspected, because they help explain the great variety in Helen's pictorial presentation. Some of the questions raised in this article are also relevant for this study. Yet, it is impossible to handle the diversity of material which offers itself for a survey like this. As has already been mentioned, this is not a traditional hermeneutic study that collects as much data as possible to reconstruct allegedly authorial or artistic intentions. My use of such additional information will be selectively employed where it is useful to specify the referential system of the repertoire. And besides literary traditions, social norms and cultural conventions, some attention must also be paid to the development of the illustration as a genre and to the specific tradition of Poe illustration. But these topics will remain, to speak with Iser, in a horizontal position. Besides the fact that the great corpus of texts and illustrations makes such methods unmanageable, I am not at all sure whether a massive accumulation of all related material would improve the outcome of this study: it would become a never-ending story.

Instead, I rather would like to demonstrate how the side by side of text and illustrations generate (almost) never-ending stories. For this undertaking, the

scope of analysis is widened in that Poe's texts are not regarded as dogmatic, and illustrations are not merely understood as visual transformations of the text.¹¹ The outcome of the illustrator's ideational activity is a work of art in itself, and not a passive reflection of the text. As a result, the reader of Poe's text and the beholder of the accompanying illustrations is involved with both. Iser's metaphor of a "network of possible connections" characterizes the communicatory conditions of text and reader very well. Norman Holland aptly designated Iser's concept of the text-reader-relationship as a "bi-active" model (Holland in Iser 1989 45f). Illustrations are not only responsible for this relationship to become a tri-active one, they also make the network more intricate, and subsequently the reader becomes entangled more deeply. The intrusion of pictorial material into the communicatory process and the participation of one more interlocutor, conditions a slight review of Iser's model. Moreover, and to come back to my starting point of this chapter, this third communicatory partner has specific, unlinguistic means of expression. This means that the visual specificity of the illustrations has to be taken into account before one can appreciate their share in the communicatory process. Wolfgang Kemp demonstrated how the perspective segments of a picture work to create a visual statement. Unfortunately, however, the gaps between the schematized aspects within illustrations are only rarely as apparent as in Gérôme's painting, so that the analysis of these indeterminacies warrants to be a difficult undertaking.

In the main part of this study, I concentrate on textual indeterminacies and indeterminacies between text and picture rather than internal indeterminacies in pictures. Although the respective detection of internal indeterminacies is sometimes a necessary step in the process of the analysis, the main focus is directed towards the juxtaposition of unconnected perspective segments between Poe's texts and the illustrations. This can be done in different ways. First, a juxtaposed text passage and its accompanying picture are regarded as two "schematized aspects", and they are organized in a theme-horizon structure. The respective structural frames of reference are provided in that they are considered as two independent "connected discourses", which can be assigned to each other. The second procedure, which may become necessary before the one above mentioned can be employed, partially works on a smaller scale. It singles out internal schematized aspects from either the text or the picture and juxtaposes this segment with a connected discourse of the other medium. Third, and this is probably the starting point of any intermedial communication, two single schematized aspects are set in relation to each other. It is at this level where comparison can be most usefully applied in a phenomenological survey study like this. The detection of a correspondence between textual and visual segments is already an act of ideation. In illustrated editions, text and images are only rarely set immediately adjacent to each other (see below), so that the assignation of textual and visual segments requires the recognition of at least one semantic congruity. This interrelation, however, can either be obvious or ambiguous. In the latter case, the activity of the reader/viewer is challenged to find more compatible elements which might support his hypothesis, and

through this operation the focus widens and more visual and textual details come into view.

So far it has been dealt with indeterminacies in either texts or illustrations as well as with those which originate between the two by a problematic assignation of segments of various size and different states of determinacy. There is also a kind of indeterminacy, which lies rather outside the illustrations or the texts. If one wants to avoid the differentiation between internal and external blanks, as Wolfgang Kemp has outlined it (Kemp, *Text* 67), one must give the somewhat paradoxical definition that this sort of gap is an omission, a constitutive absence, which, however, is an essential part of the picture. This type is a blank in the truest sense of the word. The unconnectedness is not due to the indeterminate adjustment of the segments, but to the total non-existence of a formulated equivalence inside either text or picture. From the perspective of the text one may say that the illustration either fails to depict the aspect in question or that it is overdetermined, since the picture shows aspects which the text does not describe. In fact, gaps of this sort are rather the rule than the exception. John Richardson, who is rather sceptical about the visuality of thinking, posed the question whether “a holistic semantic idea might consist in whole or in part, in a composite, interactive mental image” (qtd. in Esrock 110). Perhaps mental images are capable of holding such complex information, but text illustrations surely cannot succeed to depict the semantic totality of a literary work. It must be noted that Ingarden defined the concretization of the aesthetic object as a response to the work of art in its entirety. I agree with Iser that the aesthetic object is something in motion, an oscillating structure that defies finalization, since it is continually being rebuilt and refined. Its elusiveness is not a blemish, but an essential quality. Illustrations can only be concretizations of very specific aspects. Their concreteness as material pictures causes them to become visually impoverished in comparison to the richness of mental images. Graphic pictures can only convey faint and static impressions of the multi-dimensionality, the sensual complexity, the kinetic qualities and the semantic implicativeness of mental images. Almost no study about text-picture relations fails to point out to the basic distinction which Lessing posited in section XVI in the first part of his *Laokoon*: “[...] daß die Malerei zu ihren Nachahmungen ganz andere Mittel, oder Zeichen gebraucht, als die Poesie; jene nämlich Figuren und Farben in dem Raume, diese aber artikulierte Töne in der Zeit” (104). Lessing, of course, is not specifically dealing with illustrations, but his awareness of the formal incommensurabilities of the two arts, painting and poetry, can be generalized for the relation of figurative, in the pictorial or plastic sense, and verbally discursive artworks. Characteristically, his initial discussion is about a sculpture, the Laokoon group. In section III Lessing focuses his attention on the aspectual, but static character of figurative art. Here, he introduces his notion of the “pregnant moment” or, perhaps better, the “productive moment” (*fruchtbares Moment*). His term defines the aspect which the visual artist should use to transform the sequential arrangement and the semantic landmarks of a text optimally. According to Lessing, figurative presentations must not freeze the climactic aspects of the text, but expose those that surround and suggest it (25ff). Lessing wrote:

Dasjenige aber nur allein ist fruchtbar, was der Einbildungskraft freies Spiel läßt. Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir hinzu denken können. Je mehr wir darzu denken, desto mehr müssen wir zu glauben sehen. In dem ganzen Verfolge eines Affekts ist aber kein Augenblick, der diesen Vorteil weniger hat, als die höchste Staffel desselben. Über ihr ist weiter nichts, und dem Auge das Äußerste zeigen, heißt der Phantasie die Flügel binden. (25f)¹²

Regarding illustrations, one might argue that such a visual transformation does not do justice to the literary work, because the text's significant substance is ignored, and because the narrative succession of events is contracted, disarranged or abandoned. However, this study only marginally cares about minute faithfulness of transformation, since I regard Poe's texts and illustrations as a type of artwork which is open to interpretation, that very kind which Umberto Eco labelled *opera aperta*. The iconophobia, however, which seems to motivate the postulate of the illustration's textual faithfulness is not ungrounded. Despite the relative poverty of graphic images, which I mentioned above, a single illustration is potentially capable of turning the meaning of a text upside down, or at least what has formerly been understood as its meaning. One should only take into account the suggestive nature of single visual details, by which, for example, advertisements entice the customer. But this attractiveness is not an internal quality exclusive to images, – something that gains its full significance by being labelled as icon, index or symbol –, but its power not only to challenge the literary work, but also to cooperate with it across the border of the media, and thus to propel the reader's/ beholder's imagination to review both itself and the text from a new perspective. And yet, it must also be stated that even a most extensive series of illustrations can hardly visualize a short literary text exhaustively. Such a series can condense the gaps but it cannot completely eliminate them. This is a point of some importance. So far this chapter listed the various reasons which are responsible for the occurrence of different forms of indeterminacies in text-picture relations, and I will soon briefly deal with the process within which these indeterminacies are resolved and meaning is generated. This procedure, however, is not to suggest that the generation of "significant" contentions, by adjusting the aspects of texts and pictures to each other, is the ultimate and exclusive means to build up the aesthetic object. Sometimes it is as important what texts or pictures do not tell or show at all. Sometimes it is the difference which makes all the difference.

Basically, the communicatory process during which indeterminacies of all kinds are resolved is the same. This process can be visualized as a figure consisting of growing fields which emerge from a mutual base. In this diagram one field symbolizes the text, the other the picture, and the mutual leg is the intersection of determinate equivalences. At the start there are only a few segments from the text and from the picture. Their connection constitutes the base, which is going to be stabilized by more points, which represent the amount of intersecting determinate equivalences. From the basic building of propositions between two single aspects, the ideational process becomes more elaborate, taking at first more aspects, then syntheses of aspects, and finally syntheses of connected discourses into account. Thus the one-dimensional line develops into two reciprocally illuminating planes of projection which are built up by reflection and back-reflection. This procedure

brings forth a configurative meaning, to which text and picture equally contribute and in which indeterminacies in either the verbal or the pictorial presentation of Poe's text are dissolved. The process is one of a continual synthesis of propositions, which the one makes about the other – a *perpetuum mobile* of projected interpretations. The internal organization and the side by side of texts and pictures condition the wandering view-point's continual switch within and between the pictorial and textual aspects.¹³ Mostly it will be hard to decide whether the outcome of this interchange, the aesthetic object, is rather a text or a picture. Texts and pictures continually inseminate each other, and as this is the nature of cross-fertilization, the offspring is a hybrid.

If text and picture are the parents of this progeny, the reader/viewer is the nurse. The emerging figure in the middle ground between text and illustrations depends on the reader/viewer and the conditions under which this individual conceives the text-image relationship, and thus it can adapt many forms. Iser's notion of the reader has been criticized, since he did not provide any empirical data about existing readers that prove the relevance of his theories (Holland in Iser, *Prospecting* 43f). In fact, Iser's reader is not real, but virtual. However, the guidelines of the repertoire and the strategies imply the reader's reactions towards the text: the reader is to some extent simultaneously implied in and piloted through the structures of the literary work. The adoption of Iser's theories by art historians shows that this concept has also been applied to other fields of research advantageously. Another reproach was brought forth by Terry Eagleton, who criticized Iser's model because it taciturnly surmises not only a critical, but also a liberal reader (79), a reader that is willing, able and free to make up his/her own mind.

Basically, the reader mentioned in this study is identical with Iser's "implied reader". However, the charges of Holland and Eagleton are not unfounded. Iser stated that the indeterminacies in the text are manifold, and that the reader is unable to become aware of, react to or resolve all of them. In Iser's theoretical system, the reader is not only critic, the critic is also reader. Thus, a critic employing Iser's concept is involved with the text just like the theoretical construction of the "implied reader", one of the objects of the critic's analysis. It is here where the theoretically intersubjective transparency of the implied reader becomes clouded by an individual's infringement.¹⁴

There are many personal factors on the side of the critic which dilute the intersubjective concept of the implied reader. And yet, the oscillating *gestalt* between text, illustration and reader is not wholly arbitrary as Iser's critics suspected. The repertoire, though defined by cultural, social, and artistic norms which are not universally valid, provides the overall referential field, within which the configurative meaning can be generated and within which the indeterminacies between text and picture can be resolved, and within which my results of my analysis can be verified. To pick up my favorite metaphor of this chapter once again, the repertoire provides the boundaries of the new territory gained. It seems as if Ingarden's notion of the confines of variability (*Variabilitätsgrenzen*) comes back into play at this point. In Ingarden's system, however, these confines are prefigured by some unspecified quality of the work of art, and thus they are not considered as interlo-

cutionary conditions. The boundaries mentioned are not fixed, but they exist. However, the range within which interpretations can be made, is incomparably wider than those staked off by exclusively formalist, hermeneutic, iconographic, structuralist, Marxist, feminist, or post-colonial approaches. As a result, speculation becomes a legitimate means for the projection of meaning. The configurative meaning becomes speculative, as soon as the emerging *gestalt* loses contact with the mutual base of determinate equivalences, and, consequently, the construction of verifiable interpretations becomes difficult. The same holds true for the reconstruction of the intricate process during which interpretations are produced, turned down, re-configured and synthesized. When this *gestalt* threatens to collapse, information from the surrounding repertoire, as well as other contextual and extratextual data can support interpretations which otherwise may seem all too far-fetched. The changing positions of the reciprocally projecting fields can be compared to the pages of a book opened gradually. When the volume is fully open, when the reader has perused the text and scrutinized the illustrations, when his imagination has formed the aesthetic object from the material given by both, additional meaning can only be imported from outside the book. It is here where the phenomenological approach stops to operate and where others begin to work.

Due to my reference to various theories, my flexible and admittedly eclectic approach is, of course, susceptible of subjectivity. But in sight of the diversity of the copious material any rigid application of a theoretical concept is likely to generate undue selection and simplificatory abstraction. Thus, the striving for intersubjectivity might all too easily result in a academic fabrication of artificial homogeneity where natural heterogeneity exists. In defense of my approach, I would like, once more, to refer to a more proficient scholar than me. In the introduction to her study Mieke Bal says about her method of association: "The point is not to convince readers of its appropriateness, or its truth, but to offer the speculative possibility."

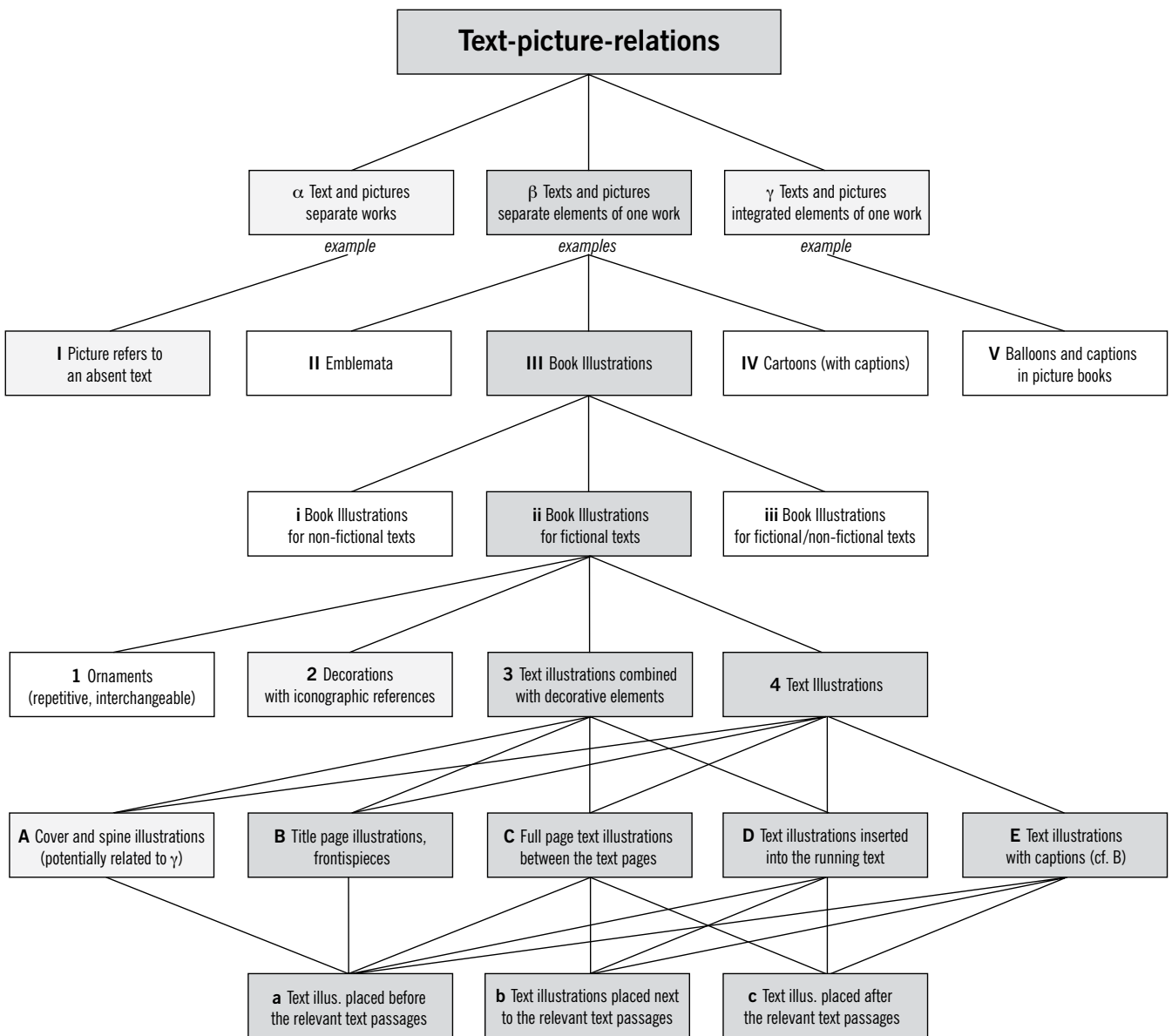
2.2 Texts and pictures discussed in this study

The difference between illustrated texts and those that are not has to be fathomed beyond the obvious fact that the former are accompanied by pictures and the latter are not. In order to find out how illustrations interfere with the communication between text and reader, the nature of these pictures as well as the various ways in which they are combined with texts must be further specified. Mitchell distinguished between graphic, optical, perceptual, mental and verbal images (*Iconology* 9ff). According to his genealogy, text illustrations belong to the class of images “proper”, that is graphic pictures (I2). The systematical categorization of illustrations as part of the image family which is united with texts, must be refined, since the variations of conceivable connections between texts and pictures are multifold. These connection can be direct, indirect or arbitrary, but *per definitionem* text illustrations require some sort of verbal, usually written source of reference.

The Bible is probably the most frequently illustrated book in Western culture, if not in the whole world. Its long history and its enormous impact on culture, politics, society, psychology and many other fields has inspired a presumably unrivalled diversity of pictures. Besides the vast mass of stand-alone paintings, drawings and prints, let alone statues and reliefs, the Bible has inspired countless illustrations. It has not only brought about thousands of pictures, in Western culture it was also one of the very first texts which demanded or challenged pictorial illustration at all. A part of the religious heritage of the word “illustration” becomes apparent in its original but now obsolete meaning as “spiritual enlightenment” (OED). The original sense of the word is nearly synonymous with explanation or, analogous to the imagery of light, elucidation. In its earliest use the word bears spiritual denotations only, but in the course of the centuries it has been absorbed by the profane world and its religious meaning became obscure. Today, the original roots of the word “illustration” are more apparent in its equivalent term “illumination”. In modern times both words are still in use, although their pragmatic use has substantially changed, and the two of them moved side by side from one semantic field into another. Whereas “illumination” is used today to specify the handmade pictures in medieval manuscripts and in religious *incunabula*, embellished and colored by the so-called illuminators, the term “illustration” signifies the huge group of all those pictures that relate to texts, which have been reproduced in the history of mass letterpress printing.

In order to examine the term “illustration” more closely it is useful to take a closer look at the already mentioned branch of the image family. In the following scheme, which is an expansion of Manfred Pfister’s typology of text-picture-relationships (321ff; fig. 1), some types of intermedial connection are represented in shaded squares. These forms will play a prominent role in the analytical part of this study. Darker shades signify points of emphasis. The types that are set in unshaded squares are merely listed to illustrate the context of the main points, but they are not going to be examined in this study. They are considered as “dead ends” of interest, and therefore their relation to other groups are not shown by means of connecting lines.

A typology of text-picture-relations



Pfister specified three main groups (α – γ), the second of which is most important for this study. However, it is interesting to take a glance at the other two, before attention will be directed to group β . Group α comprises texts and pictures that refer to each other without being physically combined. The countless paintings, drawings and prints that refer to the Bible without being part of the physical item are representatives of this group, and the literary form of *ekphrasis* is yet another, though different example. It is debatable whether pictures that were once united with the text and later separated from it belong to this group or group β . As it is, many limited editions are conceived as suites, into which the illustrations are loosely inserted. The pictures can be divided from the text or their arrangement can be put in disorder. Some examples from the body of Poe illustrations are the illustrated suites of Oscar ESTRUGA (1983), Luis MOLNÉ (1946) and Karl KORAB

Fig. 1 A typology of text-picture-relations.

(1978). The same applies to full page illustrations that keep circulating separately, such as the many single illustrations of the famous Quantin edition (Pollin, *Images* entries 145 and 146) which can frequently be found in official and private Poe collections. In these cases, where the original arrangement can be reconstructed with the help of intact editions, the illustrations must be classified as belonging to group III. The case is different with the designs of such well-known artists as Dante Gabriel ROSSETTI and James ENSOR, who were fascinated by Poe and produced pictures based on his works without commission. While decades after their creation ENSOR's etchings are still regularly used as text illustrations, only one of ROSSETTI's pictures made it into Woodberry's *Life of Edgar Allan Poe*, where, more than half a century after its production, it was wrongly attributed to another artist (cf. Pollin, *Images* entry 1265). Paul GAUGUIN, Odilon REDON, Umberto BOCCIONI, René MAGRITTE, Edward HOPPER and Robert MOTHERWELL are just a few more examples from a group of renowned artists who were inspired by Poe. It is debatable whether the works in question are to be classified as illustrations, since, on the one hand, only a few ever appeared alongside the text, and, on the other hand, the text references are often obscure. REDON's pictures relate to Poe only via the title of the art portfolio in which they were loosely assembled. The subtitles of these lithographies provide vague references rather than direct connections to Poe's texts, which are not included in the suite. Nevertheless, they have been repeatedly reprinted as specific text illustrations in later editions. The history of Poe illustration also knows embellishments that were commissioned for specific editions that never appeared, such as the pictures of Alberto MARTINI. The plates of R. Swain GIFFORD, Frederic William CHURCH and G. A. PLATT were commissioned for an edition which appeared only in very small quantities. While full sets containing these plates belong to the rarest illustrated Poe editions, single sheet prints of the illustrations and reproductions in other editions can be found frequently. While MARTINI's illustrations are identifiable, since the artist provided titles for most of them, no such clues exist for the pictures of GIFFORD and PLATT, and thus they have often been reprinted as out-of-copyright material in later editions, in which the assignation of plates and texts is disputable.¹⁵

Such disruptions of texts and pictures are impossible in group γ , since here texts and pictures are two integral elements of one work. Examples from this group will be discussed in this study marginally: picture books and comic strips that are based on Poe's text. Group β comprises the general mass of book illustrations (III), since here texts and pictures exist side by side as separate units within one physical object. In the neighbourhood of book illustrations the pictures of emblem books are of interest, since here the relationship between text and picture is defined as a collateral allegorical statement (Raupp 49ff). This kind of interplay may also apply to book illustrations, but in fact this is the exception rather than the rule. Among the book illustrations, those for fictional texts (ii) are naturally of the greatest interest for this study. Group iii, however, must be peripherally considered, since Poe successfully disguised some of his fictional texts as authentic reports. Contemporary readers believed the Western expedition account *The Journal of Julius Rodman* and especially the now so-called "The Balloon Hoax" (1844) to be true reports. Poe

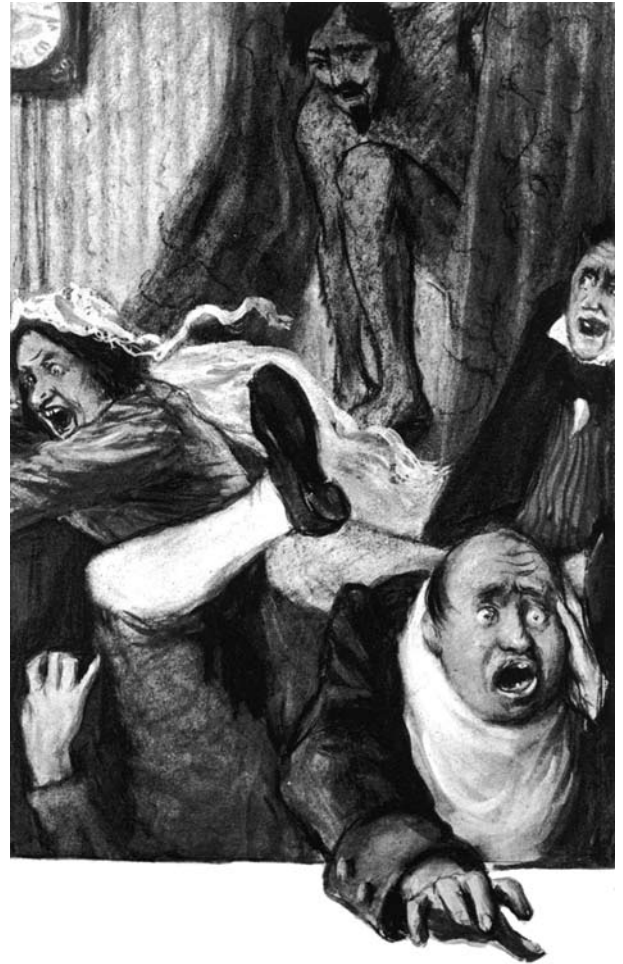


Fig. 2-4 Vignettes by Harry Clarke (1919, 1923).
Collection of the author.

succeeded in launching his latter hoax in two widespread daily newspapers within two days, and the verisimilitude of the text was enhanced by the accompanying engraving of a balloon, which Poe culled from the same source as the technical information about the vehicle.

According to Stephen C. Behrendt group ii is subdivided into four sets (3off). Group I can be neglected, since its components are mere ornamental devices interspersed with the text, mainly at the beginning or end with no reference to its contents. Examples are decorations around page numbers, abstract vignettes, geometric designs or ornamental initials, such as those produced by Emil PRETORIUS for a German Poe edition of 1913 (Pollin, *Images* entry 545). Their common feature is interchangeability, which becomes apparent in their function as space-fillers as well as in their repetitive employment within one text or for more works of disparate character. The vignette-like head-pieces and tail-pieces belonging to group 2 are related to those in group I in regard to their decorative function. However, they refer to the iconography of either cotext or context. In illustrated Poe editions decorations such as these often employ skulls with intact eyeballs or some other monstrosities to convey a general sense of dread, even where the text is devoid of such features (see CLARKE 1923 *passim*; fig. 2-4). CLARKE's vignettes may loosely correspond with a text like *The Premature Burial*, but they introduce gruesome aspects into such predominantly humorous tales as "Lionizing" and "Bon-Bon", where they were used as tail-pieces. Other variants are more specific, for example stylized representations of Poe's favourite fictional pets – cats, bugs, and ravens – or details isolated from his works, such as bells, a trowel or a painter's palette. Very often, these pictures are insignificant, but Behrendt pointed out to their potentially misleading function as "false signals" (34).

An intermediary between the text illustration, the principal object of this study, and the decorative forms is a combination of these types. Text illustrations bordered by ornamental frames are the most common types from this group (3). These frames, either drawn by the artist or added in the process of book-making, can be very inconspicuous as single or double lines confining the pictures' dimensions. Despite their unobstrusiveness even single lines intervene in the communication between text and illustrations, since they clearly divide the pictures from their cotexts. Although the repetitive use of characteristic frames lends visual unity to a book, it also signals the separateness of the verbal and pictorial components of an illustrated book. This signal is emphasized when the pictures are confined by peculiar borders which disrupt the rectangular scheme of the text



columns and the pages, as is the case with the semi-ovaloid head-pieces produced by Suzanne CLEE (1983 *passim*). The case is more complex in sight the of elaborate frames of Art Nouveau illustrations, in particular, when elaborate frames become part of the pictorial fiction as in W. Heath ROBINSON's picture for "Lenore" (1900: 31; fig. 5) or, half a century earlier, in Julian PORTCH's wood engraving for "The Pit and the Pendulum" in the first English embellished edition (1852: 140).

The separating function of frames is either accentuated or enfeebled where figures and forms transgress the regular borderlines of pictures, an effect which is often employed to create an impression of three-dimensionality (see COBURN 1902 6: 200, fig. 6; ROBINSON 1986: 9, 13, 15). Such pictorial tricks may result in a visual connection between text and picture, because the rigid frames of the pictures are forced open, but they may also effectively foreground the eye-catching qualities of illustrations at the expense of the text. Where the illustration is *hors texte*, which means it occupies a full page without running text, such effects rather stress the pictures' separateness from the typography. A similar case are pictures that have irregular shapes or so-called "fading frames" (see WÉLY 1910: *passim*). In the latter case at least one side of the linear frame is missing and the images fade into the whitish tone of the paper, providing a smooth changeover between picture and text. Illustrations with very irregular shapes are particularly eye-catching, since they are incongruous with the general impression of rectangularity provided by the pages' dimensions and their linear type composition (Bergner 107; as an

Fig. 5 *Lenore* by W. Heath Robinson (1900).

Courtesy of Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe.

Fig. 6 *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether* by Frederick Simpson Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library of New York University.



example see WÖLBING's illustrations below, figg. 15–17). When illustrations with irregular shapes are not full-page or are placed beneath the columns, they must be necessarily combined with the typography. Where the typography at least at one side adapts itself to the irregular shapes of the illustrations by means of the run-around technique, or *vice versa*, where pictures are placed in the empty spaces caused, for example, by the short lines of poems, text and pictures are presented side by side in a harmonious unit, at least as long as both components are balanced visually. The given specimen from the *Histoires Extraordinaires*, with an illustration for “Metzengerstein” by Carlo FARNETI (1927; fig. 7), shows a combination of several features mentioned so far. Here, the illustration dominates the page because of its size and its striking irregular form. The illustration is not inserted into the text, but the text is adapted to the shape of the illustration. The opposition between the houses Metzengerstein and Berlifitzing is stressed by the separation of the two castles by means of the text insertion. Manfred Titzmann stated that pictures are unable to formulate complex utterances (379), but they are capable of commenting on the text, in case the text is unable to semantize all aspects of the picture. Thus, FARNETI's illustration achieves more than just visualize the opposition of the two houses. The artist shows the young baron in a pensive mood, and an evil staring eye in the background suggests that he is under the spell of some supernatural force which makes him commit the deeds described in the text. I do not want to deliver a full interpretation of this illustration here, nor do I want to start the discussion of Titzmann's thesis, but it must be noted that the etching can only challenge the text, because of its visual dominance over the typographical elements on

Fig. 7 *Metzengerstein*: Carlo Farneti's etching, its arrangement with the text and the overall page layout. Typography by Robert Coulouma (1927). Collection of Burton Pollin.



unnatürlichen Licht einer mattleuchtenden, aber deutlich zu erkennenden, gasartigen Ausstrahlung, die weithin ausgebreitet war und wie ein Leuchentuch um das Schloß zusammenschlug. „Du sollst - du darfst das nicht sehen!“ sagte ich schauernd zu Usher und führte ihn mit sanfter Gewalt vom Fenster weg zu einem Sessel. „Die Erscheinungen, die dich so erregen, sind Naturschauspiele rein elektrischer Art und haben durchaus nichts Außergewöhnliches an sich. Vielleicht rührt die spukhafte Wirkung auch nur von den giftigen Ausdünstungen des Teiches her. Komm, schließen wir das Fenster. Es ist eiskalt draußen, und du könntest dich erkälten. Ich habe da eines deiner Lieblingswerke, ich werde dir vorlesen. So kommen wir besser über diese schauerhafte Nacht hinweg.“

Der alte Band, den ich zur Hand genommen hatte, war *Mad Trist* von Sir Launcelot Canning, und mehr in trübem Scherz als im Ernst hatte ich es Ushers Lieblingsbuch genannt; denn die eigentümliche, phantasiöse Weitschweifigkeit dieses Werkes konnte den so groß veranlagten, hohen Geist meines Freundes wirklich nicht fesseln. Doch es war das einzige Buch, das ich im Augenblick zur Hand hatte, und ich hoffte im stillen, daß die Erregung, die sich meines armen Freundes bemächtigt hatte, in den maßlosen Torheiten, die ich im Begriff war vorzulesen, Linderung finden werde, kommen doch solche und ähnliche Anomalien gar nicht selten in der Geschichte der Geisteskranken vor. Hätte ich

ahnen können, mit welch hingebungsvoller, gespanntester Aufmerksamkeit er den Worten der Erzählung lauschen oder vielmehr zu lauschen vorgeben werde, ich hätte mir zu dem Erfolg meiner guten Absicht wohl gratulieren dürfen. Ich gelangte zu jener wohlbekannten Stelle, da Ethelred, der Held des *Trist*, gewaltsam die Tür des Eremiten erbricht, nachdem er zuvor vergeblich gebeten hatte, man möge ihm freiwillig Eintritt gewähren. Die Stelle lautet etwa folgendermaßen:

„Und Ethelred, der ein beherzter Recke war und sich nun nach dem Genuß des kräftigenden Weines besonders stark fühlte, war der Unterhandlungen mit dem tückischen und boshafte Eremiten müde; er fühlte, wie der Regen ihm schon über die Schultern rann, und sah, daß das Unwetter mit unheimlicher Geschwindigkeit heranzog. So erhob er seine Keule und hatte durch ein paar kräftige Hiebe in die Brettertür bald ein genügend großes Loch geschlagen, um seine gepanzerte Hand hindurchzwingen zu können. Dann riß und zerrte er so heftig an den Latten und schlug und hieb so wütend auf sie ein, daß das Krachen des trockenen Holzes im ganzen Wald widerhallte.“

Kaum hatte ich den letzten Satz zu Ende gelesen, fuhr ich entsetzt auf und hielt einen Augenblick inne, denn es schien mir - eine Sekunde später sagte ich mir selbst, daß meine überreizte Phantasie mich wohl getäuscht haben müsse -, es schien mir, als dränge aus einem entlegenen Teil des Gebäudes ganz dumpf und schwach und kaum vernehmlich das Echo jenes krachenden, dumpfen Polterns an mein Ohr, das Sir Launcelot eben so ausführlich beschrieben hatte. Zweifelloso hatte mich nur das Zusammentreffen des Geräusches mit dem Gelesenen beirrt; denn im Klappern der Fensterläden und im Toben des immer heftigeren und wütenderen Sturmes wären jene Töne, wenn sie tatsächlich existiert hätten, sicherlich untergegangen, ohne daß ich sie hätte vernehmen können. Ich fuhr also fort zu lesen:

„Doch als der wackere Kämpfer Ethelred nun über die Schwelle trat, da staunte er und ergrimmete sehr, als er keine Spur von dem boshafte Eremiten sah, sondern an seiner Stelle einen schuppigen Drachen, der fürchterlich anzusehen

war und feuerspeierend vor einem goldenen Palast Wache hielt, dessen Fußboden ganz aus Silber war. An der Wand aber hing ein Schild aus blankem Erz, das die Inschrift trug: Wem der Eintritt hier gelungen, Dem gebührt des Siegers Preis. Wer das Drachentier bezwungen, Der gewinnt den Schild als Preis. Da schwang Ethelred seine Keule und versetzte dem Drachen einen gewaltigen Schlag auf den Schädel, so daß er vor ihm zu Boden stürzte, seinen stinkenden Odem aushauchte und einen so markdurchdringenden Schrei ausstieß, daß Ethelred sich am liebsten die Ohren zugehalten hätte, um diesen grauenhaften Ton nicht zu hören, dessengleichen er nie zuvor vernommen hatte.“

Und wieder hielt ich im Lesen dieses Unsinn inn und horchte in höchster Bestürzung auf. Diesmal bestand kein Zweifel mehr, daß ich im nämlichen Augenblick - aus welcher Richtung konnte ich allerdings nicht sagen - wie aus weiter Ferne einen leisen, doch gellenden, langgezogenen, fremd klingenden Schrei vernahm, die genaue Entsprechung zu dem gräßlichen fremdartigen Geheul des Drachen, das ich, von des Verfassers Beschreibung heraufbeschworen, soeben in meiner Phantasie vernommen hatte.

Obwohl diese zweite, so merkwürdige Beobachtung mich natürlich aufs höchste erregte und tausend widerstreitende Gedanken in mir wachrief, bewahrte ich doch noch soviel Geistesgegenwart, mein Grauen zu verbergen und die überempfindliche Nervosität meines Freundes durch keinerlei Bemerkung über meine Beobachtungen zu beunruhigen. Ich war nicht sicher, ob er selbst die fraglichen Töne gehört hatte, obgleich sich sein Verhalten während der letzten Minuten sonderbar verändert hatte. Er hatte ursprünglich mir gegenübergesessen; plötzlich aber drehte er seinen Stuhl so herum, daß sein Gesicht direkt der Zimmertür zugekehrt war. Ich konnte seine Züge nun nur noch zum Teil sehen, bemerkte aber trotzdem, daß seine Lippen leise zitterten, als flüsterte er unverständliche Worte vor sich hin. Sein Haupt war auf die Brust gesunken, doch ein Blick auf sein Profil überzeugte mich, daß er nicht schlief; er stierte vielmehr mit weit aufgerissenen, starren Augen vor sich hin. Ebenso bewies mir die stete Unrast seiner Glieder, daß er wache. Er rückte bald nach rechts, bald nach links, so daß sein Körper in beständig schaukelnder Bewegung war. Das alles hatte ich mit einem einzigen Blick erfasst; dann nahm ich die Lektüre von Sir Launcelots Werk wieder auf.



Fig. 8 *Der Untergang des Hauses Usher* by Gottfried Helnwein (1979).
Collection of the author.

the page. Just imagine the same picture, reduced to half of its actual size, as a faint pencil sketch, surrounded by a frame, and inserted between two text blocks. In this case, the illustration would lose its striking visual specificity and its prominent position on the page, so that the text would remain unchallenged. As it is, visually striking pictures are more likely to avoid complete semantization through the text. Therefore, the artist's graphic style, the picture's size, its composition, and its arrangement with the text can be considered as criteria for the evaluation of text illustrations as vital factors of influence for the hermeneutic activity of the reader/viewer.

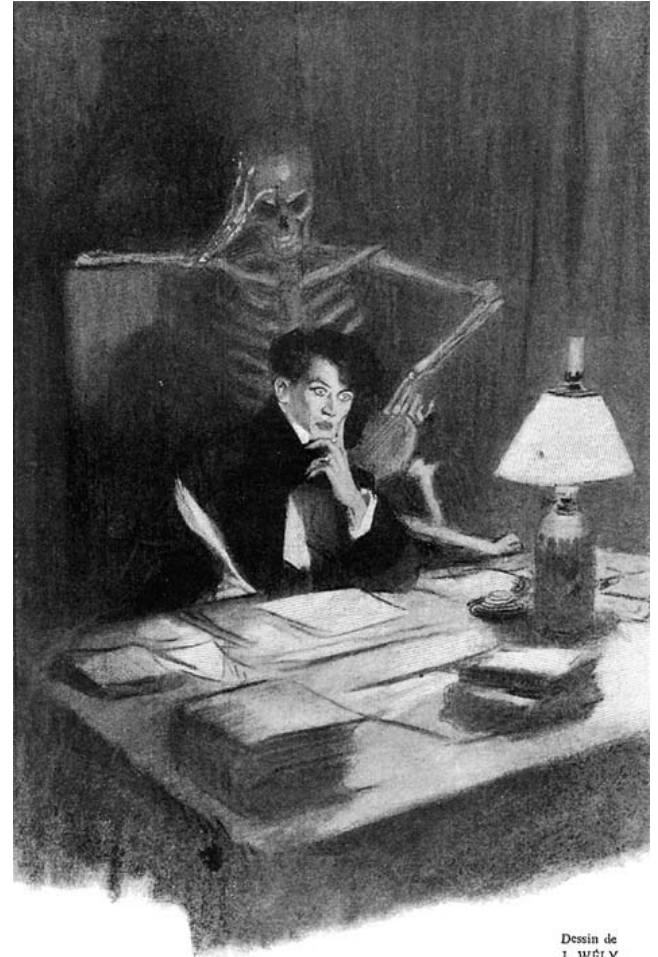
Any imbalance between text and picture on a page, or double-page, may result in one mode of expression overruling the other. The effect of multiple illustrations on one double-page depends on the graphic appearance of the pictures, their size and their arrangement in the lay-out. In the German edition *Unheimliche Geschichten*, illustrated by Gottfried HELNWEIN in 1979, the two small illustrations on pages 10 and 11 are subordinated to the text graphically, but on pages 14 and 15 the two illustrations, one of them "full-sheet", clearly "marginalize" the text. Pages 44 and 45 show a successful visual balance of text and pictures, since both illustrations, although the eye-catchers of the spread, are incorporated into the scheme of the typography (fig. 8). Double-page illustrations definitely wield a visual dominance over the text, especially where they leave only little or no room for it. The visual impact of double-pages devoid of text are even heightened by positioning the illustration not within the confines of the lay-out, that is the margins are not preserved

as white spaces, but the pictures spread over the full-page, from paper edge to paper edge. Such full-sheet or bleeding illustrations not only push away the text from the page, they also ignore the guidelines which usually delimit the preconceived space reserved for verbal or pictorial information (see SATTY 1976: *passim*). This effect must be also supposed to be exerted by pictures which occupy a full sheet beside a purely typographical page. Another disintegrating effect is the isolation of illustrations on single pages which face empty pages. Semi-transparent tissue papers, which are often employed in fine book editions to prevent color from rubbing off on facing pages, also visually separate text and illustrations. However, captions are often used as indices to restore the connection between picture and text or even specific passages.

Quite differently from the divisional function of picture frames, captions accompanying text illustrations are a means to assign the picture to a specific textual detail or correlation. Usually, a caption is a repetition or paraphrase of a passage from the main text of a few lines' length. The duplication of the relevant text stresses its special importance and it provides a semantic key to interpret the picture in case it is ambiguous. The caption channels the presentation of the illustrations and the reception of the reader/viewer, as long as it eliminates any ambiguities about the specific text-picture-relation. Due to the absence of relevant sources it is impossible to decide whether pictures were completed before captions were chosen or whether it was the other way around. For authors and publishers with specific ideas about illustrations, captions were and are a means to single out individual scenes for illustration, thus providing artists with directives for the artwork. It is likely, however, that finished pictures were furnished with captions *a posteriori*. Captions are interchangeable as long as they are not part of the picture itself. If they are, they function as interior indices which cannot be eliminated without mutilating the artist's work (such as in the illustrations of the Dutch artist A. HAHN, jr. 1930: *passim*, fig. 9). Sub-titles are misleading and cause semantic confusion, when they obviously contradict or too narrowly describe the pictorial presentation. However, this incongruity stimulates the reader's/viewer's hermeneutic activity, who is challenged to connect the two aspects with each other in a meaningful way.

Besides the conjoint existence of text and illustrations it is useful to briefly inspect the sequential arrangement of text and illustrations inside a book, of which there are four variants. Pictures can either precede or succeed the relevant text passage, or they coincide with it on the same page. The fourth variant results from the difficulty to assign the illustration to a specific part of the text or to the text at all.

The illustration precedes the relevant text passage where embellished covers or dust jackets, frontispieces and title-page illustrations are employed. Besides their economical purpose, illustrated covers may convey a first impression of what is to be expected inside the book. In modern times such covers are conceived as eye-catchers in order to arouse the interest of the buyer. Usually, they offer either colorful and visually striking pictures or such combinations of typography and images. The picture on the cover is either an illustration which was expressly commis-



Dessin de
J. WÉLY

sioned for this function, or it is a picture or a combination of pictures reprinted inside the book. In the case of a single illustration its duplication and its prominent position not only emphasize the special importance of the picture but also that of the text to which it refers. The picture, and implicitly the related text, is foregrounded as being representative of or having a special meaning for the whole contents of the book.

The historical forerunners of embellished covers are the frontispiece and title-page illustrations. One favourite topic for the frontispiece, which precedes the title-page at its left side, is a likeness of the author. This portrait can be furnished with motifs from the author's works, as has been done by Hugo Steiner-Prag, who vaguely depicted a raven behind the head of Poe. Federico CASTELLON's frontispiece for the limited edition of "The Masque of the Red Death" (1969), which shows a melancholy and pensive Poe with Death waiting in the background, is extended into an allegory, emphasizing the prominent role of doom and dread in this special tale as well as in many other of his works. The same scheme underlies the frontispiece of Jacques WÉLY (1910), where a skeleton representing Death is staring over the shoulder of a very idealized depiction of the author at his desk, who is depicted to resemble Roderick Usher and William Wilson (fig. 10). Another type of frontispiece appears in the 1903 edition of *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, where any of the five volumes is illustrated with just one color frontispiece.

Fig. 9 *Het Ovale Portret* by A. Hahn, jr. (1930).
Collection of the author.
Fig. 10 Frontispiece for *Contes Étranges* by J. Wély (1910).
Collection of the author.

POE'S TALES
OF MYSTERY
&
IMAGINATION



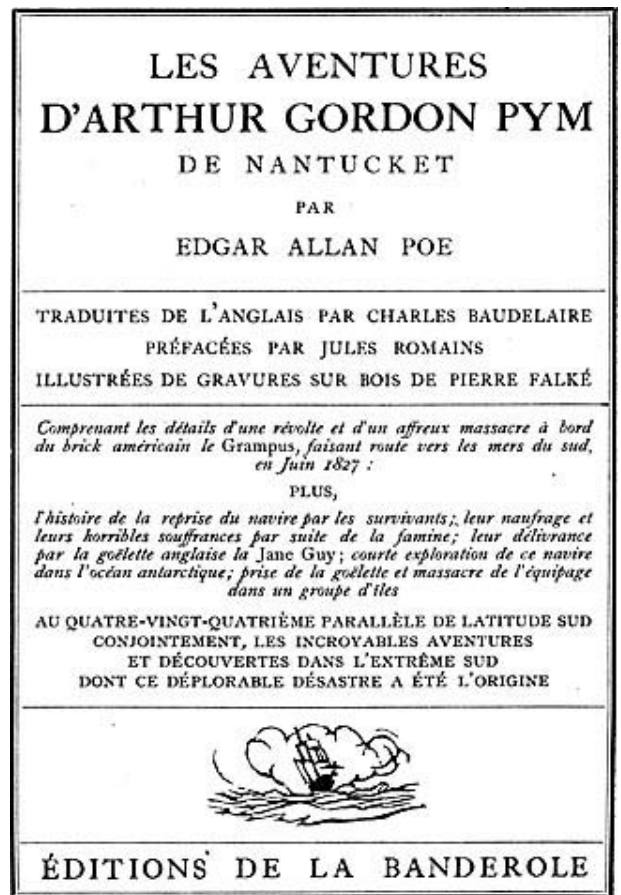
ILLUSTRATED BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM



WEATHERVANE BOOKS
NEW YORK

The following tissue paper contains the title of the story or poem, respectively, as well as a short caption and the exact page number to which the illustration refers. In the *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, illustrated by Arthur RACKHAM (1935), caption and page reference are positioned directly beneath the illustration. This book demonstrates how effectively pictorial embellishments are used outside the main text as “iconographic signposts” (Behrendt 34). The book is protected by a dust-jacket which shows a scene dominated by two weird figures and a skeleton. The cover embellishment is likely to illustrate “The Masque of the Red Death” or “The Imp of the Perverse”, but the combination of scary looking figures and skulls also seems to be intended to convey a general impression of horror. Underneath the dust jacket the book’s cover is embossed with the silhouette of a skeleton holding a blood-dripping knife (fig. 11). The overall presence of bony figures is continued in the decorations of the inner sides of the cover and the end papers, where a graveyard scene provides RACKHAM with one more opportunity to depict skeletons galore (fig. 12), and right next to the frontispiece there is a serpentine dragon clutching a hairy skull which ornaments the title-page (fig. 13). Thus, the reader is confronted with several pictures before he starts to peruse the texts. Whereas the frontispiece specifically points to “The Tell-Tale Heart”, the other illustrations are not more than suggestive of other stories in a very general way. Although skulls, skeletons and a dragon play only very subordinate and sporadic roles in the tales of Poe, belonging rather to the Gothic *décor* than to the plots of his stories, and although they do not appear at all in the manner chosen by the illustrator, RACKHAM obviously considered these cliché figures as a good vehicle to channel the perception

Figg. 11–13 *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*: Spine decoration, endpaper and title illustrations by Arthur Rackham (1935), as used for the Weathervane reprint (1985).
Collection of the author.



of the reader. Despite the absence of a specific text reference, RACKHAM's preliminary pictures must still be regarded as illustrations. They do not refer to specific texts, but can be classified as illustrations of thematic discourses and as contextual illustrations.

Where the frontispiece is not indexed by a caption the picture arouses even more curiosity to discover what is inside the book. On second sight Pierre FALKÉ's frontispiece for *Les Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym* (1921) reveals the bulk of a ship and a sloop in a bay that is surrounded by high cliffs caked with ice (fig. 14). As an illustration with a concrete text reference it can only depict the arrival of the *Jane Guy* at Christmas Harbour on the Kerguelen Islands or the exploration of a small island in the Antarctic ice, both chapters of the narrative which are not the high points of the narrative. But FALKÉ's graphic style and the technique of the woodcut cause familiar things to appear unusual. The undetailed forms and the bizarre shapes formed by the ice create a sense of eeriness. The men in the tiny sloop have left the big mother ship to venture into the obscure unknown, and the reader may have perused the book under the impression of this suggestive picture. Any direct text reference by means of a caption and a page number might have spoiled the effect of apprehension, because the unknown would have become explained, at least partially. FALKÉ's frontispiece is an illustration that can be set aside a specific text passage, but it also serves as a graphic introduction into a prominent theme of the book. Moreover, the woodcut's strong black and white contrast visualizes the conspicuous color symbolism in Pym. Once again, the importance of the graphic style

Fig. 14 *Les Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym de Nantucket*: Frontispiece and title page for the edition illustrated by Pierre Falké (1921).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

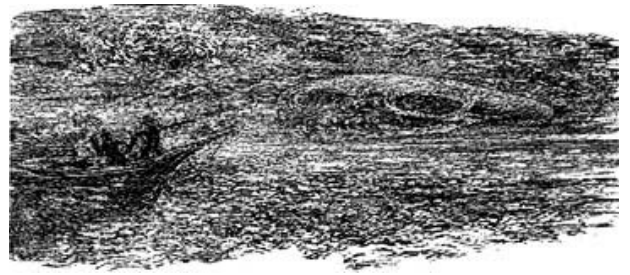
and the mode of representation must be stressed. The effect the picture has on the onlooker derives from its abstraction. Although it is a figural approach, the figures are hardly discernible as such. Thus, the abstraction creates an impression of strangeness. Through its style of representation, the picture shows familiar things in an unfamiliar way, so that the reader/viewer is disoriented. This effect could not have been achieved by a naturalistic and detailed depiction of the same scene.

Without knowledge of the following text, the reader relates the frontispiece either directly, indirectly or arbitrarily to the book's contents. The traditional function of the frontispiece has been defined as "forward-referential" (Behrendt 37), and as long as a caption indicates the relevant text passage, it is directly forward-referential. Frontispieces are indirectly forward-referential, if only a loose connection to the text is discernible. In some editions illustrations immediately precede the text on a single page, sometimes in combination with the story's title on the same page or facing the beginning of the text on the righthand page (see FRONIUS 1963), so that these pictures function as "frontispieces" for single texts and not a complete volume. In the French edition illustrated by Louis JAMES, these internal frontispieces are printed on transparent sheets of paper. The text is partly discernible behind the illustration, so that the unity of text and illustration is achieved by the physical appearance of the book. In the example of FALKE's woodcut a general text reference is provided by the book's long title which faces the frontispiece, and which serves as a synopsis of the whole narrative. Frontispiece as well as title-page and cover illustrations are arbitrarily forward-referential, in case there is no direct or indirect index to link the picture in advance with any part of the book's contents.

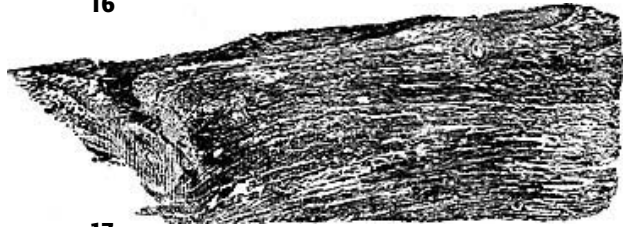
The *gros* of illustrations which do not succeed the relevant text passage, must be categorized as forward-referential. Pictures which are on the same page with the illustrated text passage are perceived and scrutinized before the text is read. There is, however, a difference between frontispieces and the pictures preceding or coinciding with the appropriate text passages. Illustrations which are set near the relevant part of the text without succeeding them, exert a much stronger influence than frontispieces. Such pictures interrupt the process of persual. The immediate precession of the graphic impression is likely to tinge the reader's imagination, and thus it interferes with the formation of the reader's own mental picture and understanding of the scene in question. A picture which precedes the illustrated passage as a frontispiece or which was reproduced in an earlier part of the book may have lost its hold on the reader's memory. For the time being arbitrarily forward-referential pictures may be dismissed as meaningless, since the reader futilely expects to find the link in the preceding or the immediately following text. The reference between text and illustration is not installed before the text elucidates the former incongruity of the picture, but it must be also be taken into account that the understanding of the text passage following the illustration may already be under the visual spell of the preceding picture. Any picture that appears before the relevant text passage intrudes into the flow of the narrative in that it visually anticipates what the text still needs to relate. Especially internal frontispieces are likely to destroy the tension elaborately built up by a text in that they



15



16



17

Figgs. 15–17 Gordon Pym:
Woodcut illustrations by
Jürgen Wölbing (1980).
Collection of the author.

often present climactic incidents of the narratives before the readers will have arrived at the relevant text passages. In view of these circumstances the widely accepted hierarchy between text and illustrations has to be reconsidered. Forward referential illustrations, especially title page illustrations and frontispieces, are capable of semanticizing the text, since the text is under the visual spell of the illustrations from the beginning. These pictures not only influence the imagination, for instance, in the way the reader imagines the appearance of the characters, but they must also be supposed to stimulate the reader to build *a priori* connections between the text and the incidents “related” by the forward referential illustrations. This way illustrations are capable of semanticizing the text.

Pictures which succeed the passages they illustrate are backward-referential, unless the picture is so ambiguous that it can be related to a preceding as well as to a later text passage. This is the case in the black and white woodcuts of Jürgen WÖLBING (1980). Exact links between the vague pictures of ships and seascapes and specific text passages are difficult to establish, since any of these illustrations is suited to depict more than one scene (18, 181, 182; figg. 15–17). This arbitrariness must not necessarily be regarded as a blemish, since the indefinitiveness of the pictures is not misleading but suggestive of the broader cotext that encompasses specific text passages. Moreover, the reader’s/viewer’s difficulty of assigning an illustration to specific text passages, that is the recognition of the unconnectedness of text and picture, stimulates his/her hermeneutic activity, so that any arbitrarily referential picture has the character of a blank in Iser’s sense. For example, WÖLBING’s illustration printed on page 182 of the German edition (fig. 16) does not particularly correspond with its immediate textual surroundings (the picture is inserted into the text which reports of the discovery of Bennet’s Island, a minor incident of the narrative), so that it can be related to several passages in the book. It vaguely shows two figures in a boat drifting towards a hardly discernible gigantic skull looming at the horizon. If the reader connected the illustration with the immediately neighboured text passage, he would have to dismiss the depiction of the vehicle as inappropriate, since all characters are on board of a ship of much bigger dimension than the one depicted in the illustration. But the illustration can

be understood as indirectly forward referential and indirectly backward referential simultaneously. On the one hand, it recalls the adventure of the boys in chapter 1, where Pym and Augustus escape death narrowly. On the other hand, it foreshadows the arrival at Tsalal, where most of the crew members of the *Jane Guy* meet their fate. Moreover, the illustration can be understood as a depiction of the enigmatic final scene, in which Peters and Pym are drifting towards a gigantic human figure of superhuman size, an encounter which results in Pym's death. And still another reading could interpret the illustration visualizing a prominent topic of the whole book, namely the omnipresence of pain, misery and death, all of which afflict the protagonists of the narrative continually.

Because of their loose text references, all arbitrary forms of illustrations are subject to wrong assignments by the reader. In *The Bells and Other Poems*, illustrated by Edmund DULAC in 1909, two color plates could be attributed to "Annabel Lee" (8, 31), since none of the two pictures is placed directly beside the poem. The second illustration, however, is printed with the text of "Lenore". The head-piece of this poem shows a woman similar to that in the color illustration, so that the attribution of the second plate to "Lenore" can only be achieved by this visual assistance of another illustration. However, the reference is anything but reliable, since some of the picture's details must be questioned. The illustrations of Jean-Gabriel DARAGNÈS are placed between two poems, a position which makes it difficult to decide whether the pictures belong to the preceding or the succeeding texts. The pictures offer only scarce and ambiguous hints, and thus the attributions must be made on the ground that it is more likely that the pictures generally follow the texts, since the less equivocal illustrations are all placed at the end of the relevant poems.

Figure 1 shows that the family generated by graphic pictures and texts is an entangled network of branches. For this study, however, there is little use in following the intricate connections up to the outermost offsprings. As some of the above examples show, it is difficult to draw a demarcation line to differentiate between formal, functional or morphological aspects in the relationship of text and pictures. To explain the dynamics of literary response by means of a close analysis of the immediate conditions of reception would ultimately lead to questions of lay-out, page composition, typography, as well as printing and paper quality (see below for a brief discussion of some of these factors). One central problem is the reconstruction of such detailed conditions of the reception process. Frequently reprinted illustrations, for example those of KUBIN, COBURN or CLARKE, are only very rarely placed at the same locations in the text, and very often the order of the pictures is changed. Moreover, it must be supposed that most "real" readers skim the pages of illustrated books to throw at least a cursory glance at the pictures before they begin to read, so that all illustrations may adapt the function comparable to that of frontispieces. In both cases the successive reception of text and pictures in a prestructured pattern is put out of order. And finally one has to ask who is responsible for the arrangement of text and pictures in an illustrated edition, that is who decides, either deliberately or arbitrarily, about the narrative structure which results from the juxtaposition of text and illustrations. Charles

Dickens minutely instructed his staff artists which scenes were to be illustrated and how and where the pictures had to be inserted into his texts (Ackroyd 654, see 177f; see Guiliani and Collins 5ff, 545f). After Dickens' death, publishers and illustrators of his works did not feel bound to his directives, so that the reorganization of text and pictures led to an alteration of the original narrative strategies the author had devised by the specific arrangement of text and illustrations. In the case of Poe, on the contrary, J. HAMMAN, illustrator and calligrapher of a French limited edition of "King Pest" (1925), produced dozens of pictures whose number exceed the number of pages by far. Since he prepared both text and pictures for printing, he had absolute control about their arrangement, so that he could afford to intersperse many small embellishments, some of which are only of a line's height into the running text. Eduard PRÜSSEN, the artist of the most recent set of illustrations for "The Raven" (2000) was free to place his linol cuts wherever he wanted, since he published the edition himself. The only condition which affected the arrangement was his decision to produce exactly one illustration for every stanza of the poem. Technical reasons may also exert influence on the arrangement, for example when the illustrations are printed separately on a different type of paper than the text, so that the pictures are either bundled or regularly dispersed all through the text.

Layout, typography and printing quality must also be considered briefly as influential factors in illustrated texts and the communication between the two modes of expression. One means to achieve structural balance is a careful page layout, where texts and pictures are arranged in visual equilibrium. In Western culture the process of reading from left to right and from top to bottom has generated specific habits of visual orientation, which can be exploited in the composition of a page or a double page, respectively. In the process of scanning a double page, the unconscious rightward drift of the eye results in a stronger focus on righthand pages.¹⁶ Additionally, the position in the upper half of the page must be considered as visually dominant (Behrendt 39). The unconscious motion of the eye, when glancing over a double page, can be described as follows: in a diagonal line the eye sweeps over the open book from its lower left corner towards the upper half of the right page, from where it moves downward and then proceeds quickly towards the beginning of the text at the uppermost part of the left page. Thus, the upper half of the right page lies in the center of visual interest, whereas the lower right is a bit "out of focus". The lower left can be visually exploited, since it can act as a visual exposition to the double page (see Bergner 113ff). In fact, the strict adherence to this basic compositional principle is the exception rather than the rule, since variations and deviations bring about interesting effects which try to elude the eye. This was done on the double-page 44/45 of the German edition illustrated by Gottfried HELNWEIN (1979, see fig. 8), where the two corresponding illustrations countercross the usual compositional lines of a double page and fill exactly those areas which are normally the "blind spots" of a spread.

The visual appearance of the text ought to match the graphic style of the pictures. When the typography is too small or composed with too narrow line spacing, reading the text proves to be tedious, a circumstance which can result in the reader's

*What tho' the moon—the white moon
 Shed all the splendour of her noon,
 Her smile is chilly, and her beam,
 In that time of dreariness, will seem
 (So like you gather in your breath)
 A portrait taken after death.
 And boyhood is a summer sun
 Whose waning is the dreariest one—
 For all we live to know is known,
 And all we seek to keep hath flown—
 Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall
 With the noon-day beauty—which is all.*

*I reach'd my home—my home no more
 For all had flown who made it so.
 I pass'd from out its mossy door,
 And, tho' my tread was soft and low,
 A voice came from the threshold stone
 Of one whom I had earlier known—
 O, I defy thee, Hell, to show
 On beds of fire that burn below,
 A humbler heart—a deeper woe.*

*Father, I firmly do believe—
 I know—for Death, who comes for me
 From regions of the blest afar,
 Where there is nothing to deceive,
 Hath left his iron gate ajar,
 And rays of truth you cannot see
 Are flashing thro' Eternity—
 I do believe that Eblis hath
 A snare in every human path—*

. 48 .



reaction to turn his attention away from it towards accompanying illustrations (see OOSTING 1941 *passim*). The style of the typeface should be in harmony with that of the illustrations. For example, copper engravings are considered to go well along with so-called transitional typefaces of English character, or typefaces based on these 18th century models, since both show a specific contrast between thin and thick lines. In the Fine Book Circle edition of Poe's *Raven and Other Poems*, issued in 1936 with illustrations by Paul McPharlin (1936), the text is composed in the italic typeface Blado. This typeface is characterized by narrow letter forms and spacing as well as by low contrast and slight irregularities which show their heritage of Renaissance calligraphy. The text makes the impression of a dense mass, and it is printed on a speckled salmon-colored paper, which makes the reading of the poems difficult. The illustrations are produced in strong contrasts, showing black silhouettes in front of light blue backgrounds. The separateness of text and pictures could not be more emphasized, especially since the text is visually swallowed by the dark masses of the pictures (fig. 18).

Printing quality must also be regarded as an influence on the presentation of text and pictures. Lack of color in a monochrome printing process causes pictures to be reproduced in poor quality, whereas the text may still appear readable under the same conditions. In badly printed books, especially dark pictures make the

Fig. 18 *Tamerlane*: Illustration by Paul McPharlin (1936). The typographer of this edition is unknown. *Collection of the author.*

impression as if besprinkled with flour, a defect which definitely spoils the presentation of illustrations (Böhmer 1951 *passim*) and, consequently, reduces their impact on the reading process. The same holds true for color illustrations where one of the hues is printed out of register, a fault resulting in blurred pictures in which details (such as facial expressions) become indiscernible.

For the following analysis of text-picture relations it is also important to throw a glance at the text versions discussed in this study. Contemporary Poe scholars have generally accepted the annotated texts edited by Thomas Mabbott and Burton Pollin, but these editions were not published before 1968. Former “authoritative” text versions, revised by the editors Rufus Griswold (1851–55), George Woodberry (1895) and especially James Harrison (1902) have also been accepted, but still many other versions appeared and still keep appearing. It must be supposed that Poe himself would have problems in pointing out the final or most accomplished state of those many texts which he continually edited and re-edited in the course of his career. Some of the differences between the text versions are marginal, and therefore considered irrelevant for this study, but others are not, such as the following example. In 1845, Poe removed four paragraphs from his tale “Berenice”, when he reprinted the story in the *Broadway Journal*. Ten years before, Poe had to defend himself against his employer and publisher T. W. White, who was obviously not alone in considering the tale to be much too horrible (see M 2: 207). After 1845, most English language editions of the text omitted the passage in question, and Mabbott banned it to the footnotes. As a result, the four paragraphs are not incorporated in foreign language translations made after 1845. Charles Baudelaire, however, based his translation of the story in the version which appeared in 1840, in the second volume of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Subsequently, and due to Baudelaire’s wide influence on the reception of Poe and the enduring popularity of his translations in France, the four paragraphs are part of most French Poe texts. Moreover, the passage is also part of Spanish translations, since these were originally produced on the base of Baudelaire’s French versions and not on the American originals (Salinas 25). These Spanish language adaptations were distributed in South America, so that the story “Berenice”, one of Poe’s most famous prose works, is different from the version known to American, Swedish, Japanese or German readers. Thus illustrations for the scene in question can only be found in French or Spanish editions (see chapter 4.1). Some of Poe’s texts underwent wholesale revisions, for example the tale “A Decided Loss” which became “Loss of Breath”. Moreover, Poe’s last changes did not always improve the work, as, for example, his later revisions of his early poem “To Helen” show (M 1: 163ff), so that posthumous editors of Poe must have felt pains to decide which versions of Poe’s texts are the “right” or the “best” ones.

Foreign language adaptations of Poe’s texts generate another problem, since no literary translation is a mere transcription from one language into the other. The translator necessarily becomes the interpreter of the text, since, as a reader, he is not only involved with the text, but he has also to cope with the various forms of indeterminacies. It must be questioned, whether a translation is already a con-

cretization of the aesthetic object in another language. The translator has to resolve indeterminacies which result from the “intranslatability” of specific vocabulary, tropes and puns as well as of literary or social allusions. Some of the problems can be circumnavigated by annotations and footnotes, but, as a matter of fact, this procedure is not very popular, among readers even less than among translators. Literary translations inevitably embody compromises, so that in comparison to the original text as well as “inside” the translations, new gaps occur.

If all the above mentioned factors were to be considered in a reader-oriented approach, this study would lead to an empirically based psychological analysis of the impact of such details on the imagination of individual recipients. Such an orientation, however, is not at stake here, since this study offers a functionalist approach to texts and illustrations within a phenomenological framework. Iser’s model has been charged since it continually deals with reader responses without delivering any empirical data (Holland in Iser, *Prospecting* 43f). The reader Iser refers to is a virtual reader, and, consequently, in my study, the communication between reader and illustrated text is abstracted in terms of a virtual interaction. As a basic prerequisite, text and illustrations have to be isolated from the natural conditions under which they appeared. In order to provide a reliable text base the critically annotated editions of Mabbott and Pollin are used as source for quotations.¹⁷ No heed will be paid to textual incongruities arising from translations and carelessly edited texts. Moreover, the specific typographical characteristics of illustrated editions are ignored. Initially, all illustrations are removed from the physical environment in which they were published. As a consequence, only casual attention will be paid to the sequence of texts and illustrations inside a book. In this study, the internal arrangement of text and illustrations, important as it may be for the analysis of individual readers, is not developed as a criterion for the phenomenological analysis of reader response to the illustrated works of Poe.

3 THE PICTORIAL POE

3.1 Poe and the visual arts

The connections between Poe's aesthetics and the visual arts are numerous. A specific pictorialism can already be found in Poe's first critical writing, in the "Letter to Mr.—", which preceded the third collection of his poems in 1831. A general fondness for pictures also surfaced in Poe's criticism, in the selected objects as well as in his prevailing jargon, in his biography, and, of course, in his fictional works as the following chapters will show.

This chapter collects the materials upon which Poe's aesthetics are built. Most of the information is piecemeal in Poe's critical and fictional writings. Putting these fragments together involves the danger of assorting them in a wrong way or trying to fit them into a pre-conceived framework. For various reasons the analysis of Poe's aesthetics is a puzzling task. First of all, the critic is, in sight of the numerous doublets in his critical oeuvre, confronted with the problem to bring Poe's critical statements into a chronological order. Due to Poe's journalistic habit to use whole or fragments of old reviews in different revisions, and at times even in contradictory contexts, it proves to be difficult to retrace the evolution of his aesthetical concept in a linear way or to decide whether any such consistent development exists at all. On the one hand, the re-use of old material hints at a continuity of thought, on the other hand one has to consider Poe's journalistic workaday practice of being responsible for such a reutilization. Poe must be supposed to have been neither a highly educated, profound intellectual, like his early ideal Samuel Taylor Coleridge, nor to have been a methodical thinker who organized his ideas in systematical array. Poe's profession as editor of some literary magazines demanded a quick and effective utilization of any material that was at hand. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that Poe was not only responsible for the editorial tasks. His letter to William E. Burton, dated June 1, 1840 (O 1: 129–32), shows that he also had to have an eye on the layout and the further preparation for the printing. For Poe, it must have been tempting to fill up the lacunae in the layout with old or only slightly revised texts, especially when these fillers added to Poe's small income. Characteristically, most of the doublets are to be found in the short miscellanies, in the *Pinakidia* (1836, 1848), in the *Literary Small Talk* (1839), in the *Fifty Suggestions* (1849), in the *Chapter of Suggestions* (1845) and particularly in the *Marginalia* (1844–49). The latter are the most important and "exploitable" series of miscellanies – all in all nearly 300 short and shortest articles which Poe began to spread in four different magazines in 17 instalments.

Another, by far bigger problem than the chronologically perplexing dates of publication of these doublets is Poe's terminological incongruity. Frequently used terms – such as "indefinitiveness", "beauty", "imagination", "grotesque", etc. – do not have fixed meanings. The variable usage of such terms is not always due to revisions and refinements deliberately enforced by Poe, but often seems to be arbitrary and inconsiderate. In spite of the great amount of material provided by

the canon of his critical writings, it is hard to extract a definite concept of Poe's aesthetics. It is true that Poe tried to evolve a certain pattern for his revisions, but since there is an obvious want of a well-devised and clearly formulated base, Poe's reviews often convey the impression as if they had been influenced by personal predilections and momentary state of mind. As a result, critics like Yvor Winters and Charles Child Walcutt who considered Poe's reputation as a critic overestimated, had little problems to point out contradictions, incongruities and logical blunders in his critical writings. In regard to the fact that the poet accused others of his own faults, that is to charge them with obscurantism and pseudo-intellectual dazzle, the apparent lack of logic and congruity in Poe's critical theory is not without irony.

In one of his *Marginalia* Poe even tried to denominate the lack of profundity a contemporary principle. With a view on the growth of magazine literature Poe wrote in *Godey's Lady's Book* four years before his death:

It is but a sign of the times, an indication of an era in which men are forced upon the curt, the condensed, the well-digested in place of the voluminous – in a word, upon journalism in lieu of dissertation. We need now the light artillery rather than the peace-makers of the intellect. I will not be sure that men at present think more profoundly than half a century ago, but beyond question they think with more rapidity, with more skill, with more tact, with more of method and less of excrescence in the thought. Besides all this, they have a vast increase in the thinking material; they have more facts, more to think about. For this reason, they are disposed to put the greatest amount of thought in the smallest compass and disperse it with the utmost attainable rapidity. Hence the journalism of the age; hence, in especial, magazines. (P 2: 248)¹⁸

In view of the aforementioned problems, there is much interpretative latitude in analyzing Poe's aesthetics. Furthermore, a great amount of alleged sources have been brought to light, sources as diverse as Aristotle (Albee), Horace (Pritchard), John Locke (Sandler; McCarthy "Source"), August Wilhelm Schlegel (Lubell), Percy Bysshe Shelley (Laser 76ff) and many more. Some critics argued by means of a textual point-to-point comparison to "prove" that Poe borrowed from or was influenced by the authors in question. The method of searching for paraphrases implies that Poe perused all the alleged sources – in most cases voluminous works – and that as carefully as the critics searching for certain passages. Undoubtedly, Poe at times swallowed page after page, but this was surely in no way the kind of reading necessary to absorb, to reflect and to elaborate the thoughts of others. If Poe came across the allegedly influential passages rather by chance, that is as quotations or synopses in some American or British magazines or in the contemporary text-books, one can hardly speak of important influences on Poe's thought. Poe's habit of picking up excerpts from obscure sources is well known, and he did it to pretend an erudition that he could not actually call his own.¹⁹

Additionally, one more fact has to be acknowledged. Most of the sources in question were hardly available to Poe. Except for his time as a student at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, when Poe was just 17 years old, access to well-equipped libraries proved to be difficult for him. One can infer from the titles Poe loaned from the university library that his interest in French history was greater than in philosophy. The problem is that one can find similarities to Poe's thoughts

in countless books, papers, and magazine articles, but these allegedly specific sources are often no more than historical analogies.

So far the most thorough critic trying to retrace the development of Poe's critical theory was Robert D. Jacobs. Jacobs identified the writings of Hugh Blair, Lord Kames and Archibald Alison as major influences on Poe as early as 1831. Jacobs conceded that their 18th century theories were somewhat obsolete in 1831, but he argued that "archaic opinions have a habit of lingering with all the semblance of authority in popular textbooks" (39).²⁰ However, it must be called into doubt whether Poe really came across these theories in popular textbooks. All alleged sources are voluminous works, e.g. Blair's *Lectures* stretches to exactly 500 pages in the 8th American edition published in New York in 1819. It is even more doubtful that Poe had perused all these works at the age of twenty-two in order to build up his own aesthetics upon them. The line of argument developed by Jacobs is quite detailed. According to him, Poe had not only a first-hand and minute knowledge of approximately 1500 pages, he also reflected on the intertextual relations between these objectivist and subjectivist theories. But, not unexpectedly, considering the poet's terminological jumble, Jacobs had to admit: "Poe's eclecticism was uncritical; he appropriated the ideas that he needed either without knowing or without caring that they were based on conflicting accounts of mental activity" (45). It is not surprising then, that Jacobs calls the soundness of his approach in question:

The theorists referred to in the preceding pages are not "sources" in the sense that Coleridge was a source for Poe. I have used them here only as illustrations of an intellectual ambience to which he was, in part, responsive. Poe's wide and often superficial reading of current journals and of popular compendiums of "universal" knowledge makes the task of identifying the exact sources of his opinions difficult and often unprofitable. Because he was eclectic and not highly discriminative in his choices, we cannot justifiably claim that he was a disciple of any particular critic or school of criticism. (33)

In fact, there can be nothing but agreement with this statement. Consequently, the analysis of Poe's eclecticism involves a methodological problem. It is impossible to "prove" general and informal influences on Poe's thought other than referring to specific quotations in the alleged source material, since the accuracy and integrity of scholarly research demands textual evidence.

I hold that Poe's erudition has been highly overrated by many critics. The detailed and specific learnedness attributed to him seems to be a projection of the critics' own scholarship, a wishful thinking of those who assume the poet had a first-hand knowledge of such writers as Blair, Home, Alison, Schelling or Kant. It must not be forgotten that Poe did not have the convenient possibilities of research which we enjoy today. In the first half of 19th century extensive libraries were rare in America. There were no conveniently accessible and comprehensive bibliographies or bibliographical databases. If some book caught Poe's interest, it would have to be available in local libraries, or he would have to know someone willing to lend it to him. If this person lived in another city, he/she would have to be asked (by letter: no telephone, no telegraph) to send a package via coach, ship or train, and that at a snail-slow speed compared to our modern standards. If this person was not willing to give his books away, whole chapters or passages would have to

be selected for manual transcription, and then laboriously copied. Under these circumstances, it seems most probable that Poe merely skimmed through the books that were only temporarily available to him in order to exploit those ideas which fitted or were adaptable to his thoughts in some way. Although Poe showed the bad habit to arraign those writers from whom he borrowed ideas, he did at least name them somewhere in his reviews or letters. Poe was not someone to hold back any bit of knowledge he had acquired for he was always eager to present himself as a critic and poet of the sophisticated kind.

However, the fact that Poe was an eclecticist is most important. He chose from various, seemingly incompatible sources what suited his own conceptions best. By incorporating the ideas of other writers into his own critical theory they often underwent a change due to the adaptation to already existing parts of his aesthetics. Poe assembled a lot of other writers' ideas, but as soon as he absorbed them he elaborated on them without much regard to their origin. This procedure, ironically, must be considered as Poe's "originality". My aim is not to show a method behind his critical works or in his aesthetics, as Jacobs did, but to lay open the loose pattern of thought which was the foundation of his critical writings as well as his fictional works. I will endeavour to follow the thread of Poe's ideas, fully aware it is no straight line always heading forward, but rather a hank which must be disentangled. I will therefore approach Poe's texts directly in order to extract and comment on those passages which reveal his predilection for a specific pictorialism. In consideration of the problems mentioned before – the many doublets, the perplexing publishing history, Poe's terminological incongruity, his promiscuous eclecticism – I consider it an adequate and legitimate method to analyze Poe's critical writings not in a strictly chronological order, but to scrutinize the relevant catchwords.

At the beginning of the analysis the focus is directed towards Poe's own artistic proclivity, which is acknowledged in several biographical accounts. The reference to Poe's comments on the visual arts and specific artists, which regularly crop up in his reviews and in some of his tales, will provide a loose framework for the more pointed analysis of his attitude towards text illustrations. To demonstrate how thoroughly Poe's aesthetics are pervaded by pictorialism, his critical jargon, which abounds with analogies drawn from the fine arts, will also be examined briefly.

3.1.1 Poe's artistic talent

In the accounts of Poe's life his proficiency as a draughtsman is a prominent topic. Most of the scattered biographical anecdotes refer to Poe's early years, before he became a professional poet and a critic. All of these reminiscences contribute their share to the portrait of the "pictorial Poe".

A letter of Miles George, a fellow student at the University of Virginia, tells of Poe's early graphic and literary talents, with which he impressed his mates in Charlottesville.

Poe, as has been said, was fond of quoting poetic authors and reading poetic productions of his own, with which his friends were delighted & entertained, then suddenly a change would come over him & he would with a piece of charcoal evince his versatile genius, by sketching upon the walls of his dormitory, whimsical, fanciful, & grotesque figures with so much artistic skill, as to leave us in doubt whether Poe in future life would be Painter or Poet. (qtd. in A. H. Quinn 108)

In his younger years, Poe displayed two artistic proficiencies, as a draughtsman and a poet. This double gift certainly influenced his works as an author and provides one reason for the strong pictorial quality of his writings. Moreover, it must be noted that the fellow student remembered the sketches were “whimsical, fanciful, & grotesque figures”; just as if some characteristics of Poe’s later writings were foreshadowed in the wall drawings in Charlottesville. In a similar vein, William Wertebaker, another fellow student and at the same time the first librarian of the University, remembered Poe’s caricatures of the faculty members (M 1: 537).²¹ Poe was generally considered a good draughtsman, since four more fellow students – Thomas Bolling, Jesse Maury, Thomas Powell and John Willis – also recalled Poe’s fine drawings (Kent, “Episode” 13; *Centenary* 7, 187). According to Poe’s first thorough biographer Ingram some of these were copies of engravings which Poe had found in a newly acquired embellished edition of Byron. Poe is reported to have duplicated at least one picture in life-size onto his ceiling, in the style of a fresco [sic] (Ingram 60; M 1: *ibid*; see Silverman 30). There is another loosely related anecdote about the student Poe trying to acquire an illustrated book, “a rare edition of Hogarth’s prints”. Since the book was promised to the apprentice of the shop, in which Poe had come across the volume, Poe proposed to gamble for it. Poe lost and, according to the rules of the game, bought the book for the apprentice (Thomas and Jackson 71f).

It was once believed that Poe was the originator of three drawings which surfaced in 1930. The pictures originated from the collection of W. Mills, who lived in Genoa, and were brought to America by the rare book seller Gabriel Wells. T. O. Mabbott was quick in confirming the authenticity of the drawings: “The pedigree which accompanies them is perfectly satisfactory and the signature, while unusually ornate, is not without parallel” (qtd. in Deas 126). Under the headline “Three Portraits Reveal Poe’s Gift as Artist”, these news were published on the front page of the *New York Times* of September 22, 1930. Within less than two weeks, the same newspaper published an opposing countercheck by J. H. Whitty (October 4 issue). In 1931, obviously unaware of this controversy between the two Poe authorities, the Poe collector Josiah K. Lilly purchased the pictures for a considerable sum. Thirty years after the affair, Mabbott had to concede that her had made a mistake and agreed with Whitty that the drawings were forgeries (Deas 127). However, the portraits, now held by the J. K. Lilly collection of Poeiana in the Bloomington University Library, are still published and attributed to Poe. In 1948 and 1965 two of the pictures were printed in John Ward Ostrom’s scholarly edition of Poe’s letters (facing pages 197 and 213 in the first volume), and they also appear in recent editions, such as, for example, in Frank T. Zumbach’s major German Poe biography, first published in 1986 (440).²²

Poe's talent was certainly talented enough to impress his fellow students, since his skills were well above average, but it would be exaggerated to speak of Poe as extraordinarily gifted. However, Poe often used to insinuate his proficiency as a graphic artist in order to lend authority to his often negative remarks about the text illustrations which he discussed in his literary reviews.

Poe was once believed to have studied lithography under Peter S. Duval in Philadelphia, a man whose work Poe did not appreciate at all (Thomas and Jackson 322). It was Duval himself who, in 1884, repudiated this gossip in a letter to George Woodberry (143n). Although there is no direct proof for it, Poe must be supposed to have furnished some graphic embellishments for his own texts, namely the tiny vignette for his essay "Maelzel's Chess-Player" (1836) and the diagrams which illustrate chapter 23 of his *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Apart from these illustrations, it seems that no completely authenticated drawing from the hand of Poe has survived.²³

3.1.2 Poe's comments on the fine arts

Whether facts, myths or forgeries, it must be noted that all sources of information agree that Poe had some artistic skill and practice. Many aspects from the biographical anecdotes are reflected in Poe's writings. His predilection for illustrators like GRANDVILLE, GIGOUX or CRUIKSHANK (see below) complies with the "whimsical, fanciful, & grotesque figures" as well as with the caricatures he had reportedly produced in Charlottesville. His expertise, or at least his keen interest in the visual arts, surfaces in his discussions of paintings and statues, and especially in numerous reviews of embellished books where Poe paid detailed attention to illustrations. Poe, in his usual attitude of the connoisseur, did not hesitate to point out the inferiority or venerability of these pictures, just as if he was an expert in the field of graphic arts.

In the course of two decades Poe was editor of four different magazines, all of which were advertised or entitled in some way to be "devoted to every department of Literature and the Fine Arts".²⁴ In his private as well as in his public announcements for his own magazine projects Poe was eager to proclaim this dual aim himself, but it was not before November 1845 that Poe, as sole editor and proprietor of *The Broadway Journal*, was able to publicize the following lines in a running magazine:

THE BROADWAY JOURNAL is, in its general character, a literary paper: occupying itself with original, and more especial with critical articles, in every department of Literature, properly so called – with a preference, nevertheless, of the BELLES LETTRES and the FINE ARTS. There is no better medium for literary or artistical advertisements. (P 3: 311; captions original)

This self-puffery clearly shows Poe's twofold interest, as well as his self-confidence to be able to cope with both tasks. Although Poe had never been the editor in charge for the fine arts department before, his early reviews already reveal his concern for illustrations, paintings and statues. The largest part of Poe's fine arts criticism originated after Charles F. Briggs had left *The Broadway Journal* in July 1845.

Briggs had been responsible for the fine arts department and, retrospectively, Poe expressed his discontent with his colleague's approach to the topic (H 15: 22).

Even before Briggs discontinued his work at *The Broadway Journal*, Poe had tried his hands in the field when he turned his attention towards a duplicate of TITIAN'S painting *Venus*, which was exhibited on Broadway.²⁵ Although the subject of this half-column article is a work of art, it is remarkably devoid of substantial art criticism. Poe argued that the exhibited painting is unlikely to be an authentic work of TITIAN. In his typical pretension of erudition Poe referred to the problematic attribution of paintings to their artists, pointing out to the works of RAFFAEL, before he concluded that the origin of the painting and the reputation of the artist is irrelevant for the viewer's pleasure. The very end of the article is written tongue-in-cheek. Poe alluded to the contemporary habit to cover naked parts of the human body on those days when women were admitted to the exhibitions (P 4: 90). Six months later, when the painting was exhibited in New York once again, Poe returned to the subject in the section "The Fine Arts" (P 3: 304f). Poe mentioned that the authenticity of the painting has been sufficiently proved in the meantime. While he had shown his admiration for the painting in the first article, he was more reserved in the second article, where he criticized defects in the picture's composition. In both articles Poe gave no argument for his opinion, but he seemed eager to stand out against the public opinion about the picture. While its origin was questionable, Poe praised the painting's merits, but as soon as its authenticity as an actual canvas by TITIAN was established, Poe turned around, and suddenly found the composition full of defects. In both articles, Poe emphasized his expert knowledge and his independency as a critic who is unimpressed by great names and the popular opinion of the day.²⁶

It was not before October 1845 that Poe published his next piece of art criticism. It is a detailed description of the so-called *Ivory Christ*, a small statue carved out of an elephant's tusk. It was brought to the States by C. Edwards Lester, the American Consul at Genoa. Poe was much impressed by Lester's book *The Artist, the Merchant and the Statesman*, which was discussed several times in *The Broadway Journal*. Much of Poe's critique of the statue are excerpts from Lester's book.²⁷ The parts that were written by Poe are some comments about the statues's anatomical perfection: "We doubt if a better model of the human frame is to be found anywhere". Poe expressly praises the exactitude of such minute details as the "contraction of the muscles [...] about the calves, toes and lumbar regions" (P 3: 282). Seemingly, it was Poe's intention to suggest a profound anatomical knowledge. Lester and the American sculptor Hieram POWERS, whose sculpture of a Greek slave was a widely celebrated piece of art, were acknowledged authorities in the field, and both had openly uttered their admiration for the statue (P 4: 217). Quite contrary to the TITIAN reviews, Poe agrees with the opinion of the day in the appreciation of the *Ivory Christ*, merely extending the article with some "expert" observations of his own. In fact, Poe's article on the statue, which consists of little more than some general remarks in accordance with Lester and Powers, and a paraphrase of two earlier opinions, reveals that he did not have to say much of his own about the *Ivory Christ*.

Poe's article about Jean-Baptiste DE CUYPER'S statue *La Sortie du Bain*, which was exhibited in the Academy of Design, was in the same vein. Poe dismissed the statue's "unjustifiable abuse"; since "neither its merits nor its defects have been fairly treated" (P 3: 297).²⁸ With this introduction Poe insinuated to deliver an objective evaluation of the statue, but the following is a piece of impressionistic criticism based on personal taste. However, Poe exerts himself to give his defense the semblance of critical authority by a minute analysis of the statue's anatomy. Poe often relied on this strategy, that is to pretend expert knowledge by means of directing his and his readers' attention to features outside the general focus.

In an earlier article in *The Broadway Journal*, where Poe reviewed the American reprint of William Hazlitt's *Table-Talk* (284; P 3: 107), Poe's remarks suggest a first-hand knowledge of the old masters. Among Hazlitt's essays are three dealing with paintings in general and with the French artist Nicolas POUSSIN in particular, respectively. Poe referred to the two part essay "On the Pleasure of Painting" to give young artists the paternal advice to either read these essays or to practice their skill in front of the canvas of the old masters in the European collections. Once again, Poe pretends expert knowledge, suggesting that he had seen and studied paintings in European collections.²⁹

Poe transferred the method he used to review literary works to his art criticism. In his literary reviews Poe took into account precision of verbal expression and even grammatical correctness to judge the achievements of an author. In his "Rationale of Verse" Poe proposed a new and pedantic system of scansion, according to which the length of each syllable in a poem could be marked with an exact numerical value. In Poe's eyes, this scheme allowed to write and read verse with metronomic precision. In his slashing review of Griswold's edition of *The Poets and Poetry of America*, published in *The Philadelphia Saturday Museum*, Poe anonymously wrote about himself: "This discovery [the wrong use of the cæsure] [...] was left to Edgar A. Poe, who has spent more time in analyzing the construction of our language than any living grammarian, critic, or essayist" (H 11: 229). In his reviews of other poets Poe used to fumble with their verses, convinced to introduce rhythmical and phraseological improvements. In his "Exordium" Poe stated that he considered criticism a science, as opposed to mere "flippant opinion" (H 11: 1; italics original). Correspondingly, Poe concentrated on anatomical, compositional and other technical details in his evaluations of statues, paintings and illustrations.

Poe's credo as a critic was better than his critical output. While Poe knew very well how to depreciate a sculpture, a painting or an illustration, his comments about the merits of such works of art are mostly insubstantial, often mere rhetoric consisting of hyperbolic, but frivolous commendations. The following remarks, from *The Broadway Journal* of March 1, 1845, are a typical example:

The first two plates are capitally designed and engraved; the "Dacota Woman and Assiniboin Girl," in especial, is worthy of all communication. No annual has been issued in America which might not have been proud of these illustrations. The third plate, called the "Love Letter," is disgraceful in every respect. The flesh of the woman is sheep's wool, and the hand holding the love-missive, has the air of having been carved by a very small child, with a dull knife, from a raw potatoe. (P 3: 25f)

3.1.3 Poe's comments on illustrations

By November 1845, Poe obviously had shot his bolt as an art critic, since no more notable articles on the fine arts can be found in the columns of *The Broadway Journal*. The only references to the fine arts appear in his frequent and passing comments on illustrations in his critical notes on newly published books and circulating embellished magazines. Poe's remarks on illustrations form a constant topic in his critical works, since these can be traced from his earliest to his very last reviews.

Poe's first specific comments on illustrations came along with his review of *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1836*, a collection edited by Eliza Leslie. In *The Southern Literary Messenger* of August 1835 Poe had announced the book exuberantly, in particular its "embellishments [...] of the very highest order of excellence" (P 5: 31). In the September issue Poe devoted half a column to the appraisal of the collection. The largest part of this review dealt with four engravings. Poe dismissed one portrait because it had "every appearance of a cabbage" and another because it was "hard and scratchy in manner, altogether unworthy of the book" (P 5: 41). In this single instance Poe's judgement was in accordance with the slightly earlier published opinion of the *Boston Courier* where the anonymous reviewer not only criticized the discrepancy between the beautiful bookmaking and the shallow contents, but especially the included portrait of Fanny Kemble (P 5: 43). Without mentioning that he had contributed his "MS Found in a Bottle" to *The Gift*, Poe literally praised the book to the skies, writing that "[n]ever an Annual had a brighter galaxy of illustrious literary names in its tables of contents." Probably offended by the New England criticism, which did not even mention his name, Poe felt eager to discard the whole *Boston Courier* review as "ill-mannered and worse-natured". In order to reveal the Bostonian's incompetence Poe specifically pointed out the Kemble-portrait as an example of artistic accomplishment. Poe regarded W. E. TUCKER'S engraving of the "Smuggler's repose" (after a painting by J. TENNANT) as especially praiseworthy, eulogizing it as "absolutely the gem [...] and sufficiently of itself to stamp a high character upon the Gift" (P 5: 41). This article with its controversial discussion of some pictures can be considered as the very first skirmish in what was to become a literary battle between the Southerner Poe and the established New England literary world a decade later. Moreover, it shows the degree of importance which Poe attributed to illustrations. First of all the embellishments were well worth reviewing, since they contributed to the success or the failure of a book.³⁰ Secondly, the appreciation of pictures demanded as much expert knowledge from the critic as the judgement of literary works. And thirdly, Poe used the review of illustrations as an instrument to suggest his expertise in the fine arts. Since Poe had demanded in his "Letter to Mr.—", published for the second time in the *Messenger* of July 1836, that a good literary critic had to be a gifted poet (H 7: xxxvi f), one can even assume that Poe possibly considered himself a good artist when he pretended to be an expert art critic.

Apart from numerous short references to embellishments in the trivial matter of the *Messenger's* critical department, Poe eulogized and condemned illustrations as he thought fit. When Harpers published *Robinson Crusoe* late in 1835, Poe praised

THE
LIFE AND SURPRISING ADVENTURES
OF
ROBINSON CRUSOE,
OF YORK, MARINER:
WITH A
BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF DEFOE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH
FIFTY CHARACTERISTIC CUTS,
FROM DRAWINGS BY WILLIAM HARVEY, ESQ.
AND ENGRAVED BY ADAMS.



NEW-YORK
PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,
NO 82 CLIFF STREET,
1835.



SECTION XVIII.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST SURPRISE.—ROBINSON DISCOVERS THAT HIS ISLAND HAS BEEN VISITED BY CANNIBALS.

I IMMEDIATELY went to work with this piece of ground, and in less than a month's time I had so fenced it round, that my flock, or herd, call it which you please, who were not so wild now as at first they might be supposed to be, were well enough secured in it: so, without any farther delay, I removed ten young she goats and two he goats to this place; and when they were there, I continued to perfect the fence, till I had made it as secure as the other, which, however, I did at more leisure, and it took me up more time by a great deal. All this labour I was at the expense of, purely from my apprehensions on the account of the print of a man's foot which I had seen; for, as yet, I never saw any human creature come near the island; and I had now lived two years under this uneasiness, which, indeed, made my life much less comfortable than it was before, as may be well imagined by any who knows what it is to live in the constant snare of the fear of man. And this I must observe, with grief too, that the discomposure of my mind had too great impressions also upon the religious part of my thoughts: for the dread and terror of falling into the hands of savages and cannibals lay so upon my spirits, that I seldom found myself in a due temper for application to my Maker, at least not with the sedate calmness and resignation of soul which I was wont to do: I rather prayed to God as unto great

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Defoe and the edition in the *Messenger's* first issue of 1836. On its title-page the Harper edition advertised "Fifty Characteristic Cuts, from Drawings by William HARVEY". Poe expressly pointed out those pictures which he liked best.

The edition of *Robinson Crusoe* now before us is worthy of all praise. We have seldom seen a more beautiful book. It is an octavo of 470 pages. The fifty wood cuts with which it is ornamented are, for the most part, admirable. We may instance, as particularly good, those on pages 6, 27, 39, 49, 87, 88, 92, 137, 146, 256, and 396. The design on the title page is superlative. In regard to the paper, typography, and binding of the work, that taste must be fastidious indeed which can find any fault with either. (P 5: 99)³¹

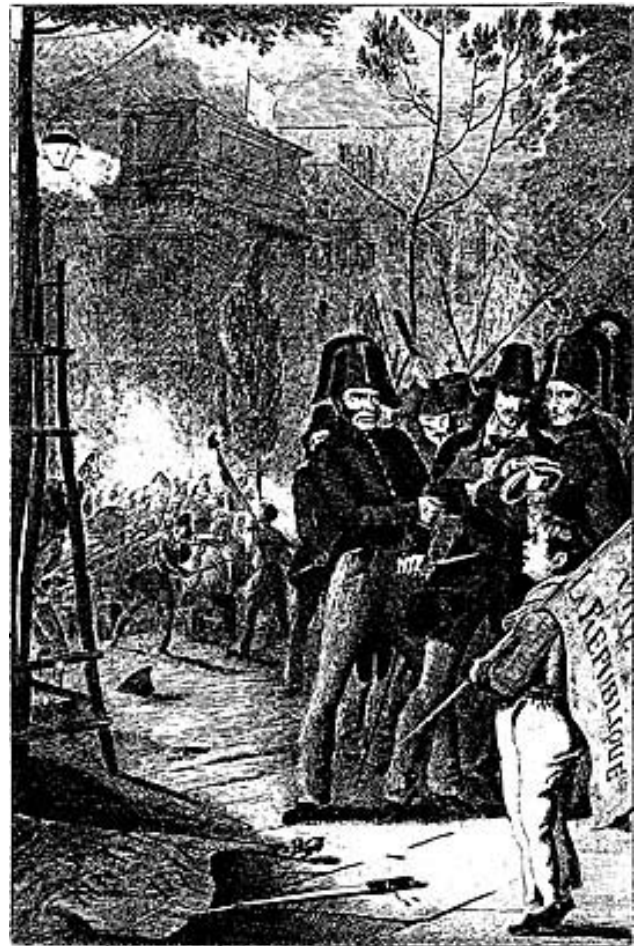
The interior illustrations are either head or tail-pieces none of which is more than two and a half inches in height or breadth. The "superlative" design on the title-page, the largest illustration of all, shows Robinson with his typical accessories and his dog (fig. 19). The head-pieces foreshadow the contents of the chapters often loosely corresponding to one of the sections' subtitles. Even the more dynamic compositions, such as the rescue of the Spaniard, or the scene where Robinson and Friday are attacked by a pack of wolves, are characterized by stiffness. On

Figgs. 19+20 *Robinson Crusoe*: illustrated title page and page 137 of the edition issued by Harpers in 1835. Illustrations by William Harvey, engraved by Adams.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

such small scales the woodcut technique did not allow the presentation of minute details, and since human figures are depicted from head to foot, their anatomy and especially their physiognomy is often reduced to an almost abstract degree (see 159, 169, 236). As a result, neither Robinson nor Friday develop character in HARVEY's pictures, quite different, for example, from George CRUIKSHANK's illustrations, which were published a few years earlier, in 1831. The headpiece of section XVIII (fig. 20) shows one of the illustrations singled out by Poe as "particularly good". In a symmetrical composition it shows Robinson amidst the flock of his pets in front of his palisaded refuge, a charming landscape vignette, whose seemingly undisturbed idyll cannot to be found in the text of the corresponding section. This illustration rather loosely reflects the text and comments on Robinson's successful efforts to establish effective precautions against the cannibals, but because of its dimensions, the picture is too inconspicuous to challenge the text. The same is true for the unobtrusive symbolism of the vignette. Robinson's stands on the brink of a sunlit spot surrounded by dark shades, a position which mirrors his inner strife between optimism and anxiety. Interpretative tendencies such as these are the exception rather than the rule in HARVEY's illustrations. In most pictures the artist confines himself to reproduce the highlights of the action faithfully or to accompany the text without intruding into the narrative. Poe's favorable comments on HARVEY's illustrations are proof of his preference for woodcuts, which he liked much more than steel engravings (see below), but they also allow some conclusions towards his ideas of proper text illustration. It can be assumed that the small size of the pictures did not disturb Poe, since he does not complain about this fact. Moreover, Poe seemingly conceded illustrations some sort of independency from the text, as the vignette from page 137 indicates. The slight degree of abstractness which characterizes the pictures, due to their small size and the mentioned limitations of the woodcut technique, was probably no blemish but a benefit in his eyes.³²

Four months later, Poe gave a detailed account of "eleven most admirable copperplate engravings" which illustrated Frances Trollope's *Paris and the Parisians* in 1835, a book also published by Harpers. In fact, the review consists of little else than a minute description of some plates, between which Poe intersperses copious quotations from the book. Notably, the critic introduces his long descriptions of the plates "as the most effectual method of imparting to our readers [...] a just conception of the work itself" (P 5: 192). In the following, the quotations and Poe's descriptions are arranged so that they illustrate each other. Poe is especially fond of the stereotypical and slightly caricatural characterization, in the text as well as in the pictures. Although Poe invests almost three and half columns for the comparison of text and plates – the whole article comprises little more than four –, his comment on the quality of the pictures is very imprecise. He generally praises the "design", the "expression" and "the exquisite picquancy" of all plates. Besides this frivolous judgment, Poe's fondness for the harmony between text and pictures foreshadows his own and later stated opinion about the appropriate role of text illustration (see below). Another reason for Poe's high opinion of these illustrations is the style in which they were engraved. While the plates in the



English version, published in 1835 by Richard Bentley in London, were engraved by the artist himself, S. H. GIMBER was responsible for the reproductions in the first American edition which Poe reviewed for *The Southern Literary Messenger* (fig. 21). While HERVIEU'S engravings are covered with a dense thicket of irregular cross hatchings, a decidedly amateurish execution, GIMBER concentrated on the figures' outlines providing only little interior drawing and shadings. GIMBER'S engravings convey a sense of clarity and openness. The main points of the compositions are effectively highlighted before the sketchy backgrounds. Quite contrary, HERVIEU'S engravings are characterized by dysfunctional scratches, so that figures and backgrounds form undistinguished masses without offering eye-catching highlights (fig. 22). Poe preferred sketchy drawings with clear outlines, and thus he often expressed his dislike for overloaded styles of graphic representation, which he used to analogize with overly detailed verbal descriptions (P 5: 117, 261f, 343; for more examples see below). Due to his skill in depicting anatomy and physiognomy GIMBER is successful in introducing slightly caricatural traces in the figures' stereotypical presentations, while a lack of that very proficiency makes HERVIEU'S pseudo-realistic approach look awkward and unconvincing. Poe's fondness for GIMBER'S engravings of HERVIEU'S illustrations foreshadows his predilection of the works of John FLAXMAN and Moritz RETZSCH, who were renowned for their outline drawings (see below).

Fig. 21+22 *Paris and the Parisians*: S. H. Gimber's line engraving for the chapter "Porte St. Martin" of the American edition (1836) and the same illustration engraved by Hervieux for the original British edition (1835).
Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

In 1845, while he was editor of *The Broadway Journal*, Poe exuberantly praised three illustrated series of books, which were first published in pamphlet form and later offered as bound volumes. The year 1845 saw the first American publication of Eugène Sue's *Le Juif Errant*. The novel had been first published as a sequel in the magazine *Le Constitutionnel*, raising the number of readers from about 3.600 to 25.000 (Gier 168). The title-pages advertised the well-known artist and caricaturist GAVARNI as the illustrator, although PAUQUET and Karl GIRARDET also contributed pictures to this profusely embellished edition. Harper and Brothers presented *The Wandering Jew* in a "new and elegant translation" and as "superbly illustrated by the most eminent artists of Paris". Poe thought the illustrations to be "beyond praise"; to be "to artists and lover of arts [...] a treasure". He classified them as "bold – striking – original" and ranked the "wood designs [...] among the most magnificent we ever beheld". In Poe's eyes the whole series promised to be "the most richly illustrated works ever published" (see P 3: 295, 321, 333). Unfortunately, he neither singled out specific illustrations nor stated why he held them in such a high esteem. The diversity of the illustrations makes it difficult to understand Poe's arguments for his admiration. The bulk of illustrations consists of portraits or of full-size depictions of the many characters. There are also scenic illustrations, most which are used as head and tail pieces or as backgrounds for decorated initials. Some portraits introduce a slightly caricatural element, as might be expected from GAVARNI. The illustrations lend visual unity to the book, since the peculiar graphic style of GAVARNI is present on almost every page.

This kind of visual unity is one of the qualities of Harper's *Illuminated and New Pictorial Bible*, for which John Gadsby CHAPMAN created about 1.400 pictures. All of these were engraved on wood by J. A. ADAMS, the craftsman who was also responsible for the reproduction of William HARVEY's illustrations for Harper's 1835 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*. The single numbers of this serial publication, issued every two weeks, contained dozens of small woodcuts and decorated initials. Poe's review of the issue no. 35 (P 3: 213f), the most detailed of his six references to this edition, lists some pictures which particularly pleased the critic, but again he provided no reason for his enthusiasm.³³ In four of these critical commentaries, however, Poe expressly singles out the small wood engravings, although about 200 hundred large plates were printed in the whole series. In his first review of the series Poe wrote that the "small cuts are without exception excellent, and many of them are not only admirable as mere specimens of wood engravings, but, as designs, belong to the highest class of art" (*ibid.*). In his critical notice of August 3 he stated that "the small woodcuts alone [...] are worth treble what is asked for the number itself" (P 3: 224). On November 29 the critic remarks that "the smaller wood engravings are especially meritorious" (P 3: 321). Poe's encomium markedly differed from Charles F. Briggs's evaluation of these illustrations. As long as Briggs had been a member of the editorial staff, the review of forthcoming illustrated editions was considered part of his fine arts department. His review shows that Briggs regarded the *Devotional Family Bible*, simultaneously published in New York by R. Martin & Co. and edited by Alexander Fletcher, as superior. Briggs complained about the lack of variety in the illustrations of Harper's edition several

times, since they been produced by one artist only (cf. Pollin, "Treatment" 270f). What Poe regarded as a merit because it contributed to the unity of the work, Briggs considered to be a blemish.³⁴

Poe was rarely so favourable in his comments on illustrations. In July 1836, he wrote a short review of Sir Stephen George's *The Adventures of a Gentleman in Search of a Horse*. At the climax of his ironical article on the book, the critic remarked: "[T]hink of all this done up in a green muslin cover; and illustrated by very laughable wood-cuts" (P 5: 259). Poe's negative review of Charles Robbins Gilman's *Life on the Lakes*, printed in the same issue, contains the following lines:

The two lithographs, (Picture Rocks and La Chapelle) the joint work of Messieurs Burford and Bufford, are abominable in every respect, and should not have been suffered to disgrace the well printed and otherwise handsome volume. (P 5: 237)

Poe's remarks on illustrations were often embedded into the context of his comments about the quality of paper, printing, typography and binding. Usually, Poe applied his criticism of the general layout to underline the tendency of his review. Poe was always eager to have his works printed between the covers of a book. His first three tiny volumes of poetry were financial failures, and most of his projected prose publications were never realized. In fact, it was hard enough for Poe to find a publisher at all. The bookmaking quality of those volumes containing Poe's own works that were published during his lifetime did not meet the publication standard of many contemporary authors. With as much scorn as envy Poe wrote in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* about "the superabundance of the Rosa-Matilda effusions – gilt-edged paper all couleur de rose: a full allowance of cut-and-thrust blue-blazing melodramaticisms" (H 11: 102). While nowadays forgotten American authors like Algernon Henry Perkins, William Leete Stone, William Maxwell, Jack Downing, or Mary E. Hewitt could afford to have their books "beautifully gotten up" (P 5: 57) and "bound in the customary muslin cover with a gilt stamp on the book" (P 5: 215), Poe's own publications, unless part of well made gift books, appear to have been produced at minimal expenditure. Poe, the magazineist, whose poems and stories in the columns of the cheaply printed papers were thrown into the waste paper basket after perusal, could not suppress his anger that, in his eyes, minor talents' writings were graced with sturdy bindings, embellishments and with clear typography on fine paper.³⁵

After his break with William Burton late in May 1840, Poe was quick to announce his plan for a magazine of his own. On June 13, the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* contained Poe's prospectus of *The Penn Magazine*. Excerpts and favourable reactions appeared in various papers in the course of the next weeks (cf. Thomas and Jackson 302ff). The first number was announced for January 1841. It was then pushed to the first of March, since Poe had been ill (O 1: 151f). After that, the publication was further postponed because of Poe's employment at *Graham's* (O 1: 157). At the end the project failed as would *The Stylus* a few years later. Lack of time, financial backing, general support and at the very end his death prevented Poe's dream ever to come true. As the prospectus shows, Poe had very specific ideas about the contents and style of his magazine, and the same applies to the general layout and the illustrations:

To the mechanical execution of the work the greatest intention will be given which such a matter can require. In this respect it is proposed to surpass, by very much, the ordinary Magazine style. The form will nearly resemble that of *The Knickerbocker*; the paper will be equal to that of *The North American Review*; the pictorial embellishments will be numerous, and by the leading artists of the country, but will be introduced only in the necessary illustration of the text. (A. H. Quinn 308)

What Poe had in mind was a book rather than a monthly literary magazine, since, apart from its high standards concerning paper, binding and illustrations, it was to comprise “half yearly, a volume of 500 pages” (ibid.). In a letter to Joseph Evans Snodgrass, written on January 17, 1841, Poe became even more specific about the “outward appearance” of his Penn Magazine:

In regard to my plans &c the Prospectus will inform you in some measure. I am resolved upon a good outward appearance – clear type, fine paper &c – double columns, I think, & brevier, with the poetry running across the page in a single column. No steel engravings; but now & then a superior wood-cut in illustration of the text. Thick covers. (O 1: 152)

Six months later Poe once more raised the standard of his magazine enterprise in all aspects. Although he was busy as editor of *Graham’s Magazine* he continued his Penn project trying to win some eminent literary figures as regular contributors. Poe presented his project in the best possible light to bait popular authors into cooperation. The following is an extract from a letter to Washington Irving (June 21, 1841), who seems to have been Poe’s favourite candidate, since he addressed him first.

The work will be an octavo of 96 pages. The paper will be of excellent quality – very far superior to that of the N. A. Review. The type will be new (always new) clear and bold, with distinct face. The matter will be disposed in a single column. The printing will be done upon a hand press, in the best manner. There will be a broad margin. We shall have no engravings, except occasional wood-cuts (by Adams) when demanded in obvious illustration of the text; and, when so required, they will be worked in with the type – not upon separate pages, as in “Arcturus.” The stitching will be done in the French style, permitting the book to be fully open. Upon the cover, and throughout, the endeavour will be to preserve the greatest purity of taste, consistent with decision and force. The price will be \$5. (O 1: 162)³⁶

With some minor changes Poe sent this letter to John P. Kennedy, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Fitz-Greene Halleck. The number of pages had increased from about eighty to 96. The paper was now even to be better than that of the distinguished *North American Review*. In the letter to Longfellow, Poe suggests that it will be “possibly finer than that upon which your ‘Hyperion’ was printed” (O 1: 167).³⁷ Poe’s intention to publish a magazine that in all aspects resembles a book also becomes apparent in his design to print the text in “single column”, to leave “a broad margin” and to have the stitching done in “French style, permitting the book [sic] to be fully open.”

The reason for Poe’s reserved attitude towards illustrations, and steel engravings in particular, can be found in his work for *Graham’s Magazine*, which lasted from spring, most probably April, 1841 to May 1842. In November 1840 George Rex Graham purchased the *Gentleman’s Magazine* from William Burton for the price of one dollar for each of the 3500 subscribers. Under the title of *Graham’s Ladys’ and Gentleman’s Magazine* he combined this paper with the *Casket*, a sentimental monthly of his own, which added 1500 more subscribers. Earlier, Graham had also been

assistant editor of Atkinson's *Saturday Evening Post*. In January 1839 he took over full editorial charge and in November, together with John S. Du Solle, he bought the paper (Thomas and Jackson 260, 276, 309). In the typical self-puffery of the day the *Saturday Evening Post* of December 19, 1840 published an enthusiastic review of the second number of *Graham's* new monthly:

This Magazine is already issued and ready for delivery, embellished in the style which has not been equalled in this country before. The opening engraving is an original mezzotint on steel prepared expressly for the work by Mr. Sartain, of Philadelphia, the best engraver of the kind in the United States ... Next follows a plate of fashion of three figures, exquisitely colored, and we stake our reputation on the assertion, that they are unequalled by any. Then follow two pages of music, the popular song of "The Indian Maid." And lastly we have Angling illustrated, making with the three fashion figures eight embellishments. Truly enough for a three dollar magazine. (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 312)

The explosive augmentation of illustrations in American magazines at the beginning of the 1840s must be ascribed to the editorial policy of *Graham's Magazine*. Although a lawyer by profession, George R. Graham proved to be a daring literary business man, and the effect of his bold as well as expensive plan was carefully calculated.³⁸ At the end of 1841 Graham could not only self-confidently assert that it had worked, but that the success of his paper was unparalleled in American magazine history (*Graham's Magazine* 19: 308). Ironically, two other staff members, John Sartain and Poe claimed at least part of the success for themselves.³⁹ Within just one year the subscription list had grown from about 5,000 to 25,000. Poe even calculated an amount of 100,000 readers (H 14: 149). In September 1842, when he had already resigned from the staff, Poe estimated the circulation to be 50,000 copies (O 1: 215; cf. Chielens 156).

Although Poe was certainly proud of the success (O 1: 180), he did not feel very comfortable with the magazine's general style, in which the mawkish legacy of the *Casket* was still apparent. On May 25, 1842 Poe explained to his friend Frederick Thomas why he quit his job in Graham's office:

My reason for resigning was disgust with the namby-pamby character of the Magazine – a character which it was impossible to eradicate – I allude to the contemptible pictures, fashion-plates, music and love tales. (O 1: 197)

What Graham considered to be the source of the magazine's success, Poe thought to be obnoxious for his own artistic and critical convictions. Poe's low opinion of the plates is understandable. Besides the lack of artistic quality, with which Poe could not come to terms, there was another reason why he despised them. Since the plates were unquestionably the magazine's main attraction, the practice of the so-called plate articles evolved at the end of the 1830s. Graham's plan was not only progressive because of the quantity of illustrations in each issue, but also because at least one embellishment was produced exclusively for each number. To doubly impress this extraordinary novelty on the readers' minds and to push these pictures into the foreground, articles had to be written to illustrate the plates. Surely nothing could be more adverse in Poe's eyes than to be impelled to deliver texts based on second-hand imagination, especially when the models were plates that did not suit his pictorial taste at all.⁴⁰

Considering the large numbers printed by the major mid-19th century American magazines such as *Graham's* and *Godey's*, reproductions from steel engravings were the publishers' first choice. Only the wood engraving with its boxwood block can compete with steel plates in terms of durability. While Thomas BEWICK, one of the foremost British 18th century illustrators, and in 1780 inventor of the wood engraving technique, claimed to have printed up to 900.000 copies from one block without a notable loss of quality (Rebel 41), steel plates virtually do not suffer from any abrasion at all. The extreme hardness of steel demands a very controlled engraving process. Among the 19th century reproductive techniques steel engraving bears the least resemblance with the act of drawing. Consequently, steel engravings often look lifeless and stiff, lacking the graphic liveliness of the woodcut. The so-called "taille", the characteristic swelling of the lines in wood cuts, which may lend the impression of penmanship to these techniques, is indiscernible in steel engravings. Moreover, one specific feature of xylographic techniques is a strong black and white contrast as well as a slight roughness, all characteristics Poe used to call "picturesque".⁴¹ The woodcut does not allow regular shadings or hatchings, and greyscale tones can only be produced by multiple block printing (chiaroscuro) with different shades of grey. However, the wood engraving combined most of the advantages of the wood cut with those of copper and steel engraving. Its merits were the artist's freedom to apply or imitate almost any graphic technique or effect on the woodblock and a durability which promised highest number of prints. The wood-engravers of the pictures for one of Poe's favorite illustrated books, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (see below), Andrew and Best, were admired for the facsimile character of their reproductions (Osterwalder 1: 51). This unique combination of creative and technical advantages made the wood engraving the most popular means of reproduction in the second half of the 19th century.

Before his employment at *Graham's*, Poe's response to illustrations in general was more enthusiastic. His experience with plate articles and fashion-plates generated a mixed opinion of embellishments. When employed in the offices of Burton and *Graham* he disliked steel engravings even more than before. He feared the illustrations were not only capable to compete with but also to overpower his texts. But Poe's time in the offices of the two Philadelphian magazines had also shown him that pictures formed an essential part in the literary business. At first this was an attendant phenomenon only, but in the 1840s it soon became an irreversible development. Embellishments quickly became the best means of sales publicity and promotion. Poe had no other choice but to find a solution to his dilemma. He desperately wanted his works to be illustrated, but only with high-quality pictures which did not challenge the supremacy of his text.

By the time when Poe reviewed Goldsmith's novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* in *Graham's Magazine* of January 1842, his attitude towards text illustrations had begun to change. This short article, which consists of little else than a detailed account of the layout and the pictures, is the only passage in Poe's oeuvre where the author gives a theoretical account of his ideas about proper text illustration.

This publication is one of a class which it behoves every editor in the country to encourage, at all times, by every good word in his power the class, we mean of well-printed, and, especially, of well-illustrated works from among the standard fictions of England. We place particular emphasis upon the mechanical style of these reprints. The criticism which affects to despise these adventitious aids to the enjoyment of a work of art is at best but *étourderie*. The illustration, to be sure, is not always in accordance with our own understanding of the text; and this fact, although we never hear it urged, is, perhaps, the most reasonable objection which can be urged against pictorial embellishment – for the unity of conception is disturbed; but this disturbance takes place only in very slight measure (provided the work be worth illustration at all) and its disadvantages are far more than counterbalanced by the pleasure (to most minds a very acute one) of comparing our comprehension of the author’s ideas with that of the artist. If our imagination is feeble, the design will probably be in advance of our conception, and thus each picture will stimulate, support, and guide the fancy. If, on the contrary, the thought of the artist is inferior, there is the stimulus of contrast with the excitement of triumph. [...] We never knew a man of genius who did not confess an interest in even the worst illustrations of a good book although we have known many men of genius (who should have known better) make the confession with reluctance, as if one which implied something of imbecility or disgrace. (H 11: 8ff)

Poe’s main argument against illustrations was their interference with the text. But Poe also mentioned the reader’s/viewer’s stimulation, which originates from diverging interpretations of text and pictures. Poe was aware of the capacity of illustrations to challenge the reader’s reception of a text. But, implicitly, Poe denied illustrations the power to be superior to the “author’s ideas”. His remarks suggest that only the imagination of recipient and illustrator are competing with each other, and the text majestically wields his authority over both.

Poe’s reservations against illustrations must be regarded before the background of one of his most famous reviews, his discussion of Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*. This article has been discussed so exhaustively⁴² that only its most important statements shall only be outlined here, since it is of immediate consequence for Poe’s ideas about text illustration proper. In this review, Poe propagated “unity of impression” as the aim of the short story. It is generated by a “pre-established design” and a careful construction of the text. From the first sentence on the text has to contribute to “a certain unique or single effect” (H 11: 106f). To convey a sense of what he understands by this effect, Poe wrote: “And by such means [...] a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind [...] a sense of the fullest satisfaction” (H 11: 108). It must be noted that Poe describes this essential effect of a tale as an image or as a coherent group of images, respectively. This definition recalls the concluding paragraph “Letter to Mr.—”, where Poe had emphasized the important role of “images with indefinite sensations” (H vii: xliii). Poe thought that the unity of visual impression created by the text could be disturbed by accompanying illustrations. The mental images before “the eye of the mind” (see P 5: 117, 333), evoked by the author, would compete with the graphic image of the illustrator. Poe uttered his reservations against illustrations not only because of his experiences at Burton’s and Graham’s, but also because he was afraid to lose his sovereignty over the reader’s imagination. Regardless of the genre, whether poem or short story, Poe followed the same doctrine: “During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer’s control” (*ibid.*).

In the Goldsmith review Poe also praises the visual harmony of text and pictures. The typography of the reprint of Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield* is characterized by

CHAPTER XVI.

The family use art, which is opposed by still greater.

WHATEVER might have been Sophia's sensations, the rest of the family were easily consoled for Mr. Burchell's absence by the company of our landlord, whose visits now became more frequent and longer. Though he had been disappointed in procuring my daughters the amusements of the town, as he designed, he took every opportunity of supplying them with those little recreations which our retirement would admit of. He usually came in the morning, and while my son and I followed our occupations abroad, he sat with the family at home, and amused them by describing the town, with every part of which he was particularly acquainted. He could repeat all the observations that were retailed in the atmosphere of the play-houses, and had all the good things of the high wits by rote, long before they made their way into the jest-books. The intervals between conversation were employed in teaching my daughters picquet; or, sometimes, in setting my two little



ones to box, to make them *sharp*, as he called it; but the hopes of having him for a son-in-law, in some measure blinded us to all his imperfections. It must be owned, that my wife laid a thousand schemes to entrap him; or, to speak it more tenderly, used every art to magnify the merit of her daughter. If the cakes at tea ate short and crisp, they were made by Olivia; if the gooseberry-wine was well knit, the gooseberries were of her gathering; it was her fingers which gave the pickles their peculiar green; and in the composition of a pudding, it was her judgment that mixed the ingredients. Then the poor woman would sometimes tell the squire that she thought him and Olivia extremely of a size, and would bid both stand up, to see



which was the tallest. These instances of cunning, which she thought impenetrable, yet which everybody saw through, were very pleasing to our benefactor, who gave every day some new proofs of his passion, which, though they had not arisen to proposals of marriage, yet we thought fell but little short of it; and his slowness was attributed sometimes to native bashfulness, and sometimes to his fear of offending his uncle. An occurrence, however, which happened soon after, put it beyond a doubt, that he

broad margins generously framing the text (fig. 23). The text is clearly composed with ample leading between the lines, and it is neatly printed. Unfortunately, the title-page does not indicate who was responsible for the “numerous engravings”, but there is no doubt that several artists contributed illustrations to the book. The tiny signatures point to the French artists Charles Émile JACQUE (1813–94), JANET-LANGE (1815–72), and Charles MARVILLE (1816–1879) (cf. Osterwalder 1: 528, 530, 671). The pictures seem to have been originally created for an edition published in France, since some illustrations contain French words. Despite the fact that at least four artists produced illustrations for the book, its visual unity is preserved by the style of the engravings, which harmonize with the graphic impression of the transitional typeface. Matching the contrast of the typeface, the wood engravings are produced in simple black and white line art, and hatchings are only sparingly employed to differentiate the foreground from the background, and not to produce a variety of shadings. The illustrations only rarely exceed the dimensions of two and a half inches in height and breadth, and all are in the typical BEWICK style. Some of the pictures show the signatures of the well-known Parisian engravers

Fig. 23 *The Vicar of Wakefield*: pp. 132/33 from the edition issued in New York by Appleton & Co (1841 or 1842).

Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

ANDREW and BEST, whose studio was also responsible for the engravings for *Le Juif Errant* (see below). The sketchy style of the artists is devoid of any minute elaboration and there is no attempt at realism. The illustrations are too small to provide precise details that might distract the reader's attention from the text. The vignettes are mostly set right into the text passages, with which they correspond. Thus, the plain illustrations directly but unobtrusively echo Goldsmith's descriptions. The inconspicuousness of the illustrations results from the absence of any narrative independent from the text. Many illustrations are embedded between two text blocks, and since no picture exceeds the breadth of the type area, the text maintains its visual dominance on every page, even where two pictures are placed on facing pages. There is no frame around the pictures which otherwise might have the effect of disintegrating the illustrations from the text. As it is, there is a smooth change-over from the pictures back to the text, and thus unity is maintained.

Poe's idea of the unity between text and illustrations included that the pictures had to be compliant to the text, but apart from that, he had one more demand: embellishments had to be presented with technical refinement, just as the paper, the typeface and the binding were expected to meet the highest standards. In this context, Poe praised the "mechanical style"⁴³ of the reviewed reprint, although he has some slight objections against the diminuity and the "blurred appearance" of some vignettes, which he described a little snobbishly as "scraps" or "trifles". Poe's remarks in the second paragraph hint at a broader conception of text illustrations, in that he approves of their not "too cautious adherence to the text." Seemingly Poe was willing to allow text illustrations some sort of autonomy, even to "stimulate, support, and guide the fancy"; but, as must be supposed, only unless the dominance of the text remained uncontested. The illustrations in Goldsmith's novel do not slavishly copy the details of the text, but they also do not add any aspects which are not mentioned in the book. In Poe's eyes the range of the illustrations' "autonomy" was limited within the confines of the text.

Poe's concession towards illustrations must be interpreted in the light of Poe's pictorial predilections. Poe paid credit to the illustrations as "sketchy, spirited cuts, depending for effect [...] upon skilful grouping of figures, vivacity, naivete, and originality of fancy, and good drawing in the mass rather than upon finish in details." One fundamental connection between Poe's ideas of proper literary style and the adequacy of embellishments surfaces here. The quoted phrase echoes Poe's comment on John P. Kennedy's *Swallow-Barn* in *Graham's Magazine* of November 1841. In Poe's opinion, the novel was characterized as "disdaining ordinary embellishment, and depending for its effect upon masses rather than upon details" (227, H 15: 184f). Numerous other reviews show that Poe had a fondness for the sketchy and the suggestive, and that he loathed minute descriptions, in works of literature as well as in those of art (see above and below). The reasons for this predilection can be found in Poe's reaction against S. D. Langtree's criticism of Longfellow's poem "Excelsior": Langtree had sustained that the poem lacks the "great merit of a picture, whether made with pencil or pen, [...] truth" (H 11: 83; italics original). In *Graham's Magazine* of April 1842, Poe commented in his review of Longfellow's *Ballads and Other Poems*:

That the chief merit of a picture is its truth, is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even the aim. Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzsch. Here all details are omitted – nothing can be further from truth. Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with the want of the eyeball. [...] If truth is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe a more noble poet than Milton. (H 11: 84)

Poe's personal aversion against "truth" in art was already an important subject of his earliest essay, the "Letter to Mr.—" (1831). Disdainfully, Poe denounced every bit of metaphysical thought in poetry as "truth". Poe's early and lasting distaste for Wordsworth's poems and his occasionally uttered reservations against Coleridge derived from their alleged metaphysical profundity, which, in Poe's eyes, was apt to gain scientific knowledge, but not to create beautiful poetry. In his later days, Poe mainly located "truth" in the writings of the "Frogpondians", authors and Transcendentalist philosophers in and around Boston, for whom Poe had nothing but scorn. In an anti-classicist vein Poe also more than once defied the artistic concept of *mimesis*. In his opinion, "truth" came hand in hand with naturalistic detailism, which he considered misplaced in a piece of art.⁴⁴ Poe's recurrent propagation of an "indefinite pleasure" as the prime aim of poetry was incompatible with any artistic formula – either literary, musical or graphic – whose aim was the imitation of the "real" and not the evocation of the "ideal".

Poe regarded the Dutch genre painter Jan STEEN (1626–79) as the personification of Flemish art.⁴⁵ With the exception of the twice published review of Charles Dickens' *Peter Snook*, Poe's use of the term "Flemish" is unequivocally depreciating. The word appears twice in Poe's brusque *Literati*-article on Charles F. Briggs, whose style the critic condemns as characterized by "a Flemish fidelity that omits nothing", "insipidity" and "sheer vulgarity" (H 15: 21). Poe also showed his discontent with Briggs' discussion of the paintings in the exhibition of the Fine Arts Academy in New York. He suspected his former colleague to have a Flemish taste of art, an indictment that Poe obviously thought to be as crushing as his imputation that Briggs was "grossly uneducated" (ibid. 22). It is no secret that Briggs and Poe did not part as good friends when Briggs left *The Broadway Journal*, but it is striking that Poe's ultimate deprecation of his former colleague's taste and talent is designated as "Flemish".

In his article on N. P. Willis's play *Tortesa, the Usurer* "true perception of Flemish truth" is contrasted with the dramatist's "fine ideal elevation or exaggeration" (H 10: 27f). Flemish art, in Poe's eyes, was characterized by copying nature's "peculiarities in disarray" (28). In his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* Poe complained about the "low miniature copying of low life, much in the manner [...] of the Dutch herrings and decayed cheeses of Van Tuysseel" (H 11: 102).⁴⁶ Even if the object is not "low" life, in Poe's eyes, imitation was the wrong means to create a piece of art. In two of his late *Marginalia*, published in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of June and July 1849, Poe discredited the mimetic approach as being "too natural" (P2: 409). His favourite examples for such an artistic concept were the works of

the Greek artists PARRHASIUS and his rival ZEUXIS (fl. late 5th century B.C.). Legend has it that birds picked at grapes painted by ZEUXIS, because they looked so real. Poe also disdained the German Baroque painter Balthasar DENNER (1685–1749) as another representative of a mimetic concept of art (P 2: 385f). In his review of Willis's play Poe argued that it is not "the imitation of Nature, but [...] the artistical adjustment and amplification of her features" which leads to the perfection of any artistic work. Nature only delivers the raw material, which is transformed by the artist into a piece of art" (P 5: 274).

While Poe praised sketchiness as a literary and artistic quality he turned against the detailism of lengthy descriptions and minute depictions. About Joseph H. Ingraham Poe wrote in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of August 1836:

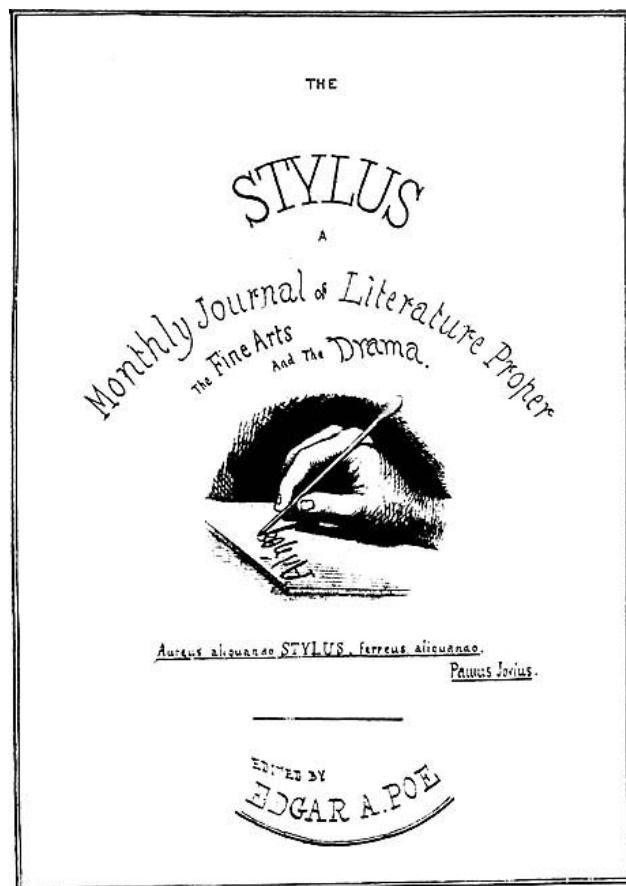
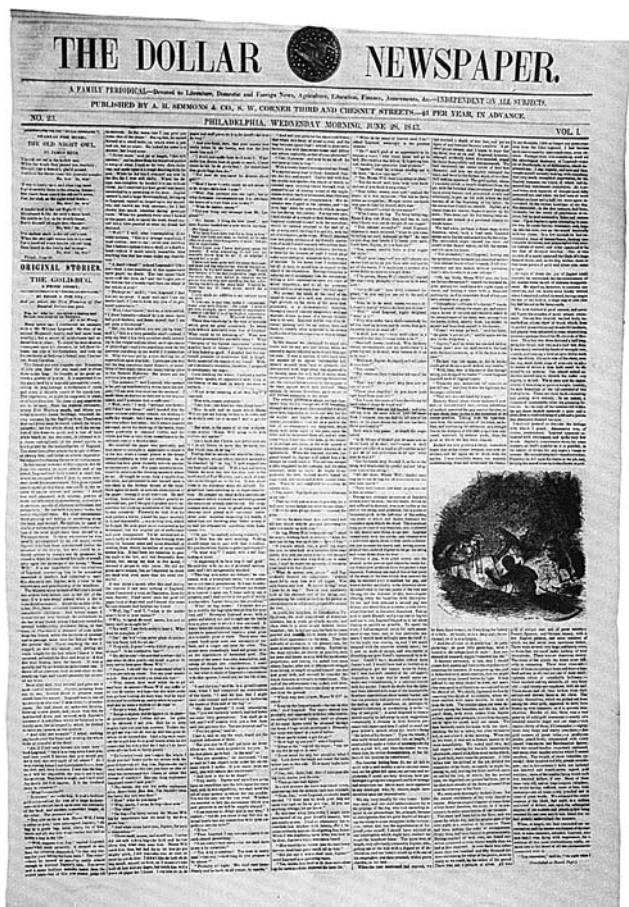
The novelist is too minutely, and by far too frequently *descriptive*. We are surfeited with unnecessary detail. Every little figure in the picture is invested with all of the dignities of light and shadow, and *chiaro 'scuro*. Of mere outlines there are none. Not a dog yelps, unsung. Not a shovel-footed negro waddles across the stage, whether to any ostensible purpose or not, without eliciting from the author a *vos plaudite*, with an extended explanation of the character of his personal appearance – of his length, depth, and breadth, – and, more particularly, of the length, depth, and breadth of his shirt-collar, shoe-buckles and hat-band. (P 5: 261; italics original)

Here again, Poe employed the term "outline" to designate a literary merit. Furthermore, the whole novel is analogized with a painting, in which, indiscriminately, all parts are elaborately depicted with the same care. Quite the contrary, two months earlier, Poe had expressly lauded Philip H. Nicklin's description of Philadelphia "very well executed outline sketch, or scratch, of Philadelphia" (P 5: 206). In the same vein, Poe praised the author of *Madrid* in 1835, who "managed to present a vivid picture by means of a few almost scratchy outlines" (P 5: 206).

However, Poe rarely saw his sketchy ideal realized, especially as far as illustrations were concerned. Usually, the plates that appeared in the contemporary magazines were characterized by that very detailism the author loathed so much. But Poe's clouded opinion of illustrations cleared up more and more after he had left *Graham's Magazine*. Once again, the prospectus of his own magazine, now called *The Stylus*, reveals Poe's current ideas about the role of text illustrations. In the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum* of February 25, 1843, Poe promised the same luxurious layout and "engravings [...] in the highest style of Art [...] in obvious illustration of the text" (4, in parts in Thomas and Jackson 398). It is noteworthy that Poe even allowed engravings to be part of his lofty magazine, although he was probably talking about prints made from wooden blocks and not from steel or copper plates, as the next quotation, from his letter to James Russell Lowell of March 27, 1843, suggests:

A part of my design is to illustrate, whatever is fairly susceptible of illustration, with finely executed wood-engravings – after the fashion of Gigoux's "Gil Blas" or "Grandville's Gulliver" – and I wish to get a tale from Mr Hawthorne as early as possible (if I am so fortunate as to get one at all) that I may put the illustration in the hands of the artist. (O 1: 232)

These lines imply an usage of illustrations that is orientated towards the demands of the general readership of the early 1840s. One has to remember that Poe, just three years before, expressed his reservations towards illustrations by announcing to print "pictorial embellishments [...] only in the necessary illustration of the text"



(see above). Although, according to Poe's prospectus of the Penn Magazine, pictures were to be numerous, illustrations were only accepted under the condition that they served the text. In his letter to Lowell, Poe's formulation "to illustrate, whatever is fairly susceptible of illustration" even indicates a lavish and unconditional use of embellishments. Poe had recognized the sign of the times. Illustrations could no longer be ruled out, since they formed an important, if not the most important argument in the marketing of magazine literature.

It is surprising that Poe did not mention F. O. C. DARLEY in his letter to Lowell. At the very end of January 1843, that is two months before the letter was written, Poe, Thomas C. Clarke (then editor of the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum*) and DARLEY had agreed upon the publication of a magazine for which the artist was to provide three to five illustrations each month at seven dollars apiece (A. H. Quinn 369; Silverman 191; Thomas and Jackson 395f). The first results of this collaboration were two illustrations for "The Gold-Bug". But the pictures were never printed between the covers of *The Stylus*, because financial problems forced Poe to postpone the publications of his own magazine once more. Thus, text and pictures first appeared in June 1843 in the *Philadelphian Dollar Newspaper* (fig. 24). Ironically, this publication was Poe's greatest success. First of all, "The Gold-Bug" brought Poe \$100, the first prize for the contest the *Dollar Newspaper* had offered as reward for the best story. This was the largest sum Poe ever received for a single text. Secondly, the story was printed on the front page of the *Dollar Newspaper* and widely distributed on the American continent. The demand for "The Gold-Bug" was so huge that

Fig. 24 Front page of *The Dollar Newspaper* with Poe's "The Gold-Bug" and one of the two illustrations by Darley (June 28, 1843).

Fig. 25 *The Stylus*: design for the title page. The picture was probably drawn by Darley.⁴⁷

Reproduced from Mankowitz.

se seroit bien contenté de la senora Mencia, s'il n'eût pas eu à choisir; mais les charmes de la jeune Catalina, comme de raison, eurent la préférence.

« Hé bien! mon prince, lui dit le comte de Lemos, pouvions-nous vous procurer le plaisir de voir deux personnes plus jolies? — Je les trouve toutes deux ravissantes, répondit le prince; et je n'ai garde de remporter mon cœur d'ici, puisqu'il n'échapperoit point à la tante, si la nièce le pouvoit manquer. »

Après un compliment si gracieux pour une tante, il dit mille choses flatteuses à Catalina, qui lui répondit très-spirituellement. Comme il est permis aux honnêtes gens qui font le personnage que je faisais dans cette occasion de se mêler à l'entretien des amants, pourvu que ce soit pour attiser le feu, je dis au galant que sa nymphe chantoit et jouoit du luth à merveille. Il fut ravi d'apprendre qu'elle eût ces talents; il la pressa de lui en montrer un échantillon. Elle se rendit de bonne grâce à ses instances, prit un luth tout accordé, joua quelques airs tendres, et chanta d'une manière si touchante, que le prince se laissa tomber à ses genoux tout transporté d'amour



extra copies of the story were issued just a few days after the first publication which had been sold out very quickly. In a letter to Lowell, written on May 28, 1844, Poe estimated that 300,000 copies of the text had been printed (O 1: 253). The wide circulation of "The Gold-Bug" spread Poe's name and fame before the story even became known in England. Thirdly, DARLEY'S illustrations were the first (and only) pictures that were commissioned for a Poe text during his lifetime, a fact that should not be under-estimated in the heyday of plate articles, second-hand illustrations and indifferent stock embellishments. The first prize, the story's prominent position on the front pages of several newspapers, its immense popularity and the two illustrations contributed to Poe's reputation in a way that can only be compared with the excitement stirred by "The Raven" in 1845.⁴⁷

While DARLEY remained unmentioned in the letter to Lowell of March 1843, Poe named two artists whose style he regarded as befitting his high plans: GIGOUX and GRANDVILLE. Poe's fondness for French illustrators is conspicuous. He not only praised the French illustrators of Goldsmith's *Vicar and Sue's Jew* but he proposed embellishments in the French style for his own lofty magazine. Jean GIGOUX'S illustrations for Alain-René Lesage's *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* are similar to those of the French illustrators of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. Most of them are sketchy vignettes which do not rival but accompany the text rather unobtrusively (fig. 26).⁴⁸ Jean-Ignace Isidore Gérard alias GRANDVILLE (1803–47) started his career as a caricaturist. GRANDVILLE illustrated a broad range of works

Fig. 26 *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*: p. 664 from the edition published by Paulin (Paris, 1835) and illustrated by Gigoux.

Courtesy of Bibliothèque National de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie.

Fig. 27 *Robinson Crusoe*: illustration by Grandville, first published in 1840.

Collection of the author.

such as the bizarre *Scènes de la Vie Privée et Publique des Animaux* (1842), the surrealist *Un autre Monde* (1844) or Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1840). Poe referred to these latter in his correspondence with Frederick W. Thomas. In his letter of February 25, 1843 Poe mentioned GRANDVILLE's pictures for *Robinson Crusoe* as a model for the illustrations to be part of *The Stylus* (O I: 224). A month later Poe wrote to James Russell Lowell (see above), again referring to GRANDVILLE, but this time expressing his fondness for the Frenchman's pictures for Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (first published in France for *Voyages de Gulliver*, 1838). The wood engravings, in both works, convey the free flowing lines of GRANDVILLE's penmanship very well. In *Gulliver* illustrations GRANDVILLE's lively graphic expressiveness perfectly harmonizes with the pictorial humor which derives from topsy-turvy compositions, slightly distorted anatomical features and the artist's inclination to depict burlesque situations. In the pictures for Defoe's novel, GRANDVILLE catches the various moods, the threatening as well as the comical. Among these works many small and inconspicuous pictures, but some of the larger illustrations live their own lives independently from the text (fig. 27). This is not only a matter of size, which allows the depiction of more details, but also of the artist's approach to the text. Although echoing Defoe's description, GRANDVILLE's depiction of the footprint scene intensely conveys a sense of Robinson's terror by its own graphic means, without employing the theatricality that characterizes other contemporary depictions of the scene, such as CRUIKSHANK's. David Blewett pointed to the development of GRANDVILLE's illustrations to change the emphasis from the depiction of an undisturbed reverie on the island to a mood in which fear and violence dominate (Blewett 78). GRANDVILLE's set of pictures has its own tale to tell, and thus the illustrations not only embellish the text, but also interpret and enhance it. These interpretative tendencies could also be found in some of William HARVEY's pictures, although they are much more inconspicuous and infrequent than in GRANDVILLE's illustrations. Whether Poe's enthusiasm for GRANDVILLE included this independent story-telling is questionable. Poe's favorable comment on the "not too cautious adherence to the text" of the French illustrations in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (see above) may also allude to the autonomous character of illustrations. But how much autonomy would Poe allow? On the one hand, GRANDVILLE's pictures certainly do not conform to Defoe's text entirely, on the other hand they do not contradict it, but rather extrapolate aspects of the narrative. As his remarks about "the most reasonable objection which can be urged against pictorial embellishment" suggest, Poe considered pictures which openly challenged the text a "disturbance" (see above). Within a year, Poe's relation to "pictorial embellishment" had relaxed even more, and his concept of the proper role of text illustrations had widened. While in January 1842 he propagated inconspicuous illustrations subservient to the text, he was willing to use interpretative illustrations such as GRANDVILLE's in March 1843.

Poe's general comments about the pictures in the illustrated editions of Charles Dickens show a mixed opinion about their merit. Such distinguished illustrators as George CATTERMOLLE (1800–68), George CRUIKSHANK (1792–1878), John LEECH (1817–64) and Hablot Knight BROWNE (1815–82) belonged to the staff of

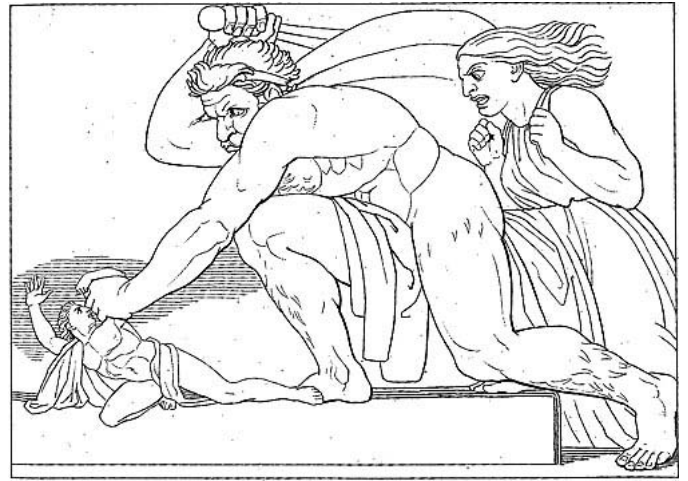
Dickens' illustrators. While CRUIKSHANK had already been a celebrated caricaturist and illustrator before he began to work for Dickens, CATTERMOLE reached the summit of his success through his pictures of Dickens' works. He became a close friend of the author (who nicknamed him "Kittenmoles"), and he was constantly patronized by Queen Victoria herself, who even offered him a knighthood, which he refused in 1839. In the end it was BROWNE, who under the *nom-de-plume* "PHIZ", became the successor of Robert SEYMOUR (1798–1836), Dickens favorite artist, who had committed suicide in 1836 while the first instalments of the *Pickwick Papers* were issued. BROWNE's style has been characterized by a modern expert as being "in the tradition of the Regency, verging on caricature, scratchy in execution and not always very assured in the penwork" (Houfe 248, *passim*). This evaluation was foreshadowed by Poe's judgment, first published in *The Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post* of May 1, 1841, and later reprinted in *Grahams's Magazine* of February 1842:

The wood-cut designs which accompany the edition before us are occasionally good. The copper engravings are pitiably ill-conceived and ill-drawn; and not only this, but are in broad contradiction of the wood-designs and text. (H 11: 61)

It is striking that Poe finds fault with the discrepancy between some illustrations and the text. Dickens was not only in the position to choose the artists of his works himself, he also decided which scenes were to be illustrated. Moreover, he pointed out where exactly he wanted the pictures to be inserted into the printed text (Ackroyd 654, see 177f; see Guiliani and Collins 5ff, 545f). The drawings of Thomas SIBSON (1817–44), for *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, did not meet the author's great expectations and as a result the young artist had to leave the illustrious group (Houfe 453). There is no evidence whether Poe knew about the circumstances under which Dickens's works were illustrated, but he would have regarded them as ideal for an author. In his contract with DARLEY for *The Stylus* Poe secured the same privileges for himself: "[DARLEY] agrees to furnish original designs, or drawings (on wood or paper as required) of his own composition, in his best manner, and from subjects supplied him by Mess: CLARKE and Poe; the said designs to be employed in illustration of the Magazine entitled 'The Stylus'" (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 396).

Poe's critique of BROWNE's illustrations turned against the peculiar graphic style of the copper engravings, which, in Poe's opinion, did not harmonize with the visual impression of the wood-engravings and the typeface. Until the end of his career in 1867, BROWNE preferred the metal plate over the wood block (Houfe 248). As a result, his engravings are characterized by thin, spidery and scratchy lines, a graphic style which Poe disliked very much. Apart from the poor quality of the copper engravings, Poe claimed that they destroyed the visual unity of the book. Many of the quotations from above clearly show that Poe liked large, bold and clear typefaces, and one reason for this can be found in their visual harmony with woodcuts and wood-engravings.⁴⁹

While Poe was partially reserved about the execution of the pictures, the caricatural tendencies in the illustrations for Dickens' works suited his taste well. This predilection for graphic humour can also be found in Poe's comment on the illus-



trations for Henry Cockton's *Stanley Thorn* in *Graham's Magazine* of January 1842 (H 11: 15). The pictures were made by the already mentioned George CRUIKSHANK and by John LEECH (1817–64), who became popular as a political caricaturist before entering the field of book and magazine illustration. A short comment about CRUIKSHANK *Omnibus*, which Poe wrote in 1845 for the September issue of *The Broadway Journal* (P 3: 43), shows that the critic was fond of the mixture of funny and melancholy elements in his drawings.

Most of the pictures for Dickens' works differ from Poe's other favourite illustrations, since many of them are overcrowded with figures and loaded with background details (fig. 28). While the pictures of HARVEY, GIGOUX and the embellishments for Goldsmith's *Vicar* are small and unobtrusive, the illustrations for Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* catch the reader's attention by mere size and attention to minute details. There are many full-page plates, and the pictures which are inserted into the running text often occupy half a page or more. Sometimes, the reader has to turn the book by 90 degrees to inspect the pictures *hors texte*, and thus the reading process is interrupted and the author's spell is broken. This strong visual attraction must be supposed to be a reason for Poe's restrictions against these kinds of illustrations.

Quite different from all illustrations mentioned so far are the works of John FLAXMAN (1755–1826). In yet another letter in which Poe projects his plans for a literary magazine, written to the potential associate Lowell on February 4, 1843, Poe's idea of perfectly appropriate designs went along with the name of FLAXMAN (O 1: 221). Due to the similarity of their graphic style Poe often named FLAXMAN together with the German draughtsman Moritz RETZSCH. RETZSCH belonged to the Romantic Movement in Germany, but his works speak of his classicist roots. He was just one of the many artists who were influenced by FLAXMAN (Houfe 15). RETZSCH became popular in England as well as in the United States by his line engravings for some plays of Shakespeare. If Poe had not seen one of the editions embellished by either FLAXMAN or RETZSCH, he became at the least learned about their works when he reviewed Henry F. Chorley's *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans* for *The Southern Literary Messenger* of October 1836 (P 5: 301–04), in which Mrs. Heman's fondness for the two artists' outline drawings was mentioned. FLAXMAN

Fig. 28 *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. Detail of the frontispiece by Hablot Knight Browne aka Phiz (1838).

Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Osnabrück.

Fig. 29 *Odyssey – The Laistrygonians*: Engraving by John Flaxman (1805).

Tate Gallery, London.

had embellished Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as Aeschylus' *Theogeny*. In *The Broadway Journal* of October 25, 1845 Poe briefly but enthusiastically commented on another celebrated set of illustrations by FLAXMAN, namely that for Dante's *Inferno* (P 3: 29of). All of FLAXMAN's illustrations betray his profession as a sculptor. The clear outlines and the absence of cross-hatchings recall Greek vase decorations as well as the perfect anatomy displayed in classics statues (Houfe 15f). In all their simplicity and concentration on the two dimensional, however, FLAXMAN's drawings convey a sense of corporeal plasticity and spatial depth. Moritz RETZSCH's works are comparable in terms of graphic style to S. H. GIMBER's outline engravings after HERVIEU (see above). However, while Poe often preferred illustrations because of their sketchiness or slight caricatural elements, the pictures of RETZSCH show formal severity. FLAXMAN's designs show the free-flowing and swelling lines of pen and ink drawings. They make the impression as if they were sketched by a swift hand rather than engraved with a cutter (fig. 29). The sparse lines in FLAXMAN's outline drawings are devoid of superfluous details. In their transparent clarity they are at the same time explicit and suggestive, definite and indefinite, since only the most important features are delineated. These pictures create a quite different kind of sketchiness, but here this effect is not achieved by a rough and suggestive depiction of particular features but by the absence of details. Furthermore, these designs do not visually rival the dense mass of a text column, and thus do not distract the reader's eyes from the printed matter, a circumstance which Poe unquestionably regarded as another advantage. In Poe's opinion, the designs of FLAXMAN and RETZSCH recommended themselves for various reasons. Despite their relatively big size they were unobtrusive, and thus they did not interfere with the text. Because of their reduced design they could be easily copied at comparatively low cost, and, last but not least, the engravings were unlikely to be subject to the usual imperfections in the process of reproduction, which might spoil a plate or may result in a blurred or obscure appearance.

Moreover, the graphic works of FLAXMAN and RETZSCH are characterized by a suggestive unfinishedness, a characteristic reminiscent of the sketchiness and indefinitiveness which Poe used to praise on other occasions. Not only are these works devoid of "truth", since they are clearly artistic abstractions from the matter-of-fact reality, they also convey a sense of something that lies beyond the sensory world. In the "Platonic" context of Poe's aesthetics the evocation of indefinite sensations are faint notions of the ideal world, the ethereal realm of beauty. The drawings of FLAXMAN and RETZSCH reproduce nature insofar as every feature is identifiable as the representation of an object of the real world. But they also transcend nature, because simultaneously, they are abstractions of these objects, and there is no attempt at realism. Without any illusory effects these outline drawings literally leave blank spaces for the imagination of the viewer. Poe's fondness for these drawings must be supposed to be founded on three reasons. Firstly, they do not compete with the literary text, since their unfinishedness does not allow the creation of a concrete graphic antipode. Secondly, Poe thought himself capable of wielding so much power over his readers' imagination that he was convinced to control or at least to direct their projections into the blank spaces.

Third, in his texts Poe himself was discriminately presenting only those details which he thought to be indispensable for a specific pre-conceived effect, and thus the un-realistic graphic style of FLAXMAN and RETZSCH matches the author's own literary technique. In most of his texts, Poe himself provided sketchy outlines, which are only filled when he wanted to put special emphasis.

There were several factors which influenced Poe's ideas about proper text illustrations. First of all, the illustrations had to be subservient to the text. His fondness for GRANDVILLE's pictures for *Robinson Crusoe* and the small French wood-engravings for *The Vicar of Wakefield*, however, suggest that Poe allowed illustrations some sort of independence from the text, but it must be supposed, only as long as they did not overtly contradict the author's descriptions. Superfluous or incompatible details might turn away the reader's attention from the author's descriptions and were therefore regarded as a blemish. Too impressive illustrations might overpower the text visually and distract the eye of the reader too much, thus breaking the spell of the text. For this reason Poe had a special fondness for small or unobtrusive illustrations, as his reviews of HARVEY's and CHAPMAN's pictures reveal. All these features correspond with Poe's predilection for the sketchy. Sketchiness in graphic art does not allow the minute representation of details. Small illustrations are necessarily sketchy, since limited space demands a concentration on the most important features. On the one hand, the visual suggestiveness which comes along with a sketchy graphic style is too unspecific to challenge a text. On the other hand, it is flexible enough to reflect more than one idea. In the sketchy, Poe's propagation of the indefinite in art meets with an unpretentious visual representation. In Poe's opinion, the woodcut and the wood-engraving were the best means to reproduce a sketchy graphic style, quite opposite to steel engravings, a technique which delivered crisp and too delicately shaded pictures, or when badly executed, lifeless illustrations. Moreover, the contemporary magazine illustrations and fashion pictures were almost exclusively engraved or etched in steel plates, and besides their technical execution Poe also despised them because of their sentimental contents. Although lithography is undoubtedly the best means to convey a hand drawing, Poe disliked it and preferred the xylographic techniques.⁵⁰

3.2 The pictorialism in Poe's aesthetics

3.2.1 Indefinitiveness

Poe's predilection for the sketchy, in literary as well as in graphic works, was closely connected with his ideas about indefinitiveness. Although its importance for the author's works is generally acknowledged, the term has been rather neglected by Poe scholars. It has been marginally discussed now and then, but a thorough analysis has not been delivered yet.⁵¹ Usually, indefinitiveness, and its derivatives, are exclusively understood as designating Poe's aversion against "truth", that is a clear-cut moral as the object of a literary work of art, which he condemned as the "heresy of *The Didactic*" (H 14: 217, italics original). This aversion against definite meaning is most notable in the articles published during the so-called Longfellow War (1845) and in his posthumously published essay "The Poetic Principle" (1850).

However, the idea(s) behind the term "indefinitiveness" influenced Poe's writings for almost twenty years, and there is more behind it than Poe's resentment against "truth". As early as 1831, the year the young poet published his third small volume of lyrics, Poe concluded the so-called "Letter to Mr—", in fact his first literary essay, as follows:

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *indefinite* sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most *indefinite* conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness. (H 7: xliii; italics original)⁵²

This statement foreshadows his later articles and essays in that Poe already turned against "truth" here. Apart from that, Poe constructed a hierarchy between poetry and prose. The latter is divided into "science" and "romance", or in modern terms, non-fiction and fiction. Poe's argument for placing poetry at the top was its unique power to create an "indefinite pleasure". The artistic means with which this effect is produced is the harmonious combination of a "pleasurable idea" with "sweet sound". Literary works of art devoid of musical qualities produce textual directness which is incompatible with the effect of undefinable delight. But it is not only music which makes all the difference. The greater effect of poetry, as opposed to prose, is due to its capacity of "presenting perceptible images with [...] indefinite sensations". As early as 1831, images play a vital role in Poe's aesthetics. However, Poe remained unspecific about the nature of those "images" and in what kind of "sensations" are connected with them. Moreover, he did not clarify the relationship between "music" and "images".

It seems as if, according to Poe, poetry is in some way in control of these images and sensations. So, musicalness, being the immediate influence which poetry wields over the human mind, in some way interferes with the presentation of these pictures. The indefinitiveness of music modulates the images and as a result, they

become indefinite themselves. It is not quite clear whether music or the images are primarily responsible for the indefinite pleasure, but with a view on the last sentence of the paragraph quoted above it seems that neither music nor the images can achieve the intended effect independently from each other. The musicalness of poetry and the images join in symbiosis. Poetry is the medium to create pleasure. The source of this pleasure are images rendered indefinite by music.

Indefinite images are a recurrent element in Poe's works. The author had a predilection for shadowy apparitions and obscure settings, since they frequently appear in his works as the discussions of his stories in the following chapters will show. Poe also directed the attention of his readers to indefinite images in other author's works, since he considered them an outstanding quality. In *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* of September 1839 Poe extolled a passage from Fouqué's *Undine* because of its pictorial indefiniteness.

Again, we might dwell upon the exquisite management of imagination, which is so visible in the passages where the brooks are water-spirits and the water-spirits brooks – neither distinctly either. What can be more ethereally ideal than the frequent *indeterminate glimpses* caught of Kühleborn? – or than his singular and wild lapses into shower and foam? – or than the vanishing of the white wagoner and his white horses into the shrieking and devouring flood? – or than the gentle melting of the passionately weeping bride into the chrysal waters of the Danube? (H 10: 38f; see H 16: 50f; italics mine)

It is true that Poe delivered long and detailed descriptions in many of his own stories, but the majority of his fictional works are characterized by pictorial indefiniteness and visual ambiguity nevertheless. In "The Assignation", a likeness of the Marchesa Aphrodite is described as an "ethereal figure", while the narrator appears as "a spectral and ominous figure" (M 2: 164, 153); the Shadow in the same story is "vague, formless, and indefinite" (M 2: 190); Egæus' musings are full of "aerial forms [...] vague, variable, indefinite, unsteady" (210); in "Ligeia" "a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect" (325) appears in the turret chamber where the arabesque ornaments seem to change their forms continually (322); Roderick Usher's "phantasmagoric" paintings "grew, touch by touch, into vagueness" (405); William Wilson cannot distinguish the features of the face of his double (439); the wanderer in "The Island of the Fay" perceives trees as "spectral forms [...] exhausting their substance into dissolution" (604) and he imagines a fay emerging from the darkness below the trees, but he is not sure whether his imagination plays a trick on him (*ibid.*). Vague, obscure, ambiguous and indefinite images not only appear in the allegedly serious tales. In "Loss of Breath", the narrator Mr. Lackobreath has visions of "spectral and stealthy figures [...] continually flitting, like the ghosts of Banquo" (80), and throughout the story "The Spectacles" the protagonist Simpson is eager to obtain "a more distinct view" of a lady's beauty (3: 891).⁵³

In his poetry, the musicalness of the lines render the images indefinite, but how Poe achieved the same effect in his prose works needs to be discussed. In his early short stories, Poe tried to adapt the language of poetry to his short stories. This is most notable in "Silence" and in "Shadow", where Poe employed the stylistic devices of his poetry to great extent: alliterations, anaphoras, assonances, syntac-

tical inversions. This elaborate prose style has been labelled “arabesque” by some critics (see below).

However, in his early writings, Poe himself called this style “quaint” and “grotesque”, as is obvious in his review of *The Book of Gems*:

Almost every devout reader of the old English bards [...] would mention vaguely, yet with perfect sincerity, a sense of dreamy, wild indefinite, and he would perhaps say, undefinable delight. Upon being required to point out the source of this so shadowy pleasure, he would be apt to speak of the quaint in phraseology and of the grotesque in rhythm. And this quaintness and grotesqueness are, as we have elsewhere endeavored to show, very powerful, and if well managed, very admissable adjuncts to Ideality. (P 5: 251)

In this early review, published in August 1836 in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe used “dreamy, wild indefinite [...] undefinable delight” and “shadowy pleasure” as synonyms for “indefinite pleasure”. This pleasure originates from a certain kind of unfamiliarity in the wording and the metrics in poetry. The two key terms, however, are ambiguous. “Quaintness” suggests “old-fashionedness”, “verbal affectation” and “strangeness”. In one of the later *Marginalia* Poe wrote on the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning in *Graham’s Magazine*:

The thoughts here belong to a high order of poetry, but could not have been wrought into effective expression, without the aid of those repetitions – those unusual phrases – those quaintnesses, in a word, which it has been too long the fashion to censure, indiscriminately, under the one general head of “affectation.” (P 2: 375)

“Quaintness” is here defined as a poetical effect achieved by “repetitions” and “unusual phrases”. In regard to the lines Poe quoted from Browning’s poems (“To Flush, my Dog” and “Drama of Exile”) they are of the kind he uses himself in his late poems “The Raven”, “Ulalume” and “Annabel Lee” to great extent. Poe’s second argument for the special charm inherent in English Renaissance poetry, the “grotesqueness in rhythm”, is also closely connected with the aspects of strangeness and unfamiliarity. In a letter to his patron and benefactor Beverly Tucker, Poe wrote in December 1835:

I have written many verses, and read more than you would be inclined to imagine. In short – I especially pride myself upon the accuracy of my ear – and have established the fact of its accuracy, to my own satisfaction at least, by some odd chromatic experiments. I was therefore astonished to find you objecting to the melody of my lines. [...] Your own verses [...] are absolutely faultless, if considered as “pure harmony” – I mean to speak technically – “without the intervention of any dischords.” I was formerly accustomed to write thus, and it would be an easy thing to convince you of the accuracy of my ear by writing such at present – but imperceptibly the love of these dischords grew upon me as my love of music grew stronger. (O 1: 78)

The “odd chromatic experiments” and a “love of [...] dischords” reveal Poe’s predilection for the unfamiliar, the unusual and the strange. In writing verse, Poe declared to use dischords deliberately. The same counts for uncommon diction and grotesque metrics to generate a sense of indefinitiveness. These means cause indefinitiveness, because none of them is compatible with “pure harmony”. This “otherness”, achieved by distorting familiar qualities, results in a hitherto unexperienced but an even more pleasurable variation of the ideal. At the root of this kind of unfamiliarity is that sort of unexpectedness or novelty which Poe thought to be essential for the originality of any poetical creation (see below).

In “Shadow” Poe used biblical diction and antique rhetorical devices like the *poly-syndeton* to create an atmosphere of ancient times. As a result, Shadow not only emerges from the darkness of the draperies but also from the mystic obscurity of the past. Poe’s poetical prose style creates the effect of an indefinite quaintness, that is strangeness, unfamiliarity, ambiguity, antiquity, and obscurity. A later example is “The Fall of the House of Usher”. Here, one of the keywords, the onomapoetic “gloom”, rings like a death-knell throughout the tale and tinges the narrative with a musical sound. In his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* Poe employed musical language and sound devices to modulate the general tone and the imagery of his stories. Just compare the following lines, culled from Poe’s poem “To Helen” and “The Shadow”. “Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche/How statue-like I see thee stand” (M 1: 166), and: “And lo! from among those sable draperies [...] there came forth a dark and undefined shadow” (M 2: 190).

One role of music has remained unconsidered until now. Poe never became tired of mentioning again and again the mediatory function of music. The following quotation not only elucidates this important role, it also reveals the Platonism that lies behind his postulated symbiosis of “pleasurable idea” and music. In the *Democratic Review* of November 1844 Poe wrote:

When music affects us to tears, seemingly causeless, we weep not, as Gravina supposes, from “excess of pleasure”; but through excess of an impatient, petulant sorrow that, as mere mortals, we are as yet in no condition to banquet upon those supernal ecstasies of which the music affords us merely a suggestive and indefinite glimpse. (P 2: 119)⁵⁴

Music is a means to disclose at least a small bit of a happier state of being to come after one’s earthly existence. This revelation is of a visual kind. The “suggestive and indefinite glimpse” recalls the “perceptible images [...] with indefinite sensations” that he mentioned in his “Letter to Mr —”. Music becomes the link between everyday existence and eternal happiness. This latter state we leave once we are born and we strive to return to it for all our lives. In Platonic terms, music conveys a faint notion of the ideal world in the way it was experienced in the prenatal state of *anamnesis*. In poetry, music opens a window into the ideal world. It creates a visual impression of the otherwise imperceptible objects of the ideal world. Therefore, poetry does *present* and not *produce* images which are indefinite because of their otherworldly provenance. Quite contrary, prose is only capable of presenting definite images and ideas which have their origin in everyday life.

In Poe’s poetical concept there seemed to exist a perfect symbiosis between the indefiniteness of the ideas and the indefiniteness of the mental impression music leaves on the human mind.

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound simply are out of reach of analysis [...] but one thing is certain – that the sentimental pleasure derivable from music, is nearly in the ratio of its indefiniteness. Give to music any undue decision – imbue it with any very determinate tone – and you deprive it, at once, of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury: – you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up: – you exhaust it of its breath of faëry. It then becomes a tangible and easy appreciable thing – a conception of the earth, earthy. (H 10: 41f)⁵⁵

In accordance with his statement in the “Letter to Mr.—” that “the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception”, Poe reasoned that the inability to analyze and to rationalize music gives it a touch of mystic ideality. This common feature in regards to indefiniteness between music and the ideal makes the first the most adequate mode of the expression of the second. It is as if by magic music opens a door through which human kind throws a glance at eternity without crossing the threshold. But what is behind the threshold? What is it that man gazes at in such exalted moments? It seems this will remain the poet’s secret. In the very centre of Poe’s aesthetic universe there is nothing but a floating, impenetrable mist which sometimes seems to take on an indefinite and elusive shape. Under these circumstances the effect must necessarily be indefinite because the object, the “pleasurable idea” to be poetically presented by means of “perceptible images”, is indefinite in itself. “Does it follow that, since the infinite is indefinite, the indefinite is also the infinite, the spiritual?” one critic asks not without legitimate disbelief (Foerster, *American* 39). Poe’s identification is certainly debatable. However, it is not important whether Poe’s aesthetic precepts are build up to a logical construction. Poe was an artist and not a philosopher. The fact that his critical and aesthetic principles abound with inconsistencies does not affect the suggestive quality of his creative works. It is not the question whether Poe’s aesthetics are based on profound and unique thoughts of his own, but simply how his aesthetics worked to serve him as a substructure for his artistic production. I agree with George Kelly who described Poe’s aesthetics as “basically Platonic” (522) and who wrote: “Thus because the ideal realm of supernal beauty is transcendent and indefinite, its proper representation will [...] evince a certain indefiniteness” (534).

It is more important to examine how Poe adapted the precepts of his poetry to his prose works. How can a prose text (without the help of musicalness) bring about the same effect of indefiniteness as poetry? In his “Letter to Mr.—” Poe had categorically declared that prose presents images with definite sensations. In 1831, Poe had not yet produced any short story of his own. “Shadow” exemplifies how Poe tries to overcome the problem of prosaic definitiveness in different ways. Firstly, Poe employs lyrical stylistic devices to create a sense of unreality and/or otherworldliness (as opposed to prosaic reality). Secondly, time and place are obscure. Thirdly, he renounces overly detailed descriptions. Fourthly, the central image is an indistinguishable figure or object. Fifthly, and as a result of all this, the meaning of the text cannot be settled definitely.

Poe used this recipe over and over again until the early 1840s. However, only in very few texts is the concentration of all listed ingredients so strong as in “Shadow”. After 1835, Poe produced no other prose text which abounds with so many lyrical stylistic devices. Poe’s texts grew in size due to more and longer descriptive parts. And, of course, Poe could not use an indistinct being such as Shadow in all of his tales, although such or similar figures entered the stage in Poe’s *mise en scène* regularly. But time and place are undefined in almost every story, and all of his texts are full of ambiguities.

One line of Poe’s 1844 poem “Dream-Land” has been frequently quoted to label this quality of Poe’s works: “Out of Space – out of Time” (M 1: 344). A blurring

effect lies over Poe's descriptions because the confines of space and time remain unclear. Thus, Poe's readers (and illustrators) are forced to imagine the setting of his tales all by themselves. Wolfgang Iser remarked that not even the most detailed description is capable of producing a wholesale representation (see chapter 2.1), so that textual indeterminacies necessarily occur. Unlike Fielding, one of Iser's favorite examples, Poe even denied his reader basic information about the setting. In a Fielding novel, many blanks can be removed because the reader has a more or less definite idea about the setting, but this is not the case in a Poe story. In fact, the indefiniteness of time and space is a characteristic of poetry. Poe used this device as a means to render his texts ambivalent from the first paragraph on.

Besides this basic blank at the root of almost any Poe text, the author's works contain another species of indeterminacy which remains unmentioned in Iser's study *The Act of Reading*. The most conspicuous example occurs in *The Pit and the Pendulum*. The narrator resorts to the brink of the pit in order to escape from the insufferable heat of the gleaming walls of his prison.

I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet, for a wild moment, did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced – it wrestled its way into my soul – it burned itself upon my shuddering reason. Oh! for a voice to speak! – oh! horror! – oh! any horror but this! (M 2: 696)

After all physical tortures the captive has endured in the prison of Toledo the view into the pit causes him even greater pain. The act of looking is as much a source of pain as the thing the prisoner perceives in the dark hole. However, it is not revealed what it is inside the pit. Thus, it remains to the reader's imagination to fill this gap. The reader has to become active in order to understand the narrator's horror. What can be even more terrifying than the brutal tortures with which the prisoner has been tormented so far? Most probably, the reader will project into this blank something that particularly frightens himself/herself. Here, the boundaries between author, text and reader begin to fade. The reader participates in the production of the text, stimulated by an intentional indeterminacy produced by the author.

There are many similar passages in Poe's works. The spectral and shadowy figures which appear in so many tales must be counted among this group, too. Although there is some sort of description, the aroused images remain elusive and demand completion by the reader. Roderick Usher's canvas depicts an encrypted nothingness, filled with gleaming brightness although it lies deep below the earth and there is no source of light in the overall emptiness. William Wilson flees Bransby's School after having illuminated the face of his sleeping adversary. He sees that they are alike as two peas. But he reported that before. There must be something else he became aware of. Poe does not tell, and thus the reader has to tell himself/herself. Symptomatically for the pictorial quality of Poe's stories, it is very often a visual experience that inspires the greatest horror, but usually it remains out of a sharp focus. Instead of delivering detailed descriptions of the horrifying spectacle, Poe left its concrete creation up to the imagination of his readers.

One of Poe's longest descriptions is the portrait of Ligeia. One might expect that a description of about 1000 words is able to present a definite portrait. But not

so in “Ligeia”. Despite the many details the lady remains remarkably unimaginable. This is the result of Poe’s method of fusion. He combined familiar and unfamiliar elements which are disparate, almost incompatible. The whole image is a strange thing with no corresponding visual experience in reality. Thus, Poe’s descriptions create an impression of the fantastic and the unreal. While each feature for itself is conceivable, the combination is difficult to imagine. As a result, the image remains indefinite as a whole. Therefore, it is also appropriate to characterize the number of imaginable combinations not only as indefinite but also as limitless. In fact, this word represents one facet of the meaning of Poe’s critical term.

As has been already pointed out, Poe appraised the method of pictorial fusion in Fouqué’s *Undine*. More than that, the above-mentioned examples from his own works evince that Poe not only employed the technique of pictorial fusion to create the intended effect in his own works, but he also suggested the dissolute and transparent (that is hardly discernible) state of figures and objects to convey indefinite images. But the eclectic fusion of singular and disparate aspects remained his prime method until the end of his career. In *Graham’s Magazine* of May 1849 Poe wrote in his *Marginalia*:

The pure imagination chooses, from either Beauty or Deformity, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as a general rule, partaking, in character, of beauty, or sublimity, in the ratio of the respective beauty or sublimity of the things combined – which are themselves still to be considered as atomic – that is to say, as previous combinations. But, as often analogously happens in physical chemistry, so not unfrequently does it occur in this chemistry of the intellect, that the admixture of two elements results in a something that has nothing of the qualities of one of them, or even nothing of the qualities of either. (H 16: 155f)

Thus, indefiniteness in Poe’s prose works became independent from musical modulation, since the poet had developed methods to create the effect by visual means. One of Poe’s most favorite quotations was a line from Francis Bacon’s *Essays*. “There is no exquisite beauty [...] without some *strangeness* in the proportion” (M 2: 311f; italics original).⁵⁶ The emphasis on strangeness recalls Poe’s key-word quaintness in his review of English Renaissance poetry and his letter to Beverly Tucker (see above). Poe distorted the basically classical beauty of Ligeia, mixing it with strange elements in order to create a sense of unearthly grace, just as he introduced dischords into the pure harmony of his verse in order to create “strange” melodies. Poe regarded pure harmony and perfect classical beauty as inept to convey an impression of the mystic world beyond.

However, Poe’s images are not only indefinite because he presents figures which are “shadows of shadows” or mysterious beings from a mystic world beyond. Poe’s texts offer several clues to explain for vague apparitions. These figures often appear in dimly lit locations. The poor or deceptive lighting conditions are responsible for vague visual impressions. In “King Pest”, for example, the protagonists become aware of a grotesque party in an undertaker’s cellar where the only source of light is “a quantity of charcoal, which threw a fitful but vivid light over the entire scene” (M 2: 248). At the end of their perilous journey, Pym and Peters perceive some giant-like figure which is “enveiled” in the vapor of a rushing cataract. The narrator of “The Fall of the House of Usher” approaches the building in the twilight of “a dull, dark [...] day [...] as the shades of the evening drew on”.

Inside the mansion no more than “[f]eeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes”, so that “the eye [...] struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber” (M 2: 397, 401).

But apart from fickle lighting conditions another reason can be called responsible for the presentation of vague visual spectacles. The largest part of Poe’s stories are first person narratives. The reader sees the fictional world through the eyes of Poe’s protagonists. The retrospective reports of these narrators, however, are not always reliable (see the next chapter). They often suffer from some sort of affliction which, among other limitations, causes their sense of “reality”, their memory and their sense of vision to be impaired. The inconspicuous I-narrator of “King Pest” is most probably as drunk as Legs and Tarpaulin. Pym and Peters are utterly exhausted and paralyzed with fear, facing death in an alien environment no mortal ever has seen before. Roderick’s visitor is tired from the long journey, and, moreover, he is very likely to be addicted to opium. Opium also engenders the wounded man’s vision of “The Oval Portrait”. The narrators of “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat” are obviously insane, and Egæus, in “Berenice”, frankly admits that he is a monomaniac losing control of himself. The husband of Ligeia cannot “remember how, when, or even precisely where, [he] first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia” (M 2: 310), and because of his short-sightedness Simpson, in “The Spectacles”, does not recognize that the “*beau idéal* of [his] wildest and most enthusiastic visions” he is about to marry is his own toothless grandmother (M 3: 889). Excessive consumption of alcohol, drug addiction, superstition, terror, exhaustion, excited and feeble states of mind, madness, and myopia all contribute, sometimes cumulatively, to the narrators’ presentation of indefinite images in Poe’s works. However, it is difficult to find definite textual evidence for the untrustworthiness of Poe’s narrators, since this circumstance is merely suggested. Poor lighting conditions are casually mentioned rather than emphasized. And likewise, the white giant, Ligeia or the little island fay may indeed be beings from a world beyond.

“The Island of the Fay” is a good example to illustrate that the indefiniteness of a text’s central image can be convincingly explained in a variety of ways. After a long and fatiguing journey through the lonely woods the wanderer reposes in the mossy grass below an “unknown odoriferous shrub”. He begins to doze. The time is near sundown: “A sombre, yet beautiful and peaceful gloom pervaded things” (M 2: 603). Contemplating the mirror-like appearance of the islet in the lake, the narrator is struck by the idea that the island is inhabited by fays. With half-shut eyes he observes the island, suddenly becoming aware of a tiny boat shaped like the flake of a sycamore tree. Then he imagines to see a fay standing in the canoe which slowly surrounds the islet. Not long and the sun has sunk and the darkness of the beginning night falls like a curtain over the spectacle.

The appearance of the indefinite figure may be the result of the wanderer’s weariness. He falls into a slumber, and the following is nothing but a dream. The fact that the narrator characterizes the sight as a “dreamy vision” supports this hypothesis. His sleep may have also been caused by the lulling effect of the “sweet-scented” turf and bush, both having the effect of a sedative. But likewise, he may be still awake. The enchanting idyll around him and the loneliness and quietness

of the scene instill a poetic mood. Characteristically, the narrator is not merely looking at the islet in the lake, he is *contemplating* the scene. This recalls the “Preface” of Wordsworth’s second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The Lakeside poet stated that “contemplation in tranquillity” in Nature is the most befitting state of mind of a poet before he starts writing his verses. But Poe’s narrator is not only passively contemplating the scene. He loses himself in reverie, he has “phantasm[s]” and an “idea” and finally his imagination converts a flake into a boat steered by a fay. Apart from Wordsworth’s well-known statement, this development also recalls Coleridge’s half-conscious process of poetic creation when he composed “Kubla Khan” (Coleridge 296).⁵⁷ But just as likely, the narrator is neither dreaming nor poetizing. He may be dozing, but his mind is still awake. After all, he reports the incident with much attention to detail and he even seems to analyze his own mental state, being aware of his momentary state between watchfulness and slumber. His eyes are half-shut and thus his gaze pierces through the superficial appearance of things. In June 1849, Poe wrote in one of his last *Marginalia*: “We can, at any time, double the true beauty of an actual landscape by half closing our eyes as we look at it. The naked Senses sometimes see too little – but then always they see too much” (P 2: 385). In the same article, Poe also mentions the “veil of the soul”. This veil obstructs the contemplation of things (in the German, and Romantic, sense of the word *Seelenschau*). Unhampered by the imperfection of the human senses the soul perceives the true and ideal state of things. Thus, the fay may not be an apparition in a dream, and it is not the product of a poetic imagination. She is really there, although her figure is almost indiscernible because of her diminutive size and her state of dissolution.

In Poe’s works veils of all sorts appear again and again. They always demarcate the dividing line between the here and an unknown world beyond. In order to experience the unknown it is necessary to transcend the borderline, at least by means of vision. Poe’s characters often move along this borderline, looking for the entrance or a window into the mystic regions. Veils crop up in the literal sense of the word, in the form of heavy draperies or floating curtains. Characteristically, Shadow, a harbinger from an unknown world, emerges from the draperies. In “The Assignation” and in “Ligeia” mysteriously moving curtains ornated with unintelligible signs furnish rooms where the threshold between life and death is trespassed in one or the other direction. At the very end of *Pym* the ominous apparition is referred to as a “shrouded human figure” (P 1: 206), because the giant is standing behind a veil produced by the vapor of a rushing cataract and a steaming milky sea. Simultaneously, the word “shrouded” suggests the garments of death. As such the word is also used in “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”. Ligeia and Madeline wear shrouds so as to signify that they are returning from the other side of existence behind the veil. At the same time their shrouds envelop them like a veil, so that their figures remain ambiguous. Most occurrences of vague apparitions, optical illusions and visual ambiguities in Poe’s works are somehow connected with real, figurative or symbolic veils that obstruct a clear view of the ideal. The twilight of the dusk, short-sighted eyes, water surfaces, mirrors are all veils functioning as gauze-like barriers, but also as a blurred, but light-sensitive

lens between Poe's protagonists and the realm of the ideal. In "MS Found in a Bottle", Pym, "The Fall of the House of Usher", and "A Descent into the Maelström" glassy and/or opening water surfaces are the signposts showing the way into unknown regions or they are the entrance into another world which usually remains hidden to the human eye. In "The Island of the Fay" the narrator states, "[S]o mirror-like was the glassy water, that it was scarcely possible to say at what point upon the slope of the emerald turf its crystal dominion began" (M 2: 603). The border between the "real" and the indefinite is blurred, the dualism is melting away into an all-encompassing unity.

Transcending or removing the barrier is not the only pre-condition for the experience of the ideal. Darkness is another essential requisite. In his "Letter to Mr.—" Poe praised the brilliance of the stars, and in his early poems "Evening Star" and "Al Aaraaf" the gleaming planets are tokens of ethereal beauty. However, the beauty of a star is only discernible because of the overall darkness surrounding the planet. In Poe's aesthetics the light of the star is a symbol for happier existence to come in a world beyond our own. During their lives all human beings are yearning to return to the homestead of their souls in the heavens. It is most likely that Poe read about this idea in the works of Platon, or probably he came across it in the writings of Plotin, a 3rd-century Neo-Platonist, or Plotin's pupil Porphyry.⁵⁸ Usually, lights are signposts pointing the way into an unknown world. To find the source of light, to become one with the source of unearthly happiness is the ultimate object of many of Poe's protagonists. As Poe stated in his "Letter to Mr.—": "[I]t is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; [...] and happiness is another name for pleasure" (H 7: xxxviii). On their search for happiness, Poe's protagonist often venture into obscure regions no man has trespassed before, places "out of space – out of time" (M 1: 344). They are led by lights that gleam at the end of the dark passages, or by something else (usually unspecified) that promises the fulfilment of their inmost desires. About man's quest for happiness Poe writes in *Graham's Magazine* in April 1842: "It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is not the mere appreciation of the beauty before us. It is a wild effort to reach the beauty above. It is a forethought of the loveliness to come" (H 11: 71f).⁵⁹

Sometimes this quest ends on board of doomed ships heading for unknown regions, it leads into ruined buildings far way from everyday life or into remote valleys shut off from the world around it. Poe's narrators are groping their way in dark halls and obscure corridors; they meander through intricate passages; they discover deep recesses, vast vaults and prisons; they fly to the moon and they precipitate into deep and bottomless abysses. Wherever the journey ends, it is notable that Poe's protagonists almost never find what they are looking for. They lose orientation on their dimly lit pathways, they are on the wrong track, or, even when they manage to reach the end of the passage, they must recognize to have followed an *ignis fatuus* or an enticing chimera. Sometimes the promising light turns out to be of a destructive kind. The brilliant "planet of beauty", Al Aaraaf, is on its way to destroy the earth, as is the magnificent comet in "The Colloquy of

Monos and Una". In Poe's works, the long-sought encounter with some supernatural entity often results in madness, death and destruction.

The wanderer in "The Island of the Fay" is one of the very few of Poe's protagonists who finds something like pleasure at the end of his journey.

As I thus mused, with half-shut eyes, while the sun sank rapidly to rest, and eddying currents careered round and round the island, bearing upon their bosom large, dazzling, white flakes of the bark of the sycamore – flakes which, in their multiform positions upon the water, a quick imagination might have converted into anything it pleased – while I thus mused, it appeared to me that the form of one of those very Fays about whom I had been pondering, made its way slowly into the darkness [...]. (M 2: 604)

The last rays of the sun illuminate the chips of bark on the dark water and begin to glow like stars. It is only now that the narrator becomes aware of the flake and the fay. The darkness helps to discern what was hidden before. But even in the idyllic valley the visual experience of the other side is connected with grief and loss, since the narrator witnesses the passing away of the fay. Finally, darkness, that is death, falls over her and she is seen no more. But the narrator wouldn't have spotted her at all without the growing darkness around him.

It is impossible to decide which of the proposed readings of "The Island of the Fay" is the most convincing. Moreover, the reader can find them convincing all at once without neglecting or over-emphasizing the one or the other assumption. Thus, the tale would suggest that a being from a world beyond can only be observed when several conditions are fulfilled. The observer must venture into a lonely place far away from everyday life (a place "out of time – out of space"). The encounter can only take place in or near darkness. His state of mind must be the right one, maybe he even has to use an appropriate drug to widen his senses. Close and strained looking is the wrong way to catch sight of the ideal, but imagination is necessary. However, the story can also be read in a totally different and prosaic way. The wanderer is so tired that he cannot keep his eyes open. Right before he falls to sleep, he is, due to the dim lighting conditions of the sunset, the victim of an optical illusion. When darkness falls, his eyes are closed and he falls asleep.

One of the *Marginalia* where Poe explained one of his methods to gather material for his poetic writings, recalls the situation of the dozing wanderer at the shore of the lake. In *Graham's Magazine* of March 1846, Poe wrote:

There is, however, a class of fancies, of exquisite delicacy [...]. I use the word fancies at random, and merely because I must use some word; but the idea commonly attached to the term is not even remotely applicable to the shadows of shadows in question. They seem to me rather psychal than intellectual. They arise in the soul (alas, how rarely!) only at its epochs of most intense tranquillity – when the bodily and mental health are in perfection – and at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams. I am aware of these "fancies" only when I am upon the very brink of sleep, with the consciousness that I am so. I have satisfied myself that this condition exists but for an inappreciable point of time – yet it is crowded with these "shadows of shadows"; and for absolute thought there is demanded time's endurance. (P 2: 258)

This piece of critical writing elucidates that "The Island of the Fay" is not merely a charming Romantic story, a supernatural incident, a fairy-tale or an allegory on the cycles of life. Certainly, all readings are legitimate. But additionally, "The Island

of the Fay” embodies a poetic discourse, and it tells of the influence of Neo-Platonic ideas on Poe’s aesthetics.

As a result of several legitimate readings, the meaning of the story becomes indefinite. Poe used to speak of “upper-current[s]” and “under-currents of meaning” (see e.g. H 10: 35, 65, 66; H 11: 79, 258) to insinuate that there are multiple meanings. In past decades, many critics have singled out this statement to discuss the topic of authorial intention in Poe’s works. However, Poe’s intention was not to suggest to his readers a primary intention, in comparison to which all other meanings are insignificant. Since convincing interpretations exist side by side, and none is so conspicuous that it overrules the others completely, the final result is not only multiplicity but also indefiniteness of meaning. The source of the indefiniteness, and the means with which it is brought about, is the indefiniteness of the central image. There are several clues inside each of Poe’s stories, all of which are intended to explain the elusiveness of the visual spectacle in a variety of ways, thus rendering it ambivalent. “The Island of the Fay” is a typical example how closely Poe’s notion of indefiniteness is connected with the presentation of indefinite images.

3.2.2 The grotesque and arabesque

Poe’s use of disproportionate elements in the portrait of Ligeia suggests that his notion of indefinite beauty is connected with his ideas of the grotesque. However, the analysis of the term “grotesque”, and the “arabesque”, is more complicated than the explanation of Poe’s ideas about indefiniteness. The author’s ideas about the grotesque and the arabesque are more difficult to disentangle because Poe employed the terms in different and even grossly contradictory contexts, and sometimes he even used them to designate the same thing.

The elucidation of the grotesque in particular is further complicated since the polysemic term is a frequent topic in art historical, literary and interdisciplinary studies. Therefore, analyzing the grotesque in Poe’s works does not only mean to come to terms with Poe’s varying ideas and terminological jumble, but also to cope with the numerous analyses the term has generally challenged in the past decades. Geoffrey Galt Harpham remarks that the word grotesque “is a storage-place for the outcasts of language, entities for which there is no appropriate noun” (xxi). Considering these problems, a brief recourse to the terms’ original significance is considered essential for the following discussion of their relevance for Poe’s writings.

3.2.2.1 The grotesque⁶⁰

The history of the term grotesque goes back to the *quattrocento*, when late 15th-century scholars discovered wall paintings underneath the ruins of Roman buildings. These pictures soon became known as *grottesche* and later as *grotesco*. Both these words derive from the Italian *grotta*, which means subterranean cave, the site where these paintings were unearthed. In the *grottesche*, the representation of human beings animals, plants and inanimate objects were fused in an unnatural way. The paintings showed monsters like griffins and manticores as well as fabulous creatures like harpies and centaurs which combine human physiognomy with the bodies of animals. Human features were also fused with vegetable or inorganic elements: human torsos growing from tendrils or heads and limbs emerging from stones. Some of these fantastic inventions aroused horror and disgust, others delight.

Below the place where Titus Bath had been erected on top of Nero's delapidated Domus Aurea (built after the devastating fire in 64 A.D.), the Renaissance archeologists found grotesque depictions arranged in geometrical and symmetrical designs. The former ceiling was divided into compartments by grotesque ornaments, forming circles, ellipses, squares and rectangles or regular sections thereof. The grotesque ornaments, devised by the Roman artist FABULLUS, functioned as borders dividing architectural elements visually, filling empty spaces and framing the paintings which showed mythological scenes.

Very quickly, these *grottesche* became the model for many imitators. Among the most famous was RAFFAEL, who designed the decoration for the Vatican Loggia, finished in 1519, roughly four decades after the excavations at the site of Titus Bath. RAFFAEL and his assistant Giovanni DA UDINE devised countless *grottesche* in the ancient style, but the arrangement was markedly different. In the Vatican Loggia, most of the grotesque depictions were circumscribed by geometrical forms. While inside these borders the paintings show eccentric, arbitrary and aberrant entities, the geometrical forms of the frames and their arrangement convey a sense of conventional organization and accurate regularity. Although the grotesque elements were marginalized in that they were grouped around the main attraction of the Loggia, a series of paintings illustrating the history of the world according to the Bible, the sheer mass of the *grottesche* could not be overlooked. FABULLUS' and RAFFAEL's *grottesche* are similar in that both display anomalies within an orderly framework. However, in RAFFAEL's *frescos* the ornaments are much more conspicuous than in the ancient paintings. In the following centuries, the grotesque was to leave its marginal position, abandoning its purely ornamental function and moving into the center of presentation.

Quite contrary to the popularity of the grotesque among artists, critics did not hold the "new" style in high esteem. Vasari condemned RAFFAEL's designs, as had Horace and Vitruvius with the works of FABULLUS one and half a millenium before. Later, Winckelmann and Ruskin also attacked the use of grotesque elements (see Harpham 26f, 30f). All these critics turned against the anti-classical properties of the grotesque. The fusion of antagonistical elements was considered a perversion

of nature, especially because the illusory effect of the *grottesche* was heightened by the naturalistic style of presentation. But there was no corresponding model for the grotesque figures in nature, so that the venerable artistic principle of *mimesis* was subverted. The ancient Greek division of the arts into *fantasia* and *mimesis*, categories which had influenced European art until the 15th century, was invalidated by the incorporation of grotesque elements into paintings and architecture, and later in sculptures, reliefs and illustrations. Moreover, putting deformity and disproportion on display, the grotesque was an obvious deviation from the classical ideals of harmony and beauty.

3.2.2.2 The arabesque

In art criticism, the terms “grotesque” and “arabesque” were often used synonymously. The identification of the two terms has a long tradition. Reportedly, Nero had looked for inspiration for the design of his *Domus Aurea* in the Babylonian palace of Nebuchadnezzar and other sites located east of Rome. Thus, the *grottesche* were probably fashioned after models of “Oriental” and Hellenistic origin. Subsequently, the terms were often used to describe the very same type of decorative element (Kayser 23). When the words were applied to literary works, the confusion remained (48ff).

Originally, the words specified two different, though similar types of ornament. The arabesque ornament primarily consists of vegetable elements, that is leaves, curved tendrils and twigs. Unlike the grotesque, the arabesque usually does not mix human with animal, vegetable or inorganic elements.⁶¹ The representation of the single elements in the grotesque is often naturalistic, but the components of the arabesque ornament are stylized, sometimes to an almost abstract degree. While the anti-mimetic and anti-naturalistic character of the grotesque is due to the depiction of abnormal figures, it is chiefly a matter of style in the arabesque ornament. The depiction of the leaves is simplified and devoid of details. The single forms are symmetrical and sometimes even geometrical. However, the depicted vegetable elements of the arabesque not only defy the principle of *mimesis* because of the stylized depiction. The leaves do not only exclusively spring from the twigs but also from the tips of other leaves, a type of growth unparalleled in nature. Quite contrary, all the elements of a grotesque ornament grow directly from the branches. There are no bifurcations originating from the offsprings of a twig. Thus, the arabesque ornament is a pattern which originates from a few leaves, a type of development which Sigrid Hunke described as “self-generating” (qtd. in Ernst 28).

The forks in the arabesque ornament are more numerous than in its grotesque counterpart. Through the great amount of leaves the arabesque pattern creates the overall impression of a dense thicket. However, the uniform design of the leaves, the regular bifurcations and the repetitive arrangement of all elements generate symmetry, order and unity. This overall visual effect is achieved when arabesque ornaments are viewed without attention to detail. A close inspection of the

arabesque reveals that there is much variety within the regular arrangement. Usually, the criss-crossing twisted twigs and tendrils are intertwined with each other so that it is impossible to follow the course of a specific branch and to discern where it begins and where it ends. This confusion is sometimes enhanced by the fact that the symmetrical arrangement of the leaves results in the creations of forms between the single elements, that is the “free” areas circumscribed by the outlines of adjacent elements look like an element as well. Foreground and background, figure and ground, contour and inner form, defining outline and enclosed space, inside and outside, top and bottom, surface and underside, cannot be clearly differentiated. Ernst Gombrich pointed to the ambivalent character of arabesque decorations. On the one hand, and on a large scale, the patterns create the effect of an orderly structured composition. On the other hand, when viewed with attention to detail, the arrangement of the single elements and groups of elements that build the overall pattern cause bewilderment (108). This effect resembles the loss of orientation within a labyrinth. The arabesque ornament is a visual maze (Riegl 308).

3.2.2.3 The grotesque and arabesque in Poe's works

There are many points of correspondence between the appearance of the grotesque and arabesque in Poe's works and the meanings of the two words as art critical terms as pointed out above. Firstly, and most obviously, the reader of Poe's stories encounters the grotesque in its most basic appearance, namely in the form of unnatural figures. Epimanes, the court members of King Pest and the General Smith are only the most conspicuous examples. Epimanes is described as possessing human and animal features, the bodily features of King Pest and his courtiers are extraordinarily deformed, and General Smith is a mixture of man and machine. For his grotesque figures, Poe used the same principles of fusion that underlie the *grottesche*.

In Poe's stories the grotesque usually appears in dark and isolated places which are difficult to enter. In the darkness of the night, Legs and Tarpaulin, for example, have to climb a barrier and find their way through the intricate and narrow lanes of medieval London, “through frequent heaps of rubbish” (M 2: 244) before they encounter the grotesque party in a hidden cellar, which happens to be a dilapidated undertaker's shop. Places such as this recall the subterranean caverns in which the *grotteschi* were first discovered. Thus, darkness and gloomy locations have been connected with the grotesque from the late 15th century onwards. The fact that the *grottesche* had been there for 1500 years, just below the surface, inspired a sense of mystery, even subversion. Very close to everyday life, there always had been something which had remained invisible to human eyes. And this something was not only new and old at the same time, it also challenged human discernment. For the explorers of the Roman ruins unearthing the *grottesche* must have been like crossing a threshold into an unknown region. It is reported that the Italians who explored the ruins had to make their way through unlit and intricate corridors, half

filled with rubbish which forced them to crawl in order to reach their destination. When the explorers arrived at the great halls, further progress was only possible with a rope by means of which they descended into the darkness (see Harpham 27). Dangling right below the high ceiling far above the ground, they inspected the *grottesche* with the help of lanterns. There was probably no visual contact with the walls or the floor, so that the descend was like a downward journey into darkness and nothingness. Under such extreme conditions the early explorers encountered the grotesque, something which they had not seen or been aware of before. When they finally returned to the upper world, one must assume that their descriptions of the paintings had been affected by these circumstances. These facts are mentioned because Poe's narrators often undergo very similar experiences: underground journeys and confrontations with the unfamiliar in dark places. Allured by the unknown, Poe's protagonists meander through obscure passageways where they often lose track of space and time.

The anti-mimetic and anti-classical character of the grotesque and the arabesque is another point of correspondence. Although Poe adhered to the classical ideal of beauty in his early poetry, most notably in "To Helen", he defied the artistic principles of mimesis and perfect proportion. Poe's ideal of beauty changed after he had given up writing verses in the early 1830s. The strange appearance of Berenice, Morella and, in particular, Ligeia, shows Poe's efforts to re-define beauty. As chapter 4.1 will show, Poe's recipe was to modify classical beauty by means of mixing it with exotic and inhuman features.

One further parallel is the disturbing character of the grotesque. The *grottesche* not only challenged categories of art but also called into question the validity of human perception and the way in which we organize the world in which we live. Likewise, the soundness of the senses is often questioned in Poe's writings. One thread that runs through the next chapters is the question whether Poe's narrators are reliable or not. The solution to this problem would answer a standard question in Poe studies: Are the related events "real" and are all figures "real" (in the sense that they could happen or exist in reality) or are they of a supernatural kind? The grotesque is so disconcerting because it propounds the same question without offering an explicit answer. On the one hand, the model for the grotesque is not reality, although it incorporates elements of everyday life. On the other hand, the grotesque is not supernatural, because it is rooted as much as in reality as in the realm of fantasy.

The arabesque often appears in Poe's works in the form of ornamented objects, such as the frames of the paintings in "The Oval Portrait", the lamps in "Bon-Bon" and "The Assignment", or the wall decorations in "Ligeia". In the last two tales mentioned, chambers which are essential for the plot are furnished with several arabesque objects: sarcophagi, ottomans and censers. Poe's predilection for arabesque interior decoration is most notable in his "Philosophy of Furniture":

The abomination of flowers, or representations of well-known objects of any kind, should not be endured within the limits of Christendom. Indeed, whether on carpets, or curtains, or tapestry, or ottoman coverings, all upholstery should be rigidly Arabesque. (M 2: 498, cf. 502)

The quoted passage not only elucidates that Poe preferred the arabesque because of its anti-mimetic character, but that the term is also juxtaposed to the adjective “well-known”. The arabesque appears in Poe’s works where the known fuses with the unknown, where the confines of time and space and the “reality” of everyday life are not valid. Poe’s ideal chamber in “The Philosophy of Furniture” is not an ordinary living-room, but a place of contemplative repose and a source of inspiration for a poet. One of Poe’s protagonists, Egæus in “Berenice”, describes a reclusive place like this as “a palace of imagination” (M 2: 210). The “vivid circular or cycloid figures, of *no meaning*” (M 2: 498, italics original) invite the musing mind to a journey without a distinct end. Irrationally, the thought spirals and meanders aimlessly as if following the course of the intersecting, intertwined and twisted lines in an arabesque ornament. Here, the arabesque appears as a visual maze that causes the loss of orientation, invalidating the usual guidelines of experience. The arabesque has an entrancing and dream-like, an almost hypnotic quality. The Byronic hero of “The Assignment” directs his final words to the narrator whose senses are under the spell of the arabesque, being “oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers” (M 2: 157).⁶²

Like these arabesque censor, my spirit is writhing in fire, and the delirium of this scene is fashioning me for the wilder visions of that land of real dreams whither I am now rapidly departing. (M 2: 166)

Arabesque decorations are like signposts pointing the way to a no-man’s-land that lies between the “reality” of everyday life and a world of dreams, between the here and another world beyond, between life and death. The Byronic hero commits suicide in his arabesquely decorated halls; in “Ligeia”, a similarly furnished turret-chamber is the place of death and resurrection; in “The Duc de l’Omelette” Lucifer’s abode is illuminated by a ruby light emanating from a cresset of arabesque style; in “Bon-Bon”, the philosopher who has just met the devil *in persona* gains his final transcendental vision when he is killed by a “fantastic Arabesque lamp of solid silver” (M 2: 87) rushing from the fretted ceiling.

This survey of arabesque elements shows that the term does not only allude to a specific type of ornament. In 19th century English the word was used synonymously with “Arabian” and “Arabic”, so that “arabesque” also signifies “oriental” in a wider context in Poe’s works. There is a cluster of words – “Egyptian”, “Indian”, “Saracene” – all of which Poe employed in order to create a sense of arabesque exoticism and mystery.⁶³

Like the grotesque, the arabesque appears when Poe’s narrators undergo extreme and unknown experiences or when they find themselves in odd places. One common feature of the grotesque and arabesque in Poe’s works is that they are qualities which are always connected with the strange, the unfamiliar and the incomprehensible. Thus, the critics who proclaim that the two terms designate approximately the same thing(s) are right (see below), at least in part. It follows that those critics who say that the grotesque and arabesque are two different and distinguishable features have missed or ignored some important similarities.

In Poe’s works the grotesque and arabesque correspond with the original meanings as art critical terms in many ways. Firstly, both appear in the form of

figures that mock nature. Secondly, these figures turn up in obscure places which represent the borderland between the known and the unknown. Thirdly, the grotesque is a deliberate turnaway from classical beauty. Pure harmony and perfect proportions are combined or are substituted by disparity and deformity. The arabesque represents an alternative type of beauty, built upon intricate and unfamiliar patterns. Fourthly, the grotesque and arabesque upset usual schemes of perception which results in a disturbing psychological effect. It is noticeable that all these characteristics are tied to visual perception. Thus, primarily, the grotesque and arabesque in Poe's works are visual spectacles.

Poe's seemingly self-explanatory statement – “[t]he epithets ‘Grotesque’ and ‘Arabesque’ will be found to indicate with sufficient precision the prevalent tenor of the tales here published” (M 2: 473) – caused confusion rather than clarification. This sentence is yet one more of Poe's definitions which is remarkably indefinite. Nevertheless, Poe's short preface to the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* has almost exclusively dominated the analyses of the terms for several decades until the 1970s. Poe further said that there is a “prevalence of the ‘Arabesque’ in my serious tales” (*ibid.*). This statement in particular has been interpreted much too narrowly. As a result, mid-20th century critics constructed the dualism between the tales of the grotesque on the one hand and the tales of the arabesque on the other hand.

Apart from the “Preface” to the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* Poe's review of N. P. Willis needs attention. In this article, Poe discussed the terms imagination, fancy, fantasy, humor, wit and sarcasm. It is one of Poe's articles in which his continual preoccupation with Coleridge's famous statement in the *Biographia Literaria*⁶⁴ becomes evident.⁶⁵ In the 1830s, Poe usually followed Coleridge in that he regarded imagination as the most important attribute of the poetic genius. Poe did not differentiate between primary and secondary imagination, but he agrees with Coleridge that fancy is a minor variant of imagination. In the Willis review Poe still regarded imagination as the highest merit of a poet, but the difference between imagination and fancy had almost dissolved. In January 1845, Poe wrote in the *Broadway Journal*:

The Fancy as nearly creates as the imagination, and neither at all. [...] We might make a distinction of *degree* between the fancy and the imagination, in calling the latter the former loftily employed. (P 3: 16)

Fancy and imagination are similar in that both re-arrange known elements into novel combinations. The products created by imagination are characterized by beauty or the sublime, irrespective of the nature of the material combined: “The pure imagination chooses, *from either beauty or deformity*, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined.” Fancy, fantasy and humor employ the same combinatory method of creation, but the results are not characterized by pure harmony and beauty. The results of fancy are striking because of their “*unexpectedness*”. The outcome “is less beautiful (or grand) for the reason that it is less harmonious”. Even less harmonious than the results of fancy are those of fantasy, because fantasy produces unexpected combinations which are characterized by the “*avoidance of proportion*”. Even more detached from imagination than fantasy is humor, in that the latter not only uses “disproportionate but incongruous or antagonistical

elements” (*ibid.* 17, all italics original). Wit and sarcasm only come into play when fancy or humor are employed with a purpose, that is to ridicule something or someone in particular.

As with all of Poe’s definitions, these statements evoke more questions than they solve. Among the definitions in the Willis review, Poe’s explanation of humor can be best comprehended, because most of his comical and satirical works show the characteristics mentioned in this article. The humor in Poe’s works often derives from the elaborate description of disproportionate physiognomical features or odd behaviour, such as in “Lionizing”, “Epimanes” or “King Pest”. Poe’s definition of sarcasm and wit implies that humor can also be applied for humor’s sake without any satirical object. However, Poe only rarely indulged himself in this pure form of humor. Poe’s comical writings are peppered with sarcastic allusions to his contemporaries. His main targets were the mannerisms and works of other authors or the philosophy of the New England Transcendentalists. Poe’s definition of humor generally corresponds with a basic characteristic of the grotesque, namely the combination of “incongruous and antagonistical elements”.

However, combinations of this kind also appear in those of Poe’s works which some critics classified as arabesque. A. H. Quinn, Mabbott and many others have labelled “Ligeia” as a tale of the arabesque *par excellence* (see below). In three long paragraphs, about a sixth of the whole story, the narrator praises the superb beauty of his wife. Poe took pains to combine several physiognomical features, each in itself striking, to convey an image of Ligeia’s exceptionally beautiful face: black curly hair, smooth and soft skin, a high forehead, large eyes resembling the stars as well as the gaze of a gazelle, a slightly curved nose, sensual lips and shiny teeth (M 2: 311ff). The description of Ligeia consists of known elements of human, animal and inorganic origin that have not been combined before, but it is debatable whether the outcome is exclusively harmonious and beautiful. Poe’s already quoted catchphrases, that “there is no exquisite beauty [...] without some strangeness in the proportion” (see above) is consistent with his classification of fantasy, which is characterized very similarly, namely by “avoidance of proportion”. On the one hand, disproportionate features are a distinguishing quality of superior beauty, on the other hand, lack of proportion is an element of fantasy and humor. However, rather than being contradictory the constellation of these definitions shows that serious and humorous elements are closely connected in Poe’s works.

Despite these similarities, the discussion of the terms in Poe studies had usually followed other leads. The arabesque tales were considered the serious tales, the others, by the logic of exclusion, that is the not serious tales, the grotesque tales. Louis A. Nelson (1930) simply regarded the terms as labels for the humorous stories on the one hand, and the serious stories on the other hand. Nelson did not offer a comprehensive list of classification for all of Poe’s tales, but the examples she gave reveal that her reading of Poe ignored the polysemic character of his works. One even finds this reductionism in the writings of such acclaimed Poe scholars as Arthur Hobson Quinn and T. O. Mabbott. Mabbott’s frequent remarks about stories in the arabesque or grotesque manner (cf. e.g. 2: 31, 117, 362, 659) suggest that he had two distinct groups in mind, however without naming exact

criteria of classification. In a similar vein, A. H. Quinn defined that “the Arabesques are the product of powerful imagination and the Grotesques have a burlesque or satirical quality” (289). A. H. Quinn’s definition implied that those tales that are characterized by burlesque or satirical elements are not the product of “powerful imagination”. Thus, he not only suggests a dualism between two different groups of stories, but also a qualifying hierarchy with the Arabesques at the top. Characteristically, A. H. Quinn ignored the serious aspects beneath the satirical surfaces of tales like “Loss of Breath” or “The Man that Was Used up”. According to A. H. Quinn, “powerful imagination” and humor seem to be at odds.

In the first sentence of his preface for the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* Poe spoke of the “prevalent tenor” of the arabesque. Where something prevails, it must prevail over something else. Where something moves to the foreground, something else remains in the background. Poe’s statement recalls his metaphor of the upper- and under-currents of meaning. Thus, the “prevalence of the ‘Arabesque’ in my serious tales” does not necessarily mean that these tales are exclusively arabesque, but only that the arabesque stands out against some other and less dominant quality. It follows that the grotesque and arabesque can exist side by side in one text, though one is more probably conspicuous than the other. Moreover, if we do read “tenor” as a metaphor, Poe’s phrase implies that there are other pitches as well.

The classification of the grotesque as a distinguishing feature of the humorous, burlesque or satirical tales, is surprising in sight of the fact that the original meaning of the term does primarily suggest ominous qualities. There is a wide field of connotations, all of which imply uncanny notions: darkness, decay, mystery, underground, subversion, perversion, even death (Harpham 27).⁶⁶ Manfred Schumacher argued that the sinister implications were particularly strong in the English language from the 16th century onwards. His etymological analysis of the term shows its close relation to “antic” (and earlier forms), a word that derived from the Italian “antico”, a synonym for “grottesco”. According to Schumacher, the noun “antic” originally denoted “Death”, “devil” and “demon”, and the adjective had likewise sinister meanings. However, the trivialization of these personifications of fear-inspiring entities brought along a shift in the meaning of the noun and the adjective antic, and subsequently of the word grotesque, both of which soon began to connote “fool” and “clown” (30ff).

In the 17th century, the meaning of the word grotesque gained new facets. The rising popularity of the *commedia dell’arte* was particularly important for the modification of the term. The *commedia dell’arte* was a street theatre that originated in 16th century Italy. The shows consisted of wild dances, songs and short scenes of vulgar comedy. The actors wore fantastic garments and weird masks characterized by exaggerated physiognomical features such as exceedingly long noses, broad mouths distorted to a horrible grin and protruding ears. In France, and later in Germany and England, the *commedia dell’arte* gained popularity through a series of plates engraved by the French artist Jacques CALLOT (1592–1635). CALLOT had travelled through Italy where he was fascinated by the comedians. He immortalized the stock characters of the *commedia* in his series *Balli* (Italian for

“dancers”). These immensely popular engravings and other works by CALLOT like the *Gobbi* (“hunchbacks”) were soon labelled “grotesque” because they combined the depiction of comical features with physiognomical deformities, that is, they fused antagonistical elements like the early *grottesche*. Thus, the light-hearted character of the performances and the engravings generated a semantic shift, since the grotesque became synonymous with “ridiculous”, “droll”, “burlesque”, and “low comedy”, however without losing the meanings “weird”, “fantastic”, “deformed”, etc. (see Barasch 79f).⁶⁷

More than 150 years later, in 1788, Karl Floegel published his *Geschichte des Groteskkomischen*. On the one hand, Floegel’s book demonstrates that the meaning of the term in its comical variant had not changed from its 17th century French usage. On the other hand, however, Floegel discarded all somber notions connected with the grotesque, so that the word was stripped of its original 15th century meanings. Floegel points to Bacchantic feasts in the ancient world, to the satirical and caricatural elements in Greek performances, the medieval Feast of Fools, the Christmas and Easter farces, the *Fastnacht* festivities and many others.⁶⁸ According to Barasch, Floegel’s definition of the grotesque as grotesque-comedy had great impact on the 19th century discussion of the term (149). Lawson (“Grotesque”) listed Floegel’s *Geschichte des Groteskkomischen* in his bibliography of sources from which Poe might have taken his ideas of the grotesque. However, the book had not been translated into English in Poe’s times, and Poe’s knowledge of the German language was too poor to allow a first-hand reading of the text (cf. Hansen and Pollin 27–45). But the meaning of the grotesque as low comedy was very prominent in the 19th century, a fact that has induced many scholars to explain Poe’s notion of the term in a very similar way.

Against this tradition, G. R. Thompson tried to re-evaluate the grotesque and arabesque in order to show that the two terms are not to be understood as synonyms for “humorous” and “serious”. Thompson pointed to Sir Walter Scott’s essay “On the supernatural in fictitious composition” as the source for Poe’s understanding of the terms. There is no doubt that Poe had read Scott’s article and that it had introduced him to the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann, but the alleged strong influence of the German on the American author has been refuted by now.⁶⁹ However, Thompson was eager to demonstrate that the article had a great impact on Poe’s conceptions, especially Scott’s notion of the grotesque and arabesque (*Fiction* 110ff). Scott’s essay is about the proper handling of the supernatural in fiction. According to Scott, there is only one way how the supernatural can be introduced into fiction advantageously:

[T]he exhibition of supernatural appearances in fictitious narrative ought to be rare, brief, indistinct, and such as may become a being to us so *incomprehensible*, and so different from ourselves, of whom we cannot justly conjecture whence he comes, or for what purpose, and of whose attributes we can have *no regular or distinct perception*. (63; italics mine)

If Poe was influenced by Scott’s essay, it was by this very passage. The American might have derived his idea of indefinitiveness from the quoted passage, that is to render his figures vague in order to merely suggest the supernatural. But generally, the two authors’ handling of the supernatural could not be more different. Decidedly,

Scott turned against the introduction of mystic elements into fiction. The supernatural is only appropriate for fairy tales and Arabian tales, both genres that Scott regarded as inferior literary forms of art (64f). Quite to the contrary, Poe's high opinion of Eastern Tales is one facet of his fondness for the arabesque. In one of his *Pinakidia* he wrote in August 1836:

Montgomery in his lectures on Literature (!) has the following – “Who does not turn with absolute contempt from the rings and gems, and filters, and caves and genii of Eastern Tales, as from the trinkets of a toyshop, and the trumpery of a raree-show?” What man of genius but must answer “Not I.” (P 2: 26, see 128)

Poe repeated this statement in 1844, and his own story “The Thousand-and-second Tale of Scheherazade” (1845) is yet one more proof that the two authors disagree considerably about the merit of the Eastern tales. Except from such tales, Scott only tolerated the supernatural when it is “entirely travestied and held up to laughter, instead of being made the subject of respectful attention” (66). For Thompson, this very satirical intention characterizes Poe's Gothic tales. But Thompson went wrong in suggesting that Poe's stories are merely well-disguised mock-Gothic texts which he wrote to ridicule the genre. I agree with Thompson that some of Poe's Gothic stories are tongue-in-cheek. However, the indefinite character of Poe's stories does not allow such a one-sided interpretation. My analyses will show that Poe tried to hold the balance between the serious and the comical. This equilibrium of horror and fun is an important characteristic of the grotesque in his works. Those texts which can be univocally regarded as serious horror stories or as mere burlesques are few in number.

For Scott, Hoffmann was an example of genius gone wrong. The Englishman's reviews of the German and his stories was deprecating. Hoffmann is said to have a “morbid sensibility” (77) and he is suspected of “mental derangement” (74, 78, see 81), “moral palsy” (79) and opium addiction (97). As a result, Hoffmann's “sickly and disturbed train of thought [...] led him to confound the supernatural with the absurd” (82). Scott labeled Hoffmann's style as “the Fantastic mode of writing, – in which the most wild and unbound license is given to an irregular fancy, and all kinds of combination, however ludicrous, however shocking, are attempted and executed without scruple” (72). In Scott's eyes, Hoffmann's works were full of absurdity and inconsistencies (*ibid.*), and they lack any “philosophical reasoning and moral truth” (73). Scott's characterization of Hoffmann's works as “fantastic or supernatural grotesque” (81) is decidedly negative. For Scott, Hoffmann's “grotesque [...] resembles the arabesque in painting” (82).

Sometimes, also, it may be eminently pleasing to look at the wildness of an Arabesque painting executed by a man of rich fancy. But we do not desire to see genius expand or rather exhaust itself upon themes which cannot be reconciled to taste; and the utmost length in which we can indulge a turn of the fantastic is, where it tends to excite agreement and pleasing ideas. (93)

Scott's argumentation stands in the tradition of 18th century criticism. His emphasis on taste and moral truth could not be more different from Poe's views about the objective of literature. As had been stated centuries earlier by Vitruv and Vasari, for Scott the “grotesque [...] is out of nature”, and therefore irreconcilable with the “beautiful” (*ibid.*).

Under these circumstances it seems improbable that Poe derived his ideas of the grotesque and arabesque from Scott, as Thompson would make us believe. Thompson's point is to demonstrate that Poe used the grotesque and arabesque (according to Thompson interchangeable terms) to circumscribe "closely proximate areas of feeling or impact, at that point between laughter and tears, calmness and frenzy, seriousness and mockery" (Fiction 105). And he went on:

Both terms have as a constant element a tension between opposites that somehow gives one insight, a transcendental vision resulting from the paradoxical fusion of opposing forces. (106)

Thompson's second objective was to make clear that the grotesque was not synonymous with humor or satire, because he had his own vision about a more complex function of the grotesque in Poe's works. According to Thompson, Poe used the terms "grotesque" and "arabesque" to feign a serious Gothicism, which, however, below its surface, is quite the opposite, namely a sophisticated kind of irony. Thompson's somewhat twisted argument is hard to follow. It would have sufficed to state that the alleged dualism of the grotesque and arabesque, as proposed by Nelson, A. H. Quinn, Mabbott and others (see above), is a simplification. Though Thompson's main thesis is stimulating, his attempt to trace Poe's conception of the grotesque and arabesque to the Scott article, is inconclusive. After all, why should Poe choose two terms for the title of his prose collection, that had served Scott as labels, in his eyes, for a detestable species of literary production? If Scott's essay was really as universally known as Thompson states, Poe could not have selected a worse title.

Thompson suggested another source for Poe's conceptions of the terms, namely Friedrich Schlegel. However, only two works of Friedrich Schlegel were available in English translation before Poe's year of death: *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* (1815; translated in 1818) und *Philosophie der Geschichte* (1829; translated in 1835). None of these books contains any word about the grotesque and arabesque. Moreover, Hansen and Pollin noted that Friederich Schlegel, unlike his brother August Wilhelm (cf. Lubell), was virtually unknown in America, before his works were translated into English in 1849 for the first time (Hansen and Pollin 110). Considering these facts and the knowledge that Poe's knowledge of the German language was at best rudimentary, the suggestion that the American author modelled his ideas of the grotesque and arabesque on Friedrich Schlegel's *Gespräche über die Poesie* and diverse and widely dispersed *Athenäum-Fragmente* is far from convincing. Obviously, some critics take it for granted that Poe knew the writings of Friedrich Schlegel only because his much better known brother August Wilhelm had exerted some influence on the American author (see Thompson Fiction 212; cf. Ernst 151).

The idea that Friedrich Schlegel might have had an effect on Poe's conception of the grotesque and arabesque was first put forward by Harry Levin. However, Levin's second suggestion was more persuasive. He indicated that Victor Hugo's "Préface" for his drama *Cromwell* was a possible source for Poe (Power 133). Unlike Friedrich Schlegel, Victor Hugo was well known to Poe (Pollin, "Hugo"). Though far from perfect, Poe's knowledge of the French language was better than his

German (Hansen and Pollin 21f), so that he could have read and understood Hugo's original introduction. The French text must not even have been available to Poe, because in 1828 the July issue of *The Foreign Quarterly*, the same paper that printed Scott's essay, contained a summary of Hugo's "Préface" (Pollin, "Hugo" 499). Hugo put special emphasis on the grotesque. Showing his French heritage as well as some German influence, for Hugo the best form of presenting the grotesque was dramatic comedy. However, the grotesque was not merely a variant of humor, as its connection with comedy might imply. Quite the contrary, for Hugo the grotesque comprised the ugly and the dreadful. For Hugo, this dualistic constellation was "realistic", in that it reflected the twofold nature of the human existence. Although it opens the view to the abysmal side of life, the grotesque, like the sublime, can afford a transcendental vision. But the grotesque is not merely a point of contrast to the sublime. The object of art is to fuse the grotesque and the sublime into something beautiful. For Hugo, however, beauty was not identical with the classical model. While classical beauty knows only one ideal, the grotesque can be presented in thousands of different ways. Thus, the combination of the grotesque and the sublime not only created a new type of beauty, the fusion of the two was also a sign of romantic literature, and that was, according to Hugo, the literature of the modern age. Hugo transcended the narrow conceptions of the past ages and devised a formula of the grotesque that united the beautiful with the ugly, and the comical with the serious.

As early as 1836 Poe had stated that "grotesqueness" is a "very admissible adjunct to Ideality" (H 9: 94). Hugo's train of thought is close to Poe's when the American author wrote: "[T]he range of Imagination is unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that Beauty which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test" (P 2: 369). The difference between beauty and the grotesque lies in the fact that the former conveys an impression of a higher, ethereal sphere while the latter directs the attention towards the horrible and incomprehensible, but both result in a transcendental vision. The reader encounters this very constellation of the beautiful and the grotesque in many of Poe's works. His protagonists strive for the contact with the divine mystery, often represented by strangely beautiful women, but at the end they are confronted with the abysmal side of human experience.

Pointing to the late Hazlitt and an anonymous article in the *New Monthly Magazine* of April 1827, but not to Hugo's preface, Lewis Lawson concluded:

Poe's conception of the grotesque, then, as a form of the ideal, as a result of pure imagination [...], and as a source of beauty, deserves more respect than many critics, who have applied the "grotesque" (meaning "gruesome") to his subject matter rather than to a type of art, have given it. Too often they mean "Gothicism" rather than "grotesque." It may indeed be argued that Poe intended to suggest "Tales of Imagination and Originality," rather than "Tales of Bizarre Subjects," when he entitled his volume *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. (205)

Obviously, Lawson's conclusion is incompatible with A. H. Quinn's. The two only agree in that they tried to define the grotesque rigidly. But the grotesque and arabesque designate many things in Poe's works, and thus any reductive definition can only elucidate one part of Poe's multi-faceted conceptions. Although I

emphasize the visual properties of the two terms in this study, it should not go unmentioned, that Poe's understanding of the grotesque and arabesque comprises different things such as the subject of his tales, imagery, style and narrative strategies

In 1978, David Ketterer, however, not only reduced Poe's diverse ideas of the grotesque and arabesque to a narrow concept, but also re-emphasized the dualism between the two. Ketterer stressed the themes of deception and delusion, showing some awareness of Poe's notion of indefinitiveness. According to Ketterer, the grotesques "are those tales in which Poe expresses his reaction to conventional reality" (*Rationale* 74). Less general, but still rather vague, Ketterer defines the grotesque as a term which Poe used to describe "the world created by man's divided perceptions" (36f). In the arabesques "the rigid pattern that is imposed on man's reason" is liquefied, so that Poe's protagonists are allowed to perceive a "shifting and fluid state" (*ibid.*). This unspecified "ideal" or "arabesque reality" is opposed to the mundane world of deception. It is obvious that Ketterer's definitions are too general, and so it is not surprising that these premises only rarely stand the test in his analyses of Poe's stories. In his introduction, Ketterer promised "considerable interpretive use of the terms *grotesque* and *arabesque*" and a "detailed account of Poe's entire output" (xiiiif), but in fact he was brushing over many problematic texts in just one or two lines without offering much variety in his explanations of the two terms. Despite copious quotations (in fact, approximately one third of his book consists of excerpts from Poe's works), even Ketterer's longer analyses, which the critic seemed to regard as self-explanatory, did not deliver much convincing evidence from the texts. Too often his "analyses" are mere categorizations within his conceived dualistic framework, being little more than elaborate labels such as the following "conclusive" statement on "Mystification": "Not just a puerile satire on dueling, this tale approaches being Poe's artistic manifesto of the grotesque" (76). Unfortunately, Ketterer remained very vague about the contents of this manifesto.

Much more convincing is Jutta Ernst's exhaustive study of the arabesque. Ernst elucidated the term in the historical context of a growing interest in the "Orient" in 19th century letters. Unfolding a variety of meanings of the term "arabesque", Ernst traced the arabesque in Poe's interior and landscape descriptions, in the narrative structures of Poe's tales as well as in his elaborate prose and lyrical style. Ernst analyzed Poe's use of digressions, deviations, narrative frames, interlockings, involved periods, repetitions and embedded elements (such as the verses incorporated into "The Fall of the House of Usher" or "Ligeia") as corresponding features between the author's works and the arabesque ornament. A weakness of Ernst's study is that she largely ignores the grotesque in that she almost exclusively concentrated on its companion term. Thus, many tales and critical writings remain out of focus. Because only one of the two terms was analyzed, her study surmises an unexplained dualism between the grotesque and arabesque. Unlike Thompson, however, Ernst resisted the temptation to superimpose a narrow "philosophical" concept of or behind the arabesque. Ernst was right in stating that the source of the arabesque in Poe's works was the author's anti-mimeticism, but she failed to

realize that the arabesque is a symptom of Poe's concept of indefinitiveness. Poe's writings do not evince a "Poetik des Arabesken" (as is indicated in the title of Ernst's study) but a poetics of indefinitiveness where the arabesque (and the grotesque) are integral elements.

In the following chapters, the grotesque and arabesque will be examined as part of Poe's aesthetics of indefinitiveness. The main focus will rest on the visual qualities of the grotesque and the arabesque, since these are of the greatest importance for this study. Despite this visual impact, however, the grotesque does not present itself in the form of instantly recognizable figures. Quite to the contrary, the most striking characteristics of the grotesque are disproportion and disjunction. But the disjunction from reality is never complete, so that the grotesque belongs as much to the "real" world as to the realm of fantasy. The grotesque is a fusion of the normal and the abnormal, the real and the unreal, the ideal and the infernal, the serious and the comical, or as Poe put it, of the beautiful and the deformed. Poe considered a harmonious fusion of antagonistical elements to be a manifestation of either beauty or the sublime, but he was skeptical whether even the imagination would be able to create such perfect combinations at all (P 3: 17).

The resulting tension between completeness and disjunction, between harmony and disparity, creates apparent gaps in the presentation of the grotesque. In his study *On the Grotesque*, Geoffrey Galt Harpham observed that the grotesque appears "in the clash between the 'virtuous' limitations of form and a rebellious content that refuses to be constrained" (8). And he went on:

Fragmented, jumbled, or corrupted representation leads us into the grotesque; and it leads us out of it as well, generating the interpretive activity that seeks closure, either in the discovery of a novel form or in a metaphorical, analogical, or allegorical explanation. (18)

Just like the presentation of indefinite images, grotesque forms stimulate the reader's/viewer's hermeneutic activity. The transitional nature of the grotesque urges the reader/viewer to fathom whether the horrible or the ridiculous prevails. More radical than the indefinite, the grotesque challenges the adequacy of human perception and judgement. While the indefinite creates indeterminacies because details are blurred or rendered ambiguous by means of omission or marginalization, the grotesque presents conjunctions of sharply outlined but incongruous details. The grotesque is disturbing because it does not fit into any category of human understanding. While undefined aspects in the representation of indefinite images can be turned into spaces of projection, the detailism of grotesque images leaves no or only little room for the imagination.

However, such "radical" grotesque images appear only rarely in Poe's works. More often Poe was eager to tone down the grotesque. As the following analyses will show, Poe's grotesque images are unlike the pictures of SCHÖNGAUER, CRANACH, CALLOT, GRANDVILLE or BEARDSLEY. The pictures of these artists of the grotesque are replete with details. Poe's descriptions, however, are almost never wholesale and explicit. Due to the author's predilection for the sketchy and the indefinite even the most "grotesque" figures in his works, such as the members of King Pest's court, must not necessarily deserve the label. They may be grotesque, but just as likely they merely appear to be grotesque. The court members are a

good example to illustrate how Poe mixes the indefinite with the grotesque. The fragmentary descriptions of the figures highlight some truly weird details, but the larger part of the picture remains obscure or out of focus. As a result, it is up to the reader to finish the picture on the base of the given details, that is he/she has to conceive the unspecified features on his/her own. But as likely the impression of grotesqueness can be discarded because the impact of some isolated weird details is not strong enough to render the whole picture grotesque. Likewise, the description can be considered unreliable, because it is given by a narrator whose vision is impaired or whose state of mind is not sober. One way or the other, the reader/viewer must be eager to complete and to unify the puzzle that lies before him/her as a heap of unconnected pieces. However, the puzzle metaphor is not to suggest that there is just one way to put the pieces together, as is with the jigsaw puzzles we play today. Quite the contrary, many pieces fit into different gaps and for some gaps there is no matching piece at all. Poe's texts offer many possibilities to combine the single parts. Consequently, the final state of the puzzle is never wholly complete and it will vary from reader to reader. The reader's concretization of the puzzle is so important, because the image-making process is a vital step for the comprehension of Poe's texts. Considering the fact that indefinite and grotesque images are located in key positions of Poe's stories, it will have become clear what I understand to be the specific pictorial quality of his works.

In Poe's works, the grotesque activates the interpretive process of the reader, who is challenged to explain its emergence. Basically, the grotesque serves the same function than the indefinite, but the visual appeal of the grotesque is more aggressive. As a result, the challenge of the reader is more direct. Grotesque figures and forms such as the court members of King Pest, Epimanes or the House of Usher are visual marks that make the reader aware of the ambivalence of Poe's tales. They indicate that Poe's stories are not what they seem to be at first sight. Like the House of Usher, mirrored in the glass-like tarn, you can turn almost any Poe tale around. The reader can begin to complete the puzzle from two different starting points, and these are poles apart.

The arabesque is a symbol of a perfect, but unintelligible otherness. Thus, the arabesque resembles the grotesque in that both are connected with the strange and unfamiliar. But while the grotesque resists homogenization, the arabesque offers a unity of its own: a harmony composed of convoluted elements, organized according to an elaborate pattern that is impossible to figure out entirely. Sandra Naddaff pointed to this endless symmetrical unity as the basic characteristic of the arabesque ornament: "[T]he horizontal and vertical mirroring of the design [...] ensures its perpetuation". Thus, the arabesque creates "visual harmony and rhythm" and "spatial infinity" (112f). For Naddaff the arabesque is a visual transformation "for the concern for the infinite and eternal over and above the transcendence of earthly existence" (113). However, Naddaff's conclusion closely corresponds with Poe's notion of "indefinitiveness". In Poe's works, the arabesque is a visual chiffre for the indefinite which is also the infinite, that otherworldly sphere Poe's protagonists are eager to enter in order to find "eternal happiness" (see the next chapter). It has been mentioned, that the journeys of Poe's narrators, through time and space, lead

along winding roads, but the end of the road is almost never reached. Their meandering movement and their futile quests can be compared to the endless windings of an arabesque ornament. There is no end of the road. Searching for the indefinite means to go in circles infinitely. And going in circles, Poe's narrator's often discover their own tracks on the road, which means they also follow themselves, often without knowing it. In this context, the arabesque signifies the mental journey on an inward road (see above) and it becomes a symbol of self-reflexiveness.

The cycloid movement is not only typical for Poe's narrators. Very similar, Poe's aesthetics were continually rotating around an indefinite and elusive center. And the very same counts for Poe's readers and critics. Reading Poe means to undertake a spiralling journey through his texts, on intertwined and cross-secting roads. As the following analyses will show, Poe's multi-layered and polysemic texts offer a variety of conflicting readings which are difficult to disentangle. Thus, the reader's hermeneutic activity can be compared to an arabesque ornament. The reader seeks his/her way through the maze of suggestions and ambiguities in order to move to the center of the text, that is to penetrate its richly decorated surface in order to recognize a unifying scheme behind it.⁷⁰ Perhaps, there is no sense in following the "vivid circular or cycloid figures, of no meaning" (see above), but more important than the goals are the roads of interpretation.

4 ILLUMINATING THE TALES OF THE GROTESQUE AND ARABESQUE

4.1 Thy beauty is to me ...

After Poe had published his third volume of poetry in 1831 he began to write his first short stories. The reason for his reorientation was most probably the financial failure of his poetry, but it is as likely that Poe had shot his first powder as a lyric poet. Superficially, this turn may appear as a *cæsura*, for the author not only began writing short stories, he also almost completely abandoned his poetry for several years. Moreover, his first short stories introduced new themes. While in his lyrics he focussed on typically romantic topics like beautiful women, loving couples, charming landscapes, the firmament and sometimes mythological themes, in Poe's first short stories such diverse new elements as gruesome horror and slapstick comedy moved to the foreground. However, Poe's preference for gloom and attractive women (often combined) prevailed. This chapter aims to demonstrate how the author adapted the imagery of his poetry to his short story production. Poe reused elements from his poetry, but not without transforming them to make them work for his prose fiction. The diversity of his first efforts in fictional prose evince that Poe was trying himself in different topics and tones, just as if he had been searching for the right mode of writing. Critics agree that the majority of Poe's earliest short stories are characterized by some sort of humor, mostly of a satirical kind. This categorization is unproblematic in the cases of "Lionizing" or "Bon-Bon", where the satire and the targets are obvious, but other tales defy such reductive interpretations. While since the early 1970s critics have been eager to discover subtle satirical aspects in Poe's Gothic stories, the discussion of serious aspects in Poe's tales of "humor" has been neglected until today.

The main reason for this approach to the prose works, in particular to the stories written in the first half of the 1830s, are Poe's well known plans to publish a collection to be entitled *Eleven Tales of the Arabesque* or *Tales of the Folio Club*, respectively. In 1833, the collection was to comprise eleven tales, in 1836 sixteen and later even seventeen. While the title of the project and the number of tales varied, Poe's overall concept remained the same. The tales were to be embedded in a narrative framework that was to suggest satirical intentions. In May 1833, Poe sent his story "Epimanes" to the publishers of the *New England Magazine*, Joseph and Edwin Buckingham:

They [the tales] are supposed to be read at table by the eleven members of a literary club, and are followed by the remarks of the company upon each. These remarks are intended as a burlesque upon criticism. In the whole, originality more than any thing else has been attempted. (O 1: 53)⁷¹

Unfortunately, no table of contents for *The Tales of the Folio Club* has survived, and the interspersed critical remarks have not surfaced yet. It must be supposed that Poe never wrote them. Consequently, Poe scholars have tried to figure out the contents on the basis of external evidence. The suggestion brought forth by Mabbott (1928 "Tales"; 2: 201f), Wilson ("Devil"), A. H. Quinn (201ff, 745f),

Richard (“Vocation”) and Hammond (“Design”, “Reconstruction”) agree in that “The Duc de L’Omelette”, “Loss of Breath”, “Bon-Bon”, “Epimanes”, and “Lionizing”, “Metzengerstein”, “MS. Found in a Bottle”, “Silence” and “The Assignation” were among the eleven stories. Other candidates are “King Pest”, “A Tale of Jerusalem”, “Raising the Wind” and “Mystification”. For the expanded collections “Shadow”, “Berenice” and “Morella” have come into consideration.

At least one half of the *Folio Club* contents are stories that are generally considered to be humorous. The prominence of the comical and the satirical is further emphasized by Poe’s statement that the interspersed critical “remarks are intended as burlesques upon criticism”. These circumstances have induced Richard, Hammond and Thompson to argue that the other stories must be satires as well. Consequently, “Metzengerstein”, “MS. Found in a Bottle”, “Silence”, “Shadow” and “The Assignation” have been interpreted in the light of satire, irony or general humor. Before the early 1970s, these texts had been read as serious stories.

In a letter to the publisher Harrison Hall, dated September 2, 1836, Poe announced seventeen stories for the *Tales of the Folio Club*. In the same letter, he repeated his ideas about a burlesque narrative framework and he also mentioned that the tales were “of a bizarre and generally whimsical character” (O 1: 103f). All these circumstances point to Poe’s satirical intentions. Nevertheless, several objections must be made against the general theses of Richard, Hammond and Thompson. First, the fact that the interspersed discussions of the Folio club members were to ridicule contemporary criticism must not necessarily mean that all stories are satires as well. Second, Poe characterized his stories as “bizarre and generally whimsical”, but not as satirical, ironical or funny. While the word “whimsical” strikes primarily funny connotations, “bizarre” certainly does not. Another ambiguity is Poe’s expression “generally whimsical”. This can either refer to all pieces in the collection or to some only. Another legitimate reading is that the whimsical character is unspecific. However, Poe wrote about satire (wit and sarcasm, that is) that it “is pointed at a purpose [...] well-intentioned or malevolent” (P 3: 17). To be effective, a satire needs a recognizable target. Consequently, the humor can hardly be of a general kind, as Poe’s letter to Harrison Hall suggests.

The main objection against the thesis that all stories in the *Tales of the Folio Club* were satires, or more generally burlesques, are the “new” texts which were to be included in the collection after 1835. Among the sixteen or seventeen stories of the expanded project were “Berenice” and “Morella”. There has always been wide agreement that “Berenice” belongs to Poe’s most gruesome stories and that it is devoid of any touch of humor. Hammond evaded the resulting problem, stating that “Berenice”, as well as “Morella” and “Shadow”, were not originally written for the Folio Club. Consequently, these tales have to be interpreted independently from the satirical framework. But as a matter of fact, Poe offered these very stories to Harrison Hall as part of his collection of allegedly satirical and burlesque stories. Although Hammond, Richard and Thompson forwarded satirical interpretations of two other tales belonging to the “marriage group” (Hoffman 229ff), namely “The Assignation” and “Ligeia”, they have refused to read “Berenice” or “Morella” as humorous stories, a circumstance that calls the validity of their thesis into

question. Although their readings are stimulating, the critics in question missed an important point in these tales, and that is the transformation of Poe's poetic material. The tales from the marriage group show how Poe adapted the imagery of his poetry to his prose works. In all marriage tales females figure prominently, recalling the many beautiful women in Poe's early poems, in particular Helen. The close connection between the four stories discussed in the following, "The Assignation", "Berenice", "Morella" and "Ligeia" and Poe's poetry is not only established by similar protagonists, but also by the combination of female beauty and death. One of the most often quoted sentences from Poe's oeuvre is his remark from "The Philosophy of Composition" that "the death [...] of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world" (H 16: 201). The four stories discussed in this chapter are all variations of this poetical doctrine.

4.1.1 Evening Star

Before attention will be turned to the manifestation of beauty Poe's tales, a short digression to Poe's early poem "Evening Star" will be useful to demonstrate how Poe adapted the topics of his poetry to his prose works and how closely his lyrics and many stories are related in terms of imagery and theme. Poe's early poem "Evening Star" belongs to the least popular works of the author. During the poet's lifetime it was only printed once, namely in 1827. There has been almost no scholarly interest in this poem. The fact, that it foreshadows the later poem "Ulalume", in which the Platonism of Poe's aesthetics is particularly obvious, is regarded as the chief merit of "Evening Star". With the exception of comprehensive collections of Poe's poetry, "Evening Star" has been rarely anthologized.

'Twas noontide of summer,
 And mid-time of night;
 And stars, in their orbits,
 Shone pale, thro' the light
 Of the brighter, cold moon,
 'Mid planets her slaves,
 Herself in the Heavens,
 Her beam on the waves.
 I gazed awhile
 On her cold smile;
 Too cold – too cold for me –
 There pass'd, as a shroud,
 A fleecy cloud,
 And I turned away to thee,
 Proud Evening Star,
 In thy glory afar,
 And dearer thy beam shall be;
 For joy to my heart
 Is the proud part
 Thou bearest in Heav'n at night,
 And more I admire
 Thy distant fire,
 Than that colder, lowly light. (M 1: 74)



The Art Nouveau artist W. Heath ROBINSON (1900) depicted a single man at a beachy shore, whose gaze is directed towards a gleaming object in the heavens (fig. 30). Poe's night-time scenery is not visualized, because in the picture there is no darkness at all. In black and white illustrations the depiction of the night is a graphic problem. To avoid large masses of black, black-and-white artists often help themselves in that they invert the pictures contrasts, that is the nightly sky is given in white, and the starlit scenery below chiefly in black. ROBINSON employed this very knack in his illustration for "Dream-Land" (59), which contrary to his picture for "Evening Star"; convincingly conveys the impression of nocturnal darkness. In the early poem, the darkness is of central importance. Thus, the illustration ignores one crucial aspect of the text, the theme of light engulfed in darkness. As it is, there is an obvious inconsistency between text and illustration.

This gap may help to direct the reader's attention towards another significance of the planet, that might have been overruled by the poem's title. The evening star is also known as the morning star, which, at the end of the night, announces the coming of a new day. As such the star can be interpreted as the symbol of a new beginning and new life. Thus, the absence of the dark night in ROBINSON's picture foregrounds a different facet of the planet, with which another symbolic reading of the picture, and the poem, goes hand in hand. In the poem the symbolism of the planet is somewhat inconspicuous. The stylized depiction of the star in ROBINSON's illustration, where it rather looks like a badge of honor, however, cannot fail to make the reader/viewer aware of some symbolic meaning.

Fig. 30 "Evening Star":
W. Heath Robinson (1900).
*Courtesy of Badische Landesbibliothek
Karlsruhe.*

Fig. 31 "Evening Star":
Greg Hildebrandt (1986).
Collection of the author.

In the Platonic context of the poem, in the illustration loosely connoted by the man's antique dress, the gleaming evening star is the visual token for a brighter world beyond.

ROBINSON's picture probably catches the very moment when the lyrical I turns away from the moon. The moon, however, is not depicted in the illustration, so that the poem's contrastive symbolism of the two planets is lost. In the poem, and in some of Poe's other works, which will be discussed in the course of this study, the moon's light is misleading. Usually, it indicates the wrong direction. Compared to the warm brightness of the evening star, her light is dull and cold. Additionally, the moon is covered by a cloud, a word that also belongs to the above-mentioned group of words like "veil", "shroud" or "mist". Poe's protagonists often follow an *ignis fatuus*. Their disoriented quest for beauty ends in madness. In the medieval tradition, the moon is a symbol of lunacy in Poe's works.

But the man might also be just about to turn his step towards the sea, just as if he would try to approach the star. In his "Poetic Principle" Poe remarked about the human desire for beauty: "It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above" (H 14: 273; see II: 72). ROBINSON's illustration visualizes the futility of this striving by means of the seemingly illimitable sea and the vastness of the sky, which occupies more than the half of his picture. The man's movement from right to left, against the direction of reading, is backward, and so he seems to return from somewhere. In the Platonic context of Poe's aesthetics, the man's way back can be interpreted as the soul's return to its homestead, to the heavenly place where it dwelt, before it was confined into a human body. In his "Poetic Principle", Poe alluded to this prenatal existence, and the Platonic notion of *anamnesis*, in that he mentions the "ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave" (*ibid.*). Thus, on the one hand, the evening star signifies nightfall and the end of life as a human being, and, on the other hand, it means the dawn of a new life after earthly existence. In the illustration, the shore line represents the threshold between life and the infinitude that lies beyond. It must be noted, that in Poe's later works sea travels lead his protagonists towards some supernatural mystery, whose solution promises bliss but the discovery of which ends in desolation and death. The vision of Poe's early poem, however, is devoid of such sombre notions. The lyrical I expressly turns away from the clouded light of the cold moon towards the gleaming star, whose warm light guides the human soul through the darkness into a more lucid sphere.

Although ROBINSON's illustration is capable of directing the reader's attention towards the broader aesthetical context of the poem, it fails to visualize a suggestive meaning of the text. If the reader knows, that the evening star is also named Venus, he/she will become aware that the Poe's verses are also an inconspicuous love poem. Venus, the ancient goddess of love, attracts the earthbound stargazer by means of the warm light of her planet. Thus, the gleaming light is a token of the beauty of divine love. If the reader also remembers Venus as the guardian of earthly lovers, the poem's Platonism becomes even more obvious. In Platonic dialectics, as unfolded in the conversation of Diotima and Socrate in the *Symposium*, the

experience of love on earth is the first step in the recognition of ethereal beauty and the fulfilment of eternal happiness. The only hint at this context in ROBINSON'S illustration is the depiction of dawn, the time of the day when Eros, the God of love, who is the topic in the mentioned Platonic dialogue, appears in the skies.

Greg HILDEBRANDT (1986) was more specific about this facet of meaning (fig. 31). His pencil drawing blends a starry sky with the face of a young woman, whose long fair hair looks like flowing water or a bank of fog. This fusion of images is absent in the poem, and a woman is not even mentioned in the verses, but her depiction stimulates the readings offered in the last paragraph. The combination of stars and beautiful women is a prominent topic in Poe's works as the following discussions will show.

4.1.2 The Assignation

While Mabbott characterized this text as "the most romantic story Poe ever wrote" (2: 148), Davidson regarded it as being characterized by "ludicrous sentimentalism" (153). Davidson was the first critic who labelled the story as "fooling" and "absurd" (138, 142), thus prompting Richard P. Benton ("Hoax") and Alexander Hammond ("Reconstruction" 27) to interpret the tale as an absurdly sensational version of the circumstances of Byron's death.⁷² Identifying the narrator as Thomas Moore, the poet and Byron's 19th-century biographer, Hammond argued that the story suggests Byron's Italian love-affair with the Countess Guiccioli as the true reason for the poet's decease. Thus, the narrator is a caricature of Thomas Moore, and the "convolute" style of the story mocks his elaborate writing, which also explains the name of the Folio Club member narrating this tale, Mr. Convolvulus Gondola. Pitcher turned twice against the humorous readings of Benton, Hammond and Thompson (*Fiction* 128ff). He detected a tension between the story's comical passages and its seriously handled Romantic themes and arrived at an ambivalent balance of meanings ("Reconsideration", "Allusion"). Pahl offered a psychological reading which focussed on the connections between the story's Byronism and "questions of [Poe's] self-hood and self-presence related to the general nineteenth-century view of the English poet as an emblem of the romantic ideal" (*Architects* 39). Suggestive as all these readings are, there are several blind spots, of which the marginal attention to the female protagonist is the most important.

More than any other female character in Poe's prose works, the Marchesa Aphrodite recalls the women in Poe's early poetry, most notably Helen. The most obvious reference is the Marchesa's forename Aphrodite, which emphasizes her exceptional beauty of an ancient mould. The Marchesa's classical face, her statue-like appearance and her "hyacinth" hair are almost verbatim references to Helen (see M 1: 166; 2: 152f). The fact, that she wears a "a snowy-white and gauze-like drapery", an early variation of the topic of the veil (see below), means that she is standing on the threshold between life and death. The classical beauty of the Marchesa is mixed with some physiognomical peculiarities which foreshadow the morbid attractiveness of Berenice, Morella and Ligeia. Just like Ligeia's the eyes of

the Marchesa are lustrous and liquid. Her physiognomy is accompanied by some sort of inexplicable melancholy which is the particular quality of her “superhuman beauty”. Moreover, her appearance is described as an “ethereal figure” (M 2: 164), as if she did not belong to this world. It is symptomatic for the pictorial quality of Poe’s works, that a painting of the Marchesa is introduced to emphasize the visual impression of her angelic appearance.

One small, fairy foot, alone visible, barely touched the earth; and, scarcely discernible in the brilliant atmosphere which seemed to encircle and enshrine her loveliness, floated a pair of the most delicately imagined wings. (ibid.)

The two long descriptions of the Marchesa have remained totally out of focus in most interpretations. Only little more attention has been paid to the detailed account of the rescuer’s fantastically decorated habitation, which foreshadows the arabesque turret chamber in “Ligeia”.⁷³ As it is, for more than one reason “The Assigination” is an important link between Poe’s early poetry and his stories, in that a beautiful woman is imported into the bizarre setting of Poe’s tales of the grotesque and arabesque.

Despite the detailed descriptions of the Marchesa most illustrators concentrated on the depiction of the Byronic hero, in particular the scene of his death. Just like literary critics, the figure of the Marchesa has been either marginalized or even completely ignored by most illustrators, as can be seen in the pictures of Julian PORTCH (1852), Alice B. WOODWARD (1903), Arild ROSENKRANTZ (1908), Roger CARLE (1945) and Ronald PORCELLI (1989). Characteristically, Gottfried HELNWEIN, who contributed the greatest amount of pictures to the story (1977), did not depict the Marchesa at all. The female protagonist appears in only few illustrations, where she is often inconspicuously placed beside the male protagonist.

In 1902, however, Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902) devoted his only illustration for the story to a portrait of the Marchesa (fig. 32). His picture, captioned “She stood alone”, shows the woman in profile. Yearningly, she is gazing at a spot outside the picture, probably towards the dark niche out of which the Byronic hero emerges to rescue her child. The onlooker’s point of view is located at the height of the Marchesa’s hip, so that her face is perceived from a slight worm’s eye view. The picture’s composition, which leads the onlooker’s gaze along the dangling arm from bottom to top, reproduces the general direction of the text’s wandering focus, which begins with the description of the Marchesa’s feet and ends with her face. The upward direction of the woman’s view prolongs the eye’s movement into the starry sky which occupies about three quarters of the picture. The river divides the Marchesa from the point at which she stares, as well as it forms a borderline between her and the starry sky. An almost indiscernible boat is moving towards her on the river. This vehicle may be regarded as the narrator’s gondola, but in correspondence with the stories’s mythological allusions it can also be interpreted as the ferry of Charon, and the river as Styx.⁷⁴ COBURN’s picture is suggestive of various motifs which are peculiar for Poe’s works: the longing for the other side, the threshold that divides this world and another beyond, the dark passage that leads towards the place, of which mortal beings can only catch a glimpse, and the



combination of beauty, death and the infinitude of the stars. The reader's attention is directed towards these elements by the great blank of the starry sky.

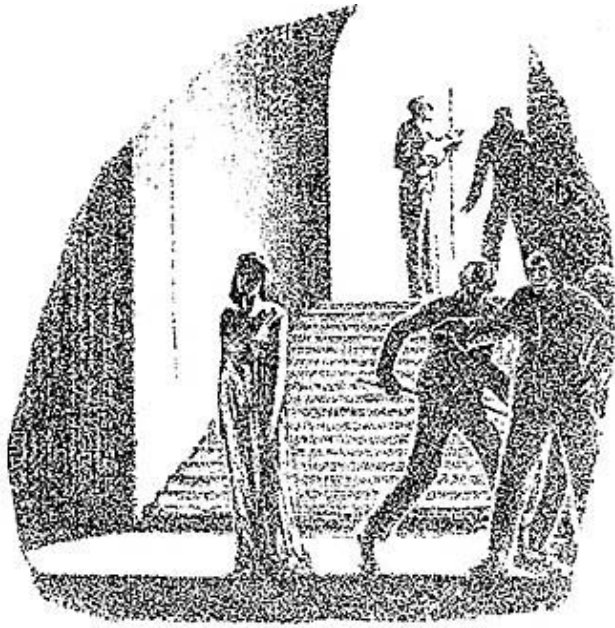
The other illustrations which show the Marchesa specify more details of her immediate surroundings. Byam SHAW's colorful picture tells of the artist's ambition to visualize many graphic details of the text, such as the reflection of the Marchesa on the wet limestone, the diamonds in her hair, and the marble-like impression of her garment (fig. 33). SHAW depicted the Byronic hero and the Marchesa, standing hand in hand on the stairs of the palazzo's watergate. Directly behind the two the behaviour of the people suggests that they are carrying the rescued child into the house. The lowest stair, the waterpost and the bow of the gondola function as an inner frame of the picture inside which the pair is singled out. The invisible, implied onlooker of the scene is situated in the gondola, at the right side of the picture, and thus the perspective from which the pair is presented may be equalled with the point of view of the story's narrator. Despite these many congruities between text and illustration the picture does not come to terms with a certain quality of the story, which Poe would have termed as an "undercurrent of meaning." SHAW's illustration does not penetrate the surface of the text, in that it exclusively stresses the romantic aspects of the love affair. In comparison to

Fig. 32 "The Assigination": Frederick S. Coburn (1902).

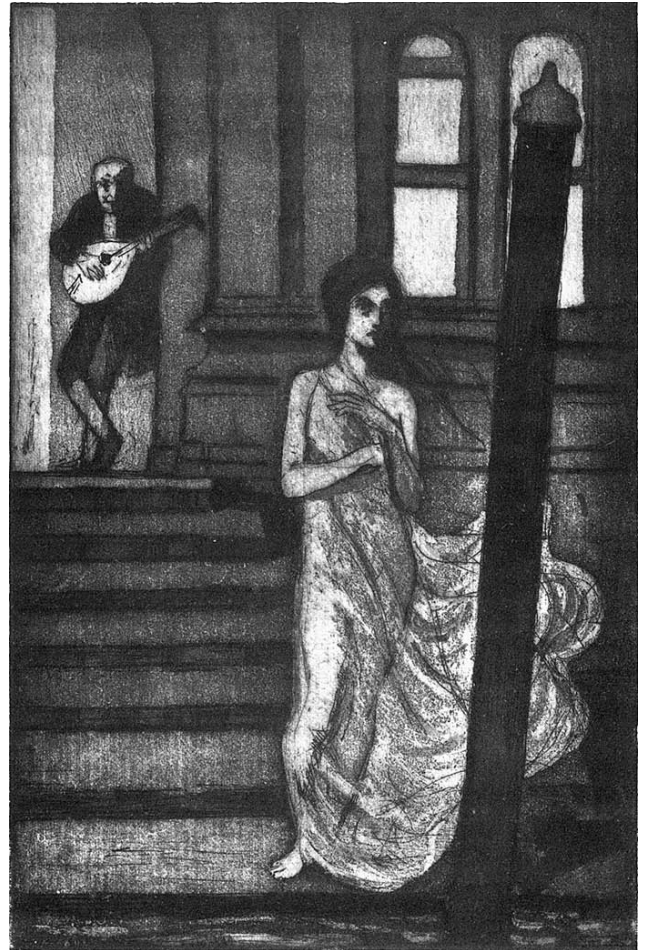
Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library of New York University.

Fig. 33 "The Assigination": Byam Shaw (1909).

Collection of Jeffrey Savoye.



*...no motion in the statue-like form itself stirred
even the folds of that raiment of vey vapour which
hung around it as the heavy marble hangs around
the Niobe.*



COBURN's earlier picture, it fails to unfold its own narrative and the text's connection to the author's aesthetics.

A. W. DWIGGINS (1930) and Povl CHRISTENSEN (1953) both depicted the Marchesa at the watergate with an unconcerned, lute-playing Mentoni in the background. While DWIGGINS, in his sketchy vignette in the pointillist style, employed dramatic lighting effects and stressed the statue-like appearance of the petrified woman (fig. 34), CHRISTENSEN, more than any other illustrator, concentrated on the beauty of the Marchesa Aphrodite (fig. 35). Just like in the story, the Marchesa is clad in semi-transparent garments, and thus CHRISTENSEN is the only illustrator who visualizes the aspects of sexual attractiveness suggested in the story (Ketterer "Abyss"; but cf. Fisher "Pieces" 67, 71). In contradiction to the text, the Marchesa's gauzy dress is flowing as if moved by a sudden breeze, and thus the Danish illustration ignores the story's mythological allusion to the petrified Niobe. The classical reference, indicated in the story by the Marchesa's forename, is brought into the picture by the posture of the woman. Her graceful *contrapposto* strongly resembles the attitude of Venus in Botticelli's famous canvas (c. 1485). This visual connection between the two figures is further strengthened by the way in which both women hold their hands to cover their breasts. In correspondence to the text, CHRISTENSEN depicts the Marchesa's large eyes and her intense look, which is presumably fixed on the gloomy niche on the other side of the canal. Similar to COBURN's picture, the direction of the Marchesa's gaze

Fig. 34 "The Assigation":
W. A. Dwiggins (1930).

*Courtesy of the John Hay Library,
Brown University, Providence, RI.*

Fig. 35 "Stævnemødet":
Povl Christensen (1953).

*Courtesy of De Kongelige Biblioteket/
Universitetsbiblioteket København.*

creates a pictorial blank, in that it deflects the onlooker's attention to a spot outside the picture. In COBURN's earlier illustration the compositionally emphasized starry sky implies the infinitude and the eternal happiness which lies ahead of the secret lovers. The vision suggested by CHRISTENSEN's illustration is darker, since there is no promise of heavenly bliss. The Marchesa's glimpse rather tells of fearful foreboding than of happy expectancy. The only sign of the hereafter is a slanted waterpost which can be interpreted as a symbol of the threshold between this world and the world beyond. The reader of the story cannot be sure about the feelings of the Marchesa. Is she looking forward to being united in death with her secret lover, or does she only agree in the joint suicide because of a promise or to settle a debt to the rescuer of her child? In the story, there are some indications at the Marchesa's unhappy marriage to an old man, but is she really ready to leave her beloved child behind? Just like the text, no illustration gives a definite answer, but CHRISTENSEN's depiction of the Marchesa is devoid of any notion of joyful anticipation.

The choice of Venice as the setting of the story was certainly motivated by the allusions to Byron's biography, but Poe also exploited the gloomy atmosphere of the city, the localities of which are transformed into symbolic places. For the narrator Venice is a "a star-beloved Elysium of the sea" (151), a far away place to which the favorites of the Gods retire and where they eternally live in perfect happiness. The Evening Star, Al Aaraaf, the valley of the many-colored grass in "Eleonora", the kingdom by the sea in "Anabell Lee"; these are all works in which some sort of Elysium appears. But Venice as well as the mentioned places are rather no-man's-lands and not paradise itself. Though Venice is entitled to be a lover's paradise, the narrator also states that it is "a city of dim visions" where the windows of the palaces "look down with a deep and bitter meaning upon the secrets of her silent waters" (*ibid.*).

The dual character of the city as a place where lovers simultaneously experience bliss and despair is typical for Poe's later works. In "The Assigination" this twofoldness is also visualized by the pattern of light and darkness and by the continual switch between elevated and low positions. The Byronic hero emerges from a dark niche. It lies directly opposite the Marchesa's window, a circumstance which is reminiscent of Helen's "brilliant window niche". Whereas the wanderer and Helen are divided by "seas long wont to roam", there is the canal between the Marchesa and the Byronic hero. In order to approach each other, both of them have to leave their elevated positions. While the Marchesa moves down from her boudoir in an upper story of the palace to the lowest steps at the watergate a few feet above the water's surface. The male protagonist precipitates from his lofty position into the "pitchy darkness" in order to heave "the treasure [...] within the abyss" (152, 154). In the story there is a continual interplay between light and darkness. At the beginning, the narrator remarks that "[i]t was a night of unsual gloom" (151), which is soon to be illuminated by the flashing lights of the Mentoni Palace. The rescuer protrudes from his dark niche "within reach of the light" and plunges into the "deep and dim canal" (152, 154), from whose dark bottom he brings back the child to the illuminated surface. After the two lovers have made their appointment,

the “lights [...] died away” and the rescuer is left alone in the darkness before the palace. In order to approach supernatural beauty, here presented by the Marchesa, the man has to cross the water, but the dangerous passage finally leads into the darkness of death. These dramatic and visual patterns were to appear over and over again in Poe’s later works. However, the gender roles were modified, the settings changed, and the histrionic was psychologized.

4.1.3 Berenice, Morella, Ligeia

Poe seems to have been fond all these three stories. Poe defended “Berenice” against his employer T. W. White, who thought the story to be much too gruesome (O 1: 57f). In a letter dating from December 1835, Poe mentioned that he regarded “Morella” as his best tale produced until that date. This statement suggests that he thought to have made improvements in comparison to “Berenice”. He also showed himself convinced to be capable of writing still better stories (O 1: 78). Later, Poe considered “Ligeia” as his finest work in prose. This story remained the author’s favorite, as two letters written eight years after the story’s first publication testify (O 2: 309, 329).⁷⁵ Just like “Berenice”, “Morella” and “Ligeia” deal with the death of a beautiful woman, but the later tales show a different concept of beauty.

The turnaway from classical beauty is most obvious in “Berenice”, where it surfaces in two ways. Firstly, the appearance of the ailing woman is in strong contrast to the unblemished classical beauty of Helen and the Marchesa. Secondly, the reader of the story witnesses the decay of Berenice’s beauty and its mutation into something strange that is repulsive and fascinating at the same time. In comparison to his previous works, Poe’s presentation of a female figure in “Berenice” is radically different. It almost seems as if Poe tried to detach himself from his earlier ideas by turning them upside down. “How is it that from beauty I have derived a type of unloveliness?” Egæus asks himself at the beginning of his report (M 2: 209). And, in a similar vein, the nameless narrator of “Morella” remarks: “And thus, joy suddenly faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous” (M 2: 230). While in his earlier works beauty promised heavenly bliss, it turns out to be a harbinger of desolation in the works of the mid-1830s. In “Morella” and “Ligeia”, Poe re-approached his earlier model of beauty based on the classical ideal, but only to fuse it with the morbid qualities of Berenice. The outcome of this mixture is an extraordinary type of beauty, a notion Poe did not let go until his death.

The places where the women appear in “Berenice”, “Morella” and “Ligeia” are important for the evaluation of beauty in these stories. Likewise, it must be taken into consideration how and by whom these beauties are presented. While the general symbolic meaning of a figure like Helen is apparent, the case is more problematic with Berenice, Morella and Ligeia. Although the exact meaning of Helen remains enigmatic because of the poem’s polysemy, it cannot be denied that she primarily represents good things, such as, for example, emotional welfare and poetic inspiration. Quite the contrary, Berenice, Morella and Ligeia may only tem-

porarily bring happiness to their husbands. At the end, these beautiful women have either been destroyed by their male companions or they have instilled madness in the narrators' minds. So, who or what are they and where do they come from? These are the basic questions with which this chapter has to deal in order to elucidate the nature of Berenice, Morella and Ligeia and the significance of the re-modelled type of beauty for Poe's works.

The abundance of critical material, in particular for "Ligeia", is symptomatic for the polysemy of these stories. The large quantity and diversity of existing illustrations also testifies that any reductive interpretation falls short of the deliberately indefinite meaning(s) of these stories. However, text illustrations are likely to direct the reader's attention towards specific meanings at the cost of other readings. Apart from the question which interpretations are promoted (or excluded) by the accompanying pictures, it will be examined how illustrators handled the stories' ambiguities, and how they transformed Poe's changing and indefinite concept of beauty into concrete graphic forms.

At least fifty different artists illustrated "Berenice". Most of them produced one single picture, a very few two to four. There are two suites, one by Karl KORAB, comprising ten expressionistic etchings (1978), the other by Angel BELLIDO, consisting of five surrealistic full-page aquatints and six vignette pictures (1976). "Berenice" was also popular among comic book artists. As early as 1967, Archie GOODWIN and Jerry GRANDENETTI condensed Poe's story on just four pages for the September issue of *Eerie* (II: 23–26), while Ricardo VILLAMONTE's mid-seventies version devoted seven pages mainly to those scenes of the story which are merely implied in Poe's text: the disinterment and desecration of the lifeless Berenice (*Dossier Negro* 79: 45–51). The adaptation of Isidro MONES is the most widespread of the comic book versions of "Berenice". Originally published in 1973, in the Spanish series *Vampirella* (6: 19–26), MONES' adaptation was frequently republished in the United States and in Western European countries. Among visual artists the story was obviously most popular on the continent, especially in France and in Spain. There are only a few American illustrations for "Berenice", and Harry CLARKE seems to be the only notable British illustrator of the story.

Alphonse LEGROS was the first illustrator of the story (fig. 36). He produced etchings for six tales in 1861. Charles Baudelaire was more than satisfied with LEGROS' pictures, which were intended to accompany the *Histoires Extraordinaires*. However, the publisher Poulet-Malassis rejected the pictures because they were all too incompatible with the literary conventions of the time and so they never appeared side by side with Baudelaire's translations (Gamboni 30, Tannenbaum 123f, Heintzelmann 43–48). LEGROS' etchings demarcate the starting point of the predominance of French artists as illustrators of this story, and they are important for two more reasons. Firstly, the picture illustrates a scene which can only rarely be found in editions outside the French and Spanish speaking world (see below). Secondly, this early picture is symptomatic for later illustrations in that it rather foregrounds Egæus than Berenice. The illustrators' focus on the narrator, however, is not surprising. Egæus' own reports of his monomaniac meditations, his autistic



Fig. 36 "Berenice":
Alphonse Legros (1862).
Victoria and Albert Museum.

musings and his descriptions of his state of mind occupy more space in the story than does Berenice. It is a peculiar for some of Poe's tales, that mentally disturbed narrators are able to deliver elaborate retrospective accounts. While one can only suspect some of Poe's narrators of unreliability, Egæus himself makes the reader aware of "the strange anomaly of his existence" and of his "own disease" (M 2: 211, 214). Egæus is a typical example of an untrustworthy narrator, but while, for example, the murderer in "The Tell-Tale Heart" is eager to dissipate the reader's suspicion about his insanity, and while the unreliability of other of Poe's narrators can only be inferred, Egæus blatantly and frequently admits it. Due to this first person narrative perspective Berenice is exclusively presented through the eyes of someone, whose perception and report cannot be fully trusted. The chronological interlocking of the events and the fragmentary account of a fallible narrator are responsible for several blanks in the story. The most apparent of these gaps occurs at the very end. The reader has to reconstruct what happened to Berenice. A few details and some hints is all what the reader gets to know, but this blank can easily be filled.⁷⁶ The female protagonist is more difficult to imagine, because the text does not offer more than some fragmented glimpses of her changing outward appearance.

There are surprisingly few portraits of Berenice. Alberto MARTINI (c. 1905), Arild ROSENKRANTZ (1908), Arnaldo GINNA (1922), W. A. DWIGGINS (1930), Ben GENAUX (1943) and Povl CHRISTENSEN (1953) provided portraits of Berenice, but none of these pictures is helpful to visualize, to remould or to challenge Poe's peculiar notion of female beauty. Some of these pictures may promote the interpretation that the woman is a vampire (see Kendall; Richmond; Twitchell,



Living 58ff; Kennedy, *Death* 78), but this supernatural reading ignores many vital parts of the story, in particular the narrator's state of mind.⁷⁷

In the first illustrations of the story the depiction of Berenice was clearly backgrounded in comparison to that of Egæus. In LEGROS' picture the encoffined Berenice is dressed in a shroud so that not more than her face in profile is depicted. WÖGEL's illustration (1884) reveals scarcely more of the female protagonist (fig. 37). In the background of WÖGEL's picture, Berenice is just about to enter the library, unnoticed by the brooding Egæus, whom she approaches from behind his back. She looks ill and weak. Her face is thin, the eyes are encircled by dark rings, and the mouth is closely shut. The lower part of her body is swallowed by the shadows of the library, so that Berenice seems to be in a state of dissolution, making the impression of an apparition floating into the chamber. Berenice is standing on the threshold of the library, between Egæus and a reading desk with an opened book. Several associations are stimulated by Berenice's spatial position. First, she intrudes into the library, that is, into the private solitude and mental isolation of Egæus. Her place behind Egæus' back, and above his head, suggests some sort of influence, of which the narrator is unaware. Moreover, the illustration insinuates the interpretation that Berenice's apparition is merely a product of the narrator's "own excited imagination" (M 2: 214), which was probably incited by the contents of the volume on the lectern. WÖGEL managed to bring together different elements of the story: the spectral appearance of the sick Berenice, the absent-mindedness of Egæus, and the reclusiveness and the morbid atmosphere of the library. On the

Fig. 37 "Berenice":
Wögel (1884).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

Fig. 38 "Berenice":
Giovanni Giannini (1978).

Collection of Burton Pollin.



one hand, WÖGEL's illustration stimulates the reading that Berenice's hold on Egæus' mind is much stronger than the narrator is aware of. On the other hand, the picture suggests that the related events are probably nothing more than the outcome of Egæus' gloomy musings or fantasies. Despite its suggestiveness, the illustration also responds to the narrative surface of the text, so that it keeps up its ambivalence.

There are more illustrations which establish a connection between the appearance of Berenice and Egæus' reading matter, or his library respectively. Alfred KUBIN devoted two of his four pictures to the library scene. The first shows the room without any person present. Two statues on the mantelpiece, two oval portraits below two full-size paintings on each side of the curtained doorway indicate the bond between Egæus and Berenice. The two statues, which may represent Cupid and Psyche, are bathed in light, as is the oval female portrait. The other three pictures are swallowed by the shadows. The middle of the picture is occupied by an open folio around which the composition revolves, and thus the central importance of the library and particularly of Egæus' reading is emphasized. Likewise, Albert DUBOUT's second illustration (1948) shows an absorbed Egæus amidst piles of books. In his illustration of 1978, Giovanni GIANNINI depicted Berenice as a semi-transparent phantom, which appears in front of Egæus (fig. 38). The narrator, who is sitting in an armchair before a bookshelf with an opened volume in his hands, does not look at the apparition. Absent-mindedly, he stares at some imaginary point beyond it. GIANNINI's illustration suggests the

Fig. 39 "Berenice": Alfred Kubin (1920).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 40 "Berenice": Fritz Eichenberg (1944).
Collection of the author.

interpretation that Berenice is nothing but a chimera, which arises in the stimulated imagination of the pondering Egæus. In comparison to WÖGEL's illustration, which is likely to have been the model for GIANNINI's picture, the later illustration is reductive in that it excludes alternative readings of the story. KUBIN's second illustration catches the very moment, in which Egæus becomes aware of the afflicted Berenice (fig. 39). In this picture, quite contrary to GIANNINI's and WÖGEL's, Egæus is startled by the appearance of his cousin. There is no hint in any of KUBIN's pictures that Egæus' suffers from some sort of mental derangement. Thus, his pictures visually confirm the narrator's account of the events from the position of an uninvolved observer.⁷⁸ Burton Pollin remarked that Baudelaire would have been legitimately disappointed to see WÖGEL's pictures embellish the first illustrated editions of the *Histoires* (Images 14, cf. entry 145). It is right, that the technical execution of WÖGEL's etchings is amateurish, but the conception of the illustrations is not.⁷⁹ The example above shows that WÖGEL's was successful in delivering an illustration suggestive of several readings. In comparison, the pictures of GIANNINI and the widely acclaimed KUBIN are less stimulating. Moreover, their illustrations may lead the reader/viewer to the arbitrary conclusion that Berenice is a ghost.

In Fritz EICHENBERG's wood engraving of 1944 the narrator has laid his head to rest on a open book (fig. 40). Right before him hovers the gigantic head of Berenice. In this illustration Berenice's supernatural appearance does not suggest her existence as a spectre, but it indicates her dominance over the subconsciousness of Egæus. Berenice haunts the dreams and the imagination of the narrator, who professes to lose control over the realities of life: "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" (M 2: 210). There is no other illustration that visualizes Berenice's spell over the narrator's mind as clearly as EICHENBERG's. Quite contrary, Pedro RIU (1942) depicted an anxiously looking Berenice (fig. 41). The reading narrator is not even aware of her, although she is standing directly at his side. RIU's small and inconspicuous picture challenges another interpretation that recalls Poe's later tale "The Oval Portrait", namely that Egæus is totally absorbed by his occupation. He ignores his beloved and does not recognize that his insensitivity towards her is responsible for her illness. The loss of Egæus's sense of reality is also foregrounded in an illustration made by Ernst SCHÜTTE (1919) (fig. 42). The cubistic picture effectively conveys Egæus' disorientation as well as the fragmentation of his perception of the world around him. The picture defies the laws of central perspective, and thus the onlooker is able to re-experience the narrator's embarrassment to differentiate between what is "real" and what is imaginary. This effect is furthered by the interlocking of geographic forms, by the circular, whirl-about composition and by the synoptic presentation. In SCHÜTTE's picture, Egæus holds a complete set of teeth in his hands, while, simultaneously, Berenice is depicted at the other side with the teeth still in her mouth. SCHÜTTE's illustration not only negates natural proportions and the fixity of spatial forms, but also the linear successiveness of time. Thus the artist manages



to convey the mental confusion of Egæus visually. Moreover, the picture's splintering into mainly triangular and sharply pointed forms visualize Egæus' obsession with his cousin's teeth, an aspect neglected by most illustrators of the text.

In Poe's projected, but never published collection *Phantasy Pieces* the story was to appear under the title "The Teeth", a fact that proves the importance of the passage where Egæus becomes aware of Berenice's teeth (note the assonance). However, some literary critics brushed over this crucial passage, probably because Egæus' obsession defies any reasonable explanation, and ascribed the scene to the narrator's insanity (Craig 512; Thompson, *Fiction* 168).⁸⁰ In her psychoanalytical biography, Bonaparte interpreted the scene as visualizing a *vagina dentata* and Egæus' fears of castration (283f). Hoffman (Poe 235f), Halliburton (202) and Porte (81ff) pointed to the narrator's repressed sexual desire which fixates on Berenice's teeth rather than on her body. Bronfen argued that the teeth become a fetish for Egæus who cannot accept that the inevitable death of his beloved is real. For Egæus, whose illness causes an incapacity to differ between material reality and his imaginary world of substitute signs, the teeth signify the endurance of her life because they alone withstand decay and extinction ("Perversion" 458f). However, the passage can be taken quite literally and Egæus' reaction can be explained within the same Platonic framework that elucidates Poe's poems "Evening Star" and "To Helen". Just as the gleaming star and the beautiful woman, Berenice's teeth are manifestations of the ideal. Note that Egæus becomes aware of the teeth despite the poor lighting conditions in the library. Like the evening star and Helen's lamp, the teeth are a shining symbol of some ideal world beyond. The narrator explicitly remarks, that "of Berenice I more seriously believed *que tous ses dents étaient des idées*" (M 2: 216, italics original). Before she fell ill, Berenice fullfilled

Fig. 41 "Berenice":
Pedro Ríu (1942).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 42 "Berenice":
Ernst Schütte (1919).
Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek
Regensburg.

all the demands of Poe's model of ideal beauty, just like Helen, the Marchesa Aphrodite, Morella, and Ligeia: a graceful demeanour, long black hair, a lofty forehead and radiant eyes. While these elements of the beautiful are subject to decay, Berenice's teeth remain perfectly white as if they would resist the transitoriness of human life. For Egæus the teeth are the concentrate of Berenice's beauty. And while Egæus knows that he will lose Berenice, he is obsessed by the thought to get hold of the lasting essence of her beauty.⁸¹

The Platonic context also explains why Egæus' is unable to give more than a blurry and incoherent description of Berenice. Egæus describes her as a "sylph" (M 2: 210), and, while musing about her untimely decay, he remembers:

Through the gray of the early morning – among the trellised shadows of the forest at noonday – and in the silence of my library at night – she had flitted by my eyes, and I had seen her – not as the living and breathing Berenicë, but as the Berenicë of a dream; not as a being of the earth, earthy, but as the abstraction of such a being. (M 2: 214)

Egæus does not regard Berenice as a living being, but as a personification of the ideal. Egæus views his cousin as an abstraction of the Platonic idea of pure beauty. As such, she primarily exists inside his "palace of imagination" (M 2: 210). But Egæus does not achieve to come into immediate contact with the ideal as he may have hoped to do by marrying Berenice. He must recognize that Berenice is merely a human being, a person bound to die. There is no place for her in his world of dreams, which has little to do with the realities of life. Egæus' existence is exclusively devoted to a realm of abstract thought and vague memories of a world that corresponds with the Platonic sphere of the ideal. Egæus declares:

There is, however, a remembrance of aerial forms – of spiritual and meaning eyes – of sounds, musical, yet sad; a remembrance which will not be excluded; a memory like a shadow, – vague, variable, indefinite, unsteady; and like a shadow, too, in the impossibility of my getting rid of it while the sunlight of my reason shall exist. (M 2: 209f)

Egæus tries to absorb Berenice into his ideal, but insubstantial world that is incompatible with everyday life. This is why he perceives Berenice as a flitting shadow only. When she intrudes into his palace of imagination he describes her as a "vacillating and indistinct outline" (M 2: 214), an elusive being.

This indefinite nature of Berenice, as perceived by Egæus, has been almost totally neglected in illustrations for the story. In 1908, PICCOLO, the first Spanish illustrator of the tale, depicted "Berenice" as a fleeting apparition, which, despite its maternal chubbiness, manages to defy gravity (fig. 43). Egæus, struck by amazement, has lost his footing, seemingly unable to grasp what he observes. PICCOLO's picture does not succeed in conveying Egæus' point of view, so that the illustration implies that Berenice is something like ghost floating through the forest. Moreover, for a modern reader, this Spanish illustration is funny rather than suggestive of an aesthetic ideal.

Quite contrary to most other illustrators of "Berenice", the already mentioned comic book artist Isidro MONES (1975) managed to visualize the changing character of the female protagonist (figg. 44 + 45). Some of his pictures depict her as a woman of flesh and blood, while others present her as a product of Egæus' imagination or suggest her to be a being from a world beyond. In the pictures which



WAS IT MY OWN *EXCITED* IMAGINATION
 ... OR THE *MISTY* INFLUENCE OF THE
ATMOSPHERE... OR THE *UNCERTAIN*
 CANDLE-LIGHT OF THE *CHAMBER*...
 OR THE *GREY GOWN* THAT FELL
 AROUND HER *FIGURE*...

... THAT CAUSED IT TO
VACILLATE AND
 APPEAR *INDISTINCT*
 IN OUTLINE?



show the two protagonists in the library, the figure of Berenice is so ambiguously presented, that is impossible to decide what her exact nature is. In one frame Berenice is an ominous shadow entering the library (fig. 44). Only the contours of her body are highlighted, so that the picture recalls “the vacillating and indistinct outline” which Egæus mentions. The supernatural character of the figure is also stressed by the applied perspective. The frame behind Berenice looks like an opening in the ceiling rather than a usual door. Thus, she seems to step down into the room from some elevated place, a movement that suggests her to be a being from a higher sphere. However, she is illuminated from the back, so that her supernatural appearance can also be attributed to the peculiar lighting conditions, which cause usual things to look unfamiliar. The picture becomes even more intriguing by the way in which Egæus is presented. The reader/viewer’s point of view is located directly behind his back. This position allows to view the scene through Egæus’ eyes, but the reader/viewer also observes Egæus viewing Berenice. This double point of view congenially transforms Poe’s narrative strategy. On the one hand, the first person narrative of Egæus creates empathy, in that the reader perceives the related events exclusively through the narrator’s mediation. On the other hand, it

Fig. 43 “Berenice”:
 Piccolo (c. 1908).
 Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 44 “Berenice”:
 Isidro Mones (1975).
 Collection of the author.



Fig. 45 "Berenice":
Isidro Mones (1975).
Collection of the author.

is Egæus himself who tells about his mental derangement, so that the reader is warned not to believe his report uncritically. Parallel to Egæus' perspective, the reader builds up his/her own point of view, which allows a more sober evaluation of the events. This perspective may also promote the reading that Berenice is not being from this world, or another beyond respectively, but a chimera. Her position above Egæus' head suggests Berenice is only imagined by the narrator. She seems to arise from the book Egæus is holding on his lab, like a chimera in his mind. There is another frame which shows the same scene, but here the onlooker's point of view is differently located (fig. 45). This picture does not allow the reader/viewer to move into the position of Egæus, because the viewer observes the narrator from some distance. Nevertheless, this picture maintains the ambivalence of Berenice's appearance too. Egæus becomes aware of Berenice, of whom only a few portions can be seen in the overall darkness. The picture might illustrate Berenice's entrance into the library, but just as likely it shows her intrusion into the dark world of his thoughts.

In the earlier versions of the tale there is a second confrontation between Egæus and his cousin. When Poe republished the tale in 1845, for the April issue of the *Broadway Journal*, he abandoned four paragraphs. This passage deals with Egæus' visit of the allegedly deceased Berenice, who is placed on the bier. Today, these paragraphs can only be rarely found in editions of Poe's texts outside the French or Spanish speaking world. When "Berenice" was first translated into French, Charles Baudelaire referred to the version of the story that was published in the second volume of *The Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), where the four paragraphs in question still appeared in print. The passage is still part of the tale in modern French editions based on Baudelaire's translations, but in English language editions the tale has been generally printed without these paragraphs for now more than 150 years. The first Spanish translations were based on Baudelaire's French versions and not on the text's early publications in America or in England (Salinas 25). Thus Baudelaire's version was not only distributed in France, but also in Spain and in South America. As a result, illustrations of the passage exclusively appear in French and in Spanish language editions. Mabbott thought that these paragraphs "were wisely omitted by the author", since some repulsive details were eliminated this way (M 2: 207).⁸² The later version of the tale is more effective, because in it Egæus never leaves his library and thus the peculiar perspective from the reclusiveness of this room as well as the fragmentization of his memory is

conveyed in a more convincing manner. But, nevertheless, the four paragraphs in question help to explain the motif of morbid women in Poe's works, the key position of this topic in the poet's imagery and its relevance for his changing concept of beauty. As early as 1831, one can find hints about Poe's notion of morbid beauty, namely in his poem "Introduction", which is an extended version of his 1827 "Romance". In 1831, Poe incorporated the following two lines into the poem: "I could not love except where Death/Was mingling his with Beauty's breath" (M 1: 157, ll. 31f). Mabbott interpreted the lines in a biographical context (158), but it cannot be overlooked that the verses foreshadow the morose affection of Poe's narrators for their death-bound female companions. Notably, Berenice fatal cataleptic paralysis, a state of semi-death, occurs in the night before her wedding with Egæus. The crucial link between "Death" and "Beauty" is emphasized, because corresponding words are capitalized, in the poem and in the versions of "Berenice" published before 1845 (cf. Sloane and Fisher 19). Thus the lines can be interpreted as an early version of Poe's famous statement in "The Philosophy of Composition" (see above).

Egæus' visit at the bier of Berenice combines the topic of the dying woman with another prominent subject in Poe's imagery, namely the motif of the veil. As has been already stated, veils, curtains shrouds, showers and the like mark the threshold between two spheres, the boundary between this world and another unimaginable realm beyond. In "Berenice" the curtains around the bier not only demarcate the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead, it also signifies a changeover from an idealized vision of eternity to the awareness of the dire realities of life (and death). For Egæus, the encounter is a shock of recognition:

Gently, I uplifted the draperies of the curtains. As I let them fall they descended upon my shoulders, and shutting me thus out from the living, enclosed me in the strictest communion with the deceased. [...] I would have given worlds to escape – to fly from the pernicious influence of mortality – to breathe once again the pure air of the eternal heavens. (M 2: 217)

The ideal realm of beauty, that is identical with the stars in Poe's early poetry, gives way to a dark and fear-inspiring world in the Gothic stories. While the beauty of the stars remained out of reach, Poe's narrators succeed to enter into the dark. The impossibility to reach the stars is a source of bitter-sweet delight in Poe's poetry. In "Berenice" and in "Morella" the fulfillment of desire turns out to be a source of mortification. What remained was the dualism between the here and a world beyond. But Poe did not simply substitute one otherworld against the other, since the realm of the ideal and the dark sphere are similar in many ways. Poe's narrators often venture into the dark because they want to reach the source of light that promises eternal bliss. The ideal is no longer exclusively located in the infinity of the firmament, it must be sought in gloomy and hidden places where one would not expect to find it. This pairing of beauty and obscurity explains why Egæus' interest for his cousin is aroused as soon as the first signs of her malady begin to show up. Egæus is enthralled "by the startling changes in the physical frame of Berenice", and he concedes that he never loved her "[d]uring the brightest day of her unparalleled beauty" (213f). It is as if the decay of Berenice's exceptional beauty



renders her even more attractive, but just like in “Morella” the narrator’s fascination soon develops into dismay and horror. The search for beauty ends in despair, as soon as Poe’s narrators come close to it. Thus beauty, as the manifestation of the ideal, is no longer a source of pleasure exclusively. Its ephemeral experience creates delight, but enduring and immediate contact with it is incompatible with human life. But the incommensurability is bilateral. Beauty is not only destructive, it is itself destroyed as soon as it is bound to human life. The marriage in Poe’s tales is a symbolic act to hold ideal beauty and eternal happiness, but finally it results in bereavement. Poe’s narrators become insane, and their wives fade away.

The bier scene elucidates that “Berenice” demarcates a landmark in the development of Poe’s motif of the beautiful dying woman. Besides Alphonse LEGROS (1861), Louis LEGRAND (1897), Fernand SIMÉON (1922), Alméry LOBEL-RICHE (1927) and Carlo FARNETI (1928), all of them French artists, directed their attention towards the episode in Berenice’s death chamber. Some of these artists even exclusively chose this scene for illustration. The prominence of this episode in French illustrations indicates that it was considered a climax of the story. While SIMÉON (fig. 46) and FARNETI portray Berenice as a repulsive, hideously grinning corpse, LEGRAND and LOBEL-RICHE (fig. 47) depict Egæus’ cousin without any signs of sickness or decay. In these two last mentioned illustrations beauty and death are united below the hangings that shut off Egæus and his cousin from the world of the living. However, the aesthetical relevance of this combination seems to have gone unnoticed by both artists, since in both pictures the exhibition of Berenice’s breasts is likely to stimulate a necrophilic reading rather than a reflection about Poe’s aesthetics. Nevertheless, the pictures of LEGRAND and LOBEL-RICHE came closer to Poe’s ideal of morbid beauty than any other illustration for “Berenice”.

Fig. 46 “Berenice”:
Fernand Siméon (1924).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 47 “Berenice”:
Alméry Lobel-Riche (1927).
*Courtesy of the Free Library of
Philadelphia, Rare Book Department,
Richard Gimbel Collection.*



As far as their physiognomy is concerned the poetical ancestry of Morella and Ligeia is apparent, but in both figures the classical model is fused with the morbid beauty of Berenice. “Ligeia” demarcates the end of Poe’s search for a way to amalgamate the female ideal of his early years with the sinister settings of the Gothic story. After the publication of “Ligeia” Poe wrote no tale in which a beautiful woman figured so prominently.⁸³

However, critical interest for “Ligeia” has been primarily revolving around the plot, and not around the female protagonist. Clayton Hamilton was among the first 20th century critics of the story, and he thought it to be one of supernatural horror. His line of interpretation was followed by Abel Darrel (“Life-in-Death”), James Schroeter (“Misreading”, “Ligeia”), John Lauber (“Plea”), and T. O. Mabbott, who, in his introduction for the story in his critical edition of Poe’s works, also concluded that Ligeia’s resurrection is a case of “real magic” (M 2: 307). The opponents of the supernatural reading pointed to the peculiar perspective of the male protagonist, who resembles the narrators of “Berenice” and “Morella” in many ways. Critics like Roy P. Basler (“Interpretation”), James W. Gargano (“Question”), Alethea Hayther (“Opium”), June and Jack L. Davis (“Ethereal”) and John R. Byers (“Chronology”) argued that the narrator’s account is unreliable, because he is deluded by some sort of psychosis, hyperbolic imagination or drug addiction. A few critics discussed the story in its aesthetic and “philosophical” context, for example as a satire on Transcendentalism (Griffith, “Romantics”; Deutsch), as the struggle between Romanticism and Gothicism (West), or between Classicism and Romanticism (Rea). James W. Gargano (“Dream”) interpreted the

Fig. 48 “Ligeia”:
Giorgio Trevisan (1970).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 49 “Ligeia”:
Gus Bofa (1941).
Collection of the author.

female protagonist and the events in a Platonic context. Muriel West (“Ligeia”), in a similar vein, classified the Lady Ligeia as a manifestation of the Ideal, and for Bennett and McEntee Ligeia represented the narrator’s muse.⁸⁴

As a matter of fact, Poe’s story offers so many hints in different directions that any interpretation can be supported by a wealth of material quoted from the text. The biggest part of illustrations corresponds with the supernatural reading of the story. It is particularly obvious in the second illustration of Giorgio TREVISAN (1970), which shows Ligeia as a spectral figure poisoning Rowena’s wine goblet (fig. 48). The pictures of Daniel-Charles Fouqueray (1951), Fernand van Hamme (1958) and Josef Hegenbarth (c. 1960) are just three more examples of similar graphic contributions to the story, in which Ligeia is also presented as a ghost-like appearance. Quite different, Gus BOFA’s only picture for “Ligeia” is one of the few illustrations which foreground the male protagonist (fig. 49). BOFA’s picture shows the appalled narrator on a sofa, but it does not depict the source of his horror. There is not the slightest hint, whether he witnesses the resurrection of Ligeia, whether he is deceived by a phantasmagoria or whether his behaviour is the result of a drug fantasy. Not even the background gives any clue, whether the scene is set in the extravagantly decorated turret chamber or in an ordinary living room. W. A. DWIGGINS’ illustration is more specific about the action and interior (fig. 50), but just like BOFA’s picture it creates a pictorial blank where the text delivers exact descriptions. DWIGGINS’ depicts the narrator at the bedside of Rowena, but the illustration does not tell whether he is startled by the faint motions of the lifeless woman. He might as well be just about to murder his wife, as the articles by Donald Koster and Terence J. Matheson suggest. A closer look on the illustration challenges the question whether there is someone lying in the bed at all. If the reader/viewer comes to the conclusion that it is empty, the narrator is revealed as untrustworthy, because there is not even a basic similarity between his report and the visual “facts” of the picture. It must be noted, however, that the picture is semanticized by its caption, by which it is linked to a specific text passage. As a result, the illustration loses its ambiguity, and in turn the picture, at least to some degree, testifies the account of the narrator, because it does not contradict his hardly believable relation of the events.

There are several hints that the narrator is unreliable or that his memory operates selectively. While he is unable to remember the circumstances under which he became acquainted with Ligeia (M 2: 310), his memory of her outward appearance is surprisingly distinct. Ligeia’s fragile frame is reminiscent of the emaciated Berenice, with whom she also shares shiny teeth. Her marble hands and “the majesty, the quite ease, of her demeanour” suggest the statuesque beauty of Helen and the Marchesa Aphrodite, and the black curly hair as well as the antique profile of her forehead, nose and chin imply more points of close resemblance between these women. But the narrator emphasizes that Ligeia’s features “were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen” (311f, see 152f, 1: 165f). The main source of her extraordinary magnificence are her eyes, for which there is “no model in the remotely antique” (M 2: 312).



Rushing to the corpse, I saw—distinctly saw—a tremor upon the lips.



In “Morella”, the woman’s eyes terrify the narrator, and their glance accelerate his alienation from her. He says his “soul sickened and became giddy with the giddiness of one who gazes downward into some dreary and unfathomable abyss” (M 2: 231f). Morella’s eyes offer a glimpse into the depth of a mysterious secret, into which the heroine attempts to introduce the narrator. The dread, which the narrator feels, is probably that very terror of the soul which Poe mentions in the preface of his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (M 2 : 473). In Poe’s tales, the motif of the downward look often is connected with a forbidden kind of knowledge, whose acquisition comes along with terror, insanity and annihilation (see 4.2; see Zanger 1978). Hans FRONIUS (1963) is one of the few illustrators who provided an effigy of Morella (fig. 21). In his drawing, Morella’s eyes are not only intensively staring, they also make the impression of dark swirls. FRONIUS’ illustration visualizes the irresistible but perilous fascination of Morella, who is attractive and repulsive at the same time.

Although Ligeia’s eyes are as unfathomable as Morella’s, the narrator does not feel any dismay when he meets their glance. The analogy of Ligeia’s eyes with the well of Democritus metaphorizes her profound erudition, but unlike Morella’s wisdom it does not appall her husband. The narrator’s initial fascination with Morella’s reading material turns into repugnance, and finally he shuns the wisdom and the presence of his wife. The narrator of “Ligeia”, however, does not lose his fascination for the knowledge into which his wife introduces him:

Fig. 50 “Ligeia”:
W. A. Dwiggin (1930).
*Courtesy of the John Hay Library,
Brown University, Providence, RI.*

Fig. 51 “Morella”:
Hans Fronius (1963).
Collection of the author.

With how vast a triumph – with how vivid a delight – with how much of all that is ethereal in hope – did I feel, as she bent over me in studies but little sought – but less known – that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden! (M2: 316, italics original)

This passage, as well as many other similar ones in Poe's works (see below), can be better understood in relation to one of the key phrases of German Romanticism, uttered by Novalis, whom Poe quoted various times. Novalis wrote: "Nach innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg. In uns, oder nirgends ist die Ewigkeit mit ihren Welten."⁸⁵ Analogous to this phrase, the downward movement in Poe's tales, on a "long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path", can be interpreted as a movement inward, an inspective journey towards the mysteries of the soul. Characteristically, the narrator *feels* the vista, because what he sees, or what Ligeia makes him see, touches his soul. It is this secret inward pathway on which many of Poe's protagonists meander to reach the final goal, the discovery of ideal beauty. But roaming in the dark recesses of the soul is dangerous, and thus Poe's narrators often end in madness.

The unfathomable eyes of Morella and Ligeia present an entrance into the inner pathway. The homophony of "eye" and "I" suggests that their eyes function like mirrors in which the narrators become aware of themselves, so that the inward journey towards the soul can be understood as the exploration of the self. But the symbolism of Ligeia's eyes is, at least, twofold, in that it also reveals the basic Platonism of the story. The analogy of Ligeia's eyes with two heavenly stars is reminiscent of Poe's aesthetic concept of heavenly beauty as it is part of his early poetry. The contemplation of the firmament is one means to stimulate a faint recollection of a happier life that the soul has once enjoyed, because the stars are the homeland of the souls. In "Ligeia", the analogy between the heroines's eyes and heavenly stars emphasize the woman's transcendental character. Looking into Ligeia's eyes means looking downward and upward at the same time. Staring downward means, just like in "Morella", to scrutinize the mysteries of the soul, to look upward, towards the stars, means to bring the soul into visual contact with its origin. Although the two ways go into different directions, both finally lead towards the same goal, and that is to get hold of the ideal. It must be noted that the narrator feels himself "*upon the very verge of remembrance*" (314, italics original), when he looks into Ligeia's eyes. For a human being, the vague remembrance of the ideas resembles the perception of "shadows of shadows", as Platon put it in his *Republic*. The indefinitiveness and elusiveness of this memory is responsible for the continual want to experience more and less ineffable portions of eternal beauty and rapture.⁸⁶

But the ideal remains elusive and unimaginable. To explain for Ligeia's exceptional outward physiognomy, the narrator refers to the already mentioned statement by Bacon: "There is no exquisite beauty [...] without some strangeness in the proportion" (M 2: 311). The strangeness of Ligeia has different sources. The narrator states, that he considers the eyes to be incongruous with the classical ideal, because there is no model for them in the ancient statues with which the other features of Ligeia's physiognomy bear so much resemblance. It is, however, dif-



difficult to accept that the mere addition of eyes is responsible for a distortion of the classical model. The strangeness is not due to the combination of some physiological features, which the narrator classifies as distinguishing marks of the highest manifestation of earthly beauty. The exquisite strangeness of Ligeia's beauty derives from the combination of the imaginable with the unimaginable. It must be noted, that the classical ideal which underlies Ligeia's description is eclectic, in that it fuses various ancient models. The blending of classical features of different origin with an element which defies specification results in the creation of something "new". Throughout his whole career, Poe regarded the capacity to produce unexpected, novel and original combinations as a central pre-condition for an author's imagination (see the previous chapter). The eloquence with which the narrator tries to convey an impression of Ligeia's eyes, does not result in a distinct image, but enhances the inexplicability of their peculiar nature. All efforts to come to terms with the expression of Ligeia's eyes, either by means of sober examination or mythological allusions, result in phenomenal multifariousness. The affair is further complicated, since Ligeia is the synthesis of all beautiful women which appear in Poe's earlier poetry and prose. Ligeia combines the spiritual beauty of Helen with the physical, yet elusive loveliness of the healthy Berenice and the mental power of Morella. However, none of these female figures is presented in a state of determinacy, so that the image of Ligeia not only fuses the few distinct peculiarities of her predecessors, but also their indefinite qualities. The elusiveness of Ligeia's beauty creates an effect of indefiniteness. Poe used this effect of pictorial

Fig. 52 "Ligeia":
Paul Durand (1964).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 53 "Ligeia":
Harry Clarke (1923).
Collection of the author.



indefinitiveness to foreground Ligeia's transcendental character. She can be interpreted as a mediator between this world and an ethereal realm, where the soul once lived in a state of happiness. Because this sphere is only vaguely imaginable, so is Ligeia as its representative.

Some artists have tried to capture the ethereal beauty of Ligeia. Most portraits of Ligeia reveal that the lady's exotic beauty has been adapted to the female ideal of the illustrators' times. Paul DURAND's portrait (1964; fig. 52) shows Ligeia as a young woman that might as well have been the model for a contemporary fashion advertisement. Irving DOCKTOR's Ligeia (1961) seems to rest on the female characters in Roger Corman's early Poe movies. Two of the more ambitious efforts to visually transform Ligeia's exotic beauty are a color illustration by Harry CLARKE (1923; fig. 53) and an aquatint etching by William SHARP (1941; fig. 54). Both artists depicted the large and dark and tranquil eyes of the heroine, and thus they managed to convey at least a faint visual impression of what the narrator circumscribes so eloquently. In CLARKE's color illustration Ligeia is a very slender and stylish beauty of an oriental type, bedecked with jewels and magnificently dressed in an extravagant, semi-transparent evening gown. In contrast to CLARKE's picture full of exuberant fantasy, SHARP's portrait of Ligeia is very reduced. Her physiognomy seems to be modeled on a Hispanic type of woman, and she makes a very decent and graceful impression. The symmetrical composition of SHARP's

Fig. 54 "Ligeia":
William Sharp (1941).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 55 "Ligeia":
Fritz Eichenberg (1944).
Collection of the author.

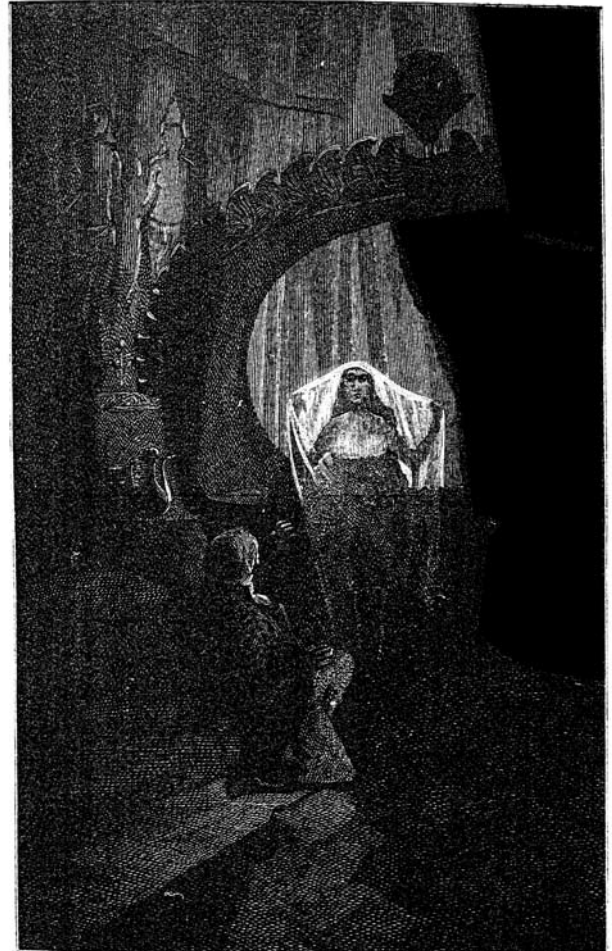
picture and the artist's renunciation on any striking pictorial details emphasizes the eyes of Ligeia, which intensely and calmly stare at the picture's onlooker. While CLARKE's picture stresses the story's undertones of debauchery and eroticism, which have been pointed out by several critics (Basler, *Sex* 177–200, "Interpretation" 367; Porte 69–76), SHARP's illustration is suggestive of the hypnotic influence which Ligeia wields over the narrator. Fritz EICHENBERG (1944) tried to visualize Ligeia's beauty by means of a careful transformation of the text's description, with due attention to her large eyes and the disproportionate elements of her physiognomy (fig. 55). The result is a caricature rather than a serious portrait. Just like the portraits of Berenice, those of Ligeia must necessarily fail to render a convincing impression of exquisite beauty, since no single picture can convey the many facets of the narrator's lengthy description. Although the text delivers many details, the composition of the whole must be done by the reader. The text only delivers single aspects, which are not only unconnected but also incompatible, and thus the synthesis is impossible.

Poe's portrait of Ligeia is styled according to those principles that he mentioned in his *Marginalia* 220 (P 2: 369). The single elements from which her beauty is assembled had not been used together before. The material is so heterogeneous that it cannot be amalgamated. It is already difficult to imagine a portrait that unites Greek, Roman and Hebrew features, but the concrete visualization of eyes that recall an animal and gleaming stars simultaneously, is impossible. The beauty of Ligeia is exquisite and unparalleled because of its singularity and unnaturalness. Her physiognomy defies analysis and comprehension, since no corresponding or similar model exists. The unnatural assemblage of such disparate elements, taken from human and animal life, from the vegetable and the inorganic world, results in nothing but the visual grotesque. The unimaginableness of the portrait served Poe as a means to present Ligeia as a supernal being, whose nature lies out of the reach of human understanding. His long description does not clarify, it mystifies. In "Ligeia", the grotesque is a manifestation of the ideal. The compound character of the grotesque emphasizes that the ideal is ambivalent, in that it is not only a source of delight but also of sorrow. This double role of the ideal has been visualized by Dieter Müller who depicted Ligeia back to back with Death.

So, just like CLARKE and SHARP, and not surprisingly, EICHENBERG did not manage to convey a convincing impression of Ligeia's face. But different from the two earlier artists, EICHENBERG's picture challenges an amused reaction of the reader. This response to the illustration is likely to make the reader aware of possible self-satirizing elements in the story. Provokingly, G. R. Thompson argued that the narrator's description of Ligeia could as well be that of a skull (*Fiction* 87). He also wrote:

"Ligeia" [...] can be read simultaneously as a supernaturalistic tale of metempsychosis and as a psychological study of the delusions of a madman, since we perceive everything through the narrator's eyes. In addition, there are ironic reversals and absurdities that suggest that Poe is satirizing the very genre to which the tale belongs. ("Romantic" 29)

Even more than EICHENBERG's wood engraving, the theatricality and sentimentality of turn-of-the-century illustrations may promote the modern reader's aware-



ness to ironical elements in Poe's story. Today, the illustrations for "Ligeia" of, for instance, F. C. TILNEY (fig. 56), Albert Edward STERNER (both 1895) and Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902) all produce an involuntary effect of laughter. For a modern leisurely reader, the trite one-dimensionality of Victorian illustrations for "Ligeia" becomes more transparent than Poe's multi-layered textual strategies. Thus, illustrations which seem to be inappropriate or ridiculous at first sight, can direct the reader's awareness of surreptitious elements, unless the picture is discarded as utterly meaningless.

The resurrection of Ligeia is the story's most frequently illustrated passage. The first illustration for the story, produced by Hermann WÖGEL for the famous Quantin-edition (1884), shows the narrator before a figure stiffly sitting on the bedside. WÖGEL is one of the very few illustrators who depicted the revivor enveloped in bandages. The text states twice that the woman's body is wrapped in cerements, just as if she were mummified, but this fact was ignored by most artists. It seems as if the occurrence of the adjective "enshrouded", with which the narrator refers to the habiliments of the lifeless woman, has led many illustrators to depict the rising figure in some sort of winding-sheet. Beyond its literal meaning, "shroud" (and its derivative "enshrouded") belong to the already mentioned cluster of words, which signify the occurrence of the supernatural in Poe's works. Poe's frequent use of "enshrouded" are wordplays with verbatim and figurative meanings.

Fig. 56 "Ligeia":

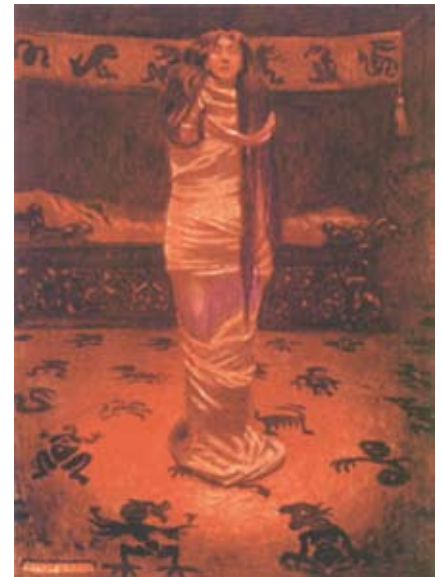
T. C. Tilney (1895).

Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Bochum.

Fig. 57 "Ligeia":

Martin van Maële (1912).

Courtesy of the New York Public Library.



Martin VAN MAËLE's obscure wood-engraving (1912; fig. 57) shows Ligeia lifting a thin veil from her face below an arch, which is suggestive of the conqueror worm because it looks like a combed dragon's tail. It seems as if Ligeia has just emerged from the draperies shown in the background, and thus the picture is suggestive of the symbolism of the veil as a borderline between life and death. VAN MAËLE's picture stimulates various readings. Ligeia's presentation as an astral figure importing light into the overall shadows of the chamber visualizes her as a transcendental being. She has defeated the conqueror worm and returns to the world of the living through the veil and the arched portal of death. The two faintly discernible figures on the draperies, probably a couple holding each other by the hand, support the interpretation that the two protagonists are happily reunited. On the other hand, the picture may also present Ligeia as a frightening harbinger from a world beyond bringing madness and death.

A ghost-like figure also appears in Carlo FARNETI's last aquatint etching for "Ligeia" (1927; fig. 58). Amidst a great hall, presumably the turret chamber, a veiled, semi-transparent apparition moves either away from or towards a illuminate circular spot. Due to the dim lighting conditions it is not discernible, whether the anthropomorphous silhouette represents a sarcophagus or shadowy phantom, and the shape can even be mistaken for a door. The nearest wall, however, lies a few steps behind this figure and it shows that kind of ghastly forms which, as the narrator states, the eye beholds on the arabesque wall hangings when these are viewed from a certain distance. FARNETI's picture neither faithfully reproduces the descriptive details of the text nor unambiguously represents the protagonists, but its symbolism is suggestive of Poe's poetics of space. While the picture's symmetrical composition, which is stressed by a Gothic window dividing the vault into two equal halves, visualizes the dual aspect of the room, other pictorial elements can be either interpreted as allegories of journey or as symbols of transcendence: the white linear spot at the foot of the gateway-like silhouette, looks like a threshold; the rays streaming from the spectre's garment, resemble stairs as do the dais below the lamp in the left background. FARNETI's illustration transforms the tur-

Fig. 58 "Ligeia":
Carlo Farneti (1927).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 59 "Ligeia":
Wilfried Satty (1944).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 60 "Ligeia":
Byam Shaw (1909).
Collection of Jeffrey Savoye.

ret chamber into a symbolic space – the no-man’s-land on the borderline between the worlds of light and shadow, sanity and madness, life and death.

The many interpretations brought forth to explain for the supernatural (or what seems to be supernatural) in Poe’s works do not exclude each other, although many of the previously mentioned critics insist on the exclusive validity of their interpretation. The multi-layered structure of Poe’s works cannot be denied. However, the different levels of meaning do not run in parallel lines, but they intersect. On the one hand, there is proper evidence in the text, that there is nothing supernatural in “Ligeia”, since the whole narration is very likely to be engendered by an opium dream. But on the other hand, one may argue, that the drug, or the mental state caused by it, does not restrict but expand the narrator’s awareness for something which otherwise would have remained unrevealed.

Joseph Garrison interpreted “Ligeia” as the narrator’s epistemological quest, which ironically does not lead towards wisdom, but to insanity. In the Platonic context, Ligeia can be interpreted as a representative of the world of Ideas,⁸⁷ and thus the narrator’s marriage is a bond with the supernal realm of beauty. Ligeia introduces her husband into a transcendental knowledge, which remains as indefinite as the exact nature of the ethereal realm of happiness. But Ligeia’s death breaks the tie between the narrator and the ideal world, and by this loss he is “crushed into the very dust of sorrow” (320). While the narrator’s education by Ligeia is the first part of his epistemological quest, the second part is a search for the love and beauty lost. It leads him from a desolate world into “one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England” (*ibid.*), where he further withdraws into the seclusion of a gloomy abbey, and in this isolated building, the narrator and his new wife Rowena inhabit the most secluded portion, the turret chamber.

Just like the library of Egæus, the fantastically decorated turret chamber is a “palace of imagination” (s.a.). Egæus’ library and the tower in “Ligeia” are no-man’s-lands between life and death. While in both places something becomes alive – Egæus, Ligeia –, they also mean the end of life for Egæus’ mother and Rowena, and madness for the two narrators. Moreover, the library and turret chamber are places of refuge from a world with which both narrators cannot cope with. In “Ligeia” the tower is a self-chosen private exile, where the narrator can indulge in “a display of more than regal magnificence within” (*ibid.*). The eclectic decoration is reminiscent of the apartment of the Byronic hero in “The Assignation”, and both places resemble each other in that they signify the intersection between two worlds. Though the narrator states that “there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display”, the interior is dominated by furnishings of Oriental origin. The four Egyptian sarcophagi from Luxor allude to the omnipresence of death, and from the Saracenic censor emerges a writhing haze, whose serpent-like form recalls the conqueror worm of the poem of the same name, which Poe inserted into later versions of the tale. The vapor caused by the thuribulum creates a misty atmosphere, which uses to accompany the appearance of supernal beings in Poe’s works, and the gigantic, moving draperies which hang from the vaulted ceiling are another signpost for the borderline between two worlds where beauty and death are one.⁸⁸ But the smoke from the censor also stresses the hallucinatory character of the

narrator's report, recalling the effect of the vapour mentioned in "The Assignment": "The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers" (M 2: 157).

Poe's description also suggest that the turret chamber is the upper and inner part of a human head, an idea that links "Ligeia" with "The Fall of the House of Usher" (see chapter 5). Moreover, corresponding with the portrait of Ligeia, the interior of the tower room is a self-description of the narrator's mental world. On the one hand, the elaborate grotesque figures carved into the ceiling are reminiscent of the strange tracks which his mind follows, on the other hand they represent the fears that haunt him. Mental disorder, or at least irrational thinking, is also visualized by the eclectic design that has no "keeping". This mind is busied with uncanny thoughts, as the many tokens of death testify. Like the library (and the mind) of Egæus, the room is a reclusive place. The only contact to the outside is provided by a huge window pane, but it is tinted and thus only little light from the outside passes through the glass. The turret chamber is, at the same time, the spatial and mental point of view from which the final part of the story is related.

Despite Poe's detailed and suggestive description of this interior, the depiction of the turret chamber has been marginalized in the illustrations for "Ligeia". Wilfried SATTY (1978; fig. 59) is the only artist who devoted an illustration to the depiction of this room. SATTY's picture, like all of his eighty Poe illustrations, is a montage of fragments from diverse prints of mostly 19th century origin. For his composition for "Ligeia", SATTY scattered several isolated pictorial elements on a modified interior consisting of architectural elements from different epochs and cultures. Rowena is shown at the foot of the picture, right below the Saracenic censer, from whose vapor emerges a dragon. The picture is full of other elements which are reminiscent of the furnishings in the turret chamber: an oriental bed, a massive candlestick, an Egyptian sarcophagus, the gigantic draperies hanging from the lofty ceiling, the great window and diverse ornamental designs of Eastern origin. SATTY's discretionary assemblage reflects Poe's eclecticism, and the many unconnected segments and their incompatibility in terms of size and perspective create a surrealistic effect. By this means a general impression of the interior's kaleidoscopic arrangement as well as a sense of the narrator's mental disorder is conveyed. But SATTY's assemblage bears only a superficial resemblance with Poe's description, since none of the depicted elements more than arbitrarily reflects the imagery of the story. Although, for instance, SATTY depicts the gigantic draperies, the crucial element of the arabesque pattern is neglected. Though the many inconsistencies between the picture and the text are likely to challenge the hermeneutic activity of the reader/viewer, the illustration itself falls short of offering any interpretative insight.

A few other illustrations show parts of the chamber in the background, in front of which the resurrection scene is foregrounded (e.g. Emilien DUFOUR, 1927). Most pictures for this passage do only very marginally pay attention to the location, and even more illustrations do not visualize the interior at all (e.g. Georges VILLA, 1911; Harry CLARKE, 1919; Arthur RACKHAM, 1935; Ronald PORCELLI, 1989). The similar illustrations of F. C. TILNEY (1895; fig. 56)⁸⁹ and Byam SHAW (1909; fig.

60) are notable, because both of them show the bizarre figures on the carpet described by the narrator. In SHAW's illustration these forms are discernible as stylized animals or fantastic critters, all of which are modelled on Meso-American pictography rather than on oriental hieroglyphs. The figures are circularly arranged around Ligeia, who thus seems to come forth from their midst as if arising from a swirl. This visual effect is heightened by the tightly wound folds of her garment. The picture even suggests that the woman's appearance is the last stage of a metamorphosis, as a claw and an arrow-shaped tail at the foot of her shroud indicate. The overall impression of magic is emphasized by the unnatural red light in which the scene is bathed. The reddish colorization does not correspond with Poe's story "Ligeia", but it is reminiscent of the "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death", where crimson light accompanies the final catastrophe. The arabesque figures are not as distinct in TILNEY's illustration, where variable aspects of the forms are depicted. While they are irregularly scattered over the carpet, as amorphous splodges or as winged somethings, the folds on the bed's draperies show single dragon-like figures as well as some other unintelligible designs. TILNEY's paid more tribute to the overall orientalism of the chamber, as a sarcophagus and the ornaments of the bed show, but the symbolism of the room remains unreflected just like in SHAW's illustration.

Apart from VAN MAËLE and FARNETI, no illustrator did manage to transform the turret chamber into a symbolic space, and no picture renders a convincing impression of Ligeia's face. Seemingly, the depiction of the interior is as problematic as Ligeia's portrait. Although the disparate elements of the room can be more easily combined than the incompatible details of Ligeia's face, illustrators must necessarily fail to visualize the continually changing impression created by the wall hangings. Like the eyes of Ligeia, the narrator eloquently describes the curtains at the end of his account of the chamber:

But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief phantasy of all. [...] It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures about a foot in diameter [...]. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. [T]hey were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and step by step, as the visiter moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms [...]. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies [...].
(M 2: 322)

The movement of the draperies, and the metamorphosis of the forms on it, visualizes the continually changing aspects of meaning of the story. Just like the mentioned visitor alters his position inside the turret chamber, the reader has to move through Poe's story, continually looking for a reliable perspective from which the related events can be viewed coherently. A shift in perspective affords new insights, but former introspections are likely to lose their validity then. No other Poe text forces the reader to change his position so often and so quickly. Wolfgang Iser metaphorized the continual demand for the refinement of the reader's perspective on a text as a wandering viewpoint. In "Ligeia" there is no rest. When entering the chamber of the Byronic hero in "The Assig nation", the narrator

remarks: "The eye wandered from object to object, and rested upon none" (M 2: 157). The story offers so many diverging aspects that the reader is likely to lose control over what he reads. Each approach to the story supports and contradicts alternative readings at the same time, so that no definite and exclusive meaning can be established. The reader's involvement with the text becomes even more intricate, when he/she is aware that the feeling of disorientation is analogous to the mental confusion of the narrator. David Ketterer remarked that the interior of the turret chamber symbolizes "grotesque deception and Arabesque reality" (*Rationale* 39) where everything is in a state of fluidity (*passim*), but he forgot to remark that these qualities also belong to Poe's texts as well. The fluid and ever-changing character of the curtains visualizes the many currents of meaning in Poe's story. It is notable, that this peculiar quality of the story is visually encoded inside the text, a point that once more stresses the versatile pictorial quality of Poe's works.

Despite its strong visual character "Ligeia" belongs to those stories which are particularly difficult to illustrate. Illustrations are capable of extrapolating subtle aspects of meaning which might have gone unnoticed otherwise. Thus, they can be a visual help to unfold the richness of meanings in Poe's texts. However, the illustrations for "Berenice", "Morella" and "Ligeia" are usually reductive and simplifactory. In sight of the impossibility to visualize the dense polysemy of these stories, illustrators often drew back on the narrative surface. In sight of the great impact of illustrations on the reader's hermeneutic activity, it must be concluded that conventional illustrations impoverish texts like "Ligeia", because they use to channelize the currents of meaning into one direction only.

4.2 Tales of mystery

The texts discussed in this section belong to Poe's most popular works ever. They have shaped the image of the author lastingly, as his popular reputation as the "Father of Horror", "King of Horror/Terror", "Dark Prince" or "Master of the Macabre" shows.⁹⁰ Since the beginning of the 20th century Poe's humorous stories (see 4.3) have been standing in the shadows of the horror tales, although these latter are less in number. Although Poe's comical tales were much better known during his lifetime than they are today, the author already had to defend himself against the reproach of "Germanism" when he wrote the preface for his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (M 2: 471ff). In the past three decades, some critics questioned whether the so-called horror stories really deserved the label. Richard, Hammond and Thompson were convinced to have detected subtle ironies and intentional absurdities in the tales in question, so that these stories would not have to be read as effective horror stories but as parodies and satires of conventional "Gothic" material and authors. While Richard and Hammond limited their approach to the *Tales of the Folio Club*, Poe's projected collection of allegedly satirical stories, Thompson also applied his theory of "Romantic Irony" to Poe's works of the late 1830s. The provocative theses of these critics stimulated new discussions about classic Poe texts which had been treated under completely different aspects before. The reversal of the general perspective on canonized Poe texts, from serious to humorous, was supported by arguments that could not be ignored or discarded by traditional critics like A. H. Quinn, Hirsch or Mabbott, who were eager to defend their hitherto unchallenged views. This debate influenced Poe studies for almost a decade without being resolved. It seems, as if the idea of exclusively valid and irrefutable interpretations is still lingering inside some critics' minds. In the end, the many arguments brought forth on both sides until now has demonstrated that it is impossible to pin down Poe's texts to specific meanings. The ambivalent character of Poe's texts, and, as a result, the latitude of interpretation, is due to the author's use of indefinitiveness, which blurs distinct conceptions and fuses seemingly irreconcilable ideas. The interpretation of Poe's stories creates more mysteries than it solves. Thus the title of this section does not only allude to the contents of the stories in question but also to their enigmatic meanings. However, it would be wrong to capitulate in sight of Poe's indefinitiveness. There is no need to label Poe's texts as uninterpretable only because absolute meanings cannot be established (cf. Symons 231ff). Quite the contrary, Poe's stories are particularly proper for interpretation as long as one is ready to accept that the process of interpretation is more important than its outcome.

The following analyses will try to do justice to the multi-layered character of Poe's texts. Special emphasis will be put on the gradual development of his aesthetics of indefinitiveness. Like the stories discussed in the previous section, the tales of mystery evince Poe's efforts to adapt his early aesthetic concept and the imagery of his poetry to his prose works. With respect to Poe's notion of upper- and undercurrents of meaning, the tales of mystery are regarded as serious productions, as pastiches of conventionalized literary patterns and as reflections

of and contributions to Poe's developing aesthetics. In this context, the analysis of illustrations is a good means to see how graphic artists responded to the stories' ambiguities and how they resolved them. The visual concretization of Poe's polysemic texts directs the reader's attention into specific directions. Illustrations can obstruct the view of undercurrents of meanings, such as a aesthetical discourse or ironic undertones, but they can also open new perspectives.

4.2.1 Metzengerstein

"Metzengerstein" has been and still is one of Poe's most popular stories. This fact is reflected in its numerous reprints in selections of Poe's works, its regular inclusion in anthologies, the many translations, and, not least, in the substantial number of illustrations. Most of the pictures originated from Western Europe, especially France, Spain, Italy and Germany. On the contrary, illustrations in English language editions are rare, although the text has been reprinted in both the United States and Great Britain frequently. Despite the story's popularity, critical interest in "Metzengerstein" has been surprisingly sporadic. Besides a few source studies (King; Levine; Melchiori) half a dozen articles were written after 1970, when G. R. Thompson re-evaluated the story as a burlesque. Three decades earlier, A. H. Quinn had interpreted the story as "an allegory and the lesson that evil may become so powerful that the human soul who has given way to it has lost the power to resist" (193), a line of interpretation which had been followed by Bittner (85f), Davidson (138ff) and Mabbott (2: 15). While, at the beginning of the 1970s, Hammond ("Reconstruction" 29) adopted Thompson's provoking interpretation of the tale as mock gothic, B. J. Fisher ("Hoax") re-emphasized the grave aspects of "Metzengerstein", as did Hirsch and Bousseyroux in their psychological interpretations. Lubbers (23), Link (*Dichter* 208f) and Wuletich-Brinberg (127) detected a serious treatment of the theme of destruction caused by an uncontrollable force and a powerful imagination. Just like "MS. Found in a Bottle" (see below) "Metzengerstein" is a more problematic tale than one might suppose at first reading. The many convincing arguments brought forth by Fisher and Kindermann on the one and Thompson on the other side, demonstrate that Poe's ambivalent text can be read as serious Gothic tale and as a pastiche.

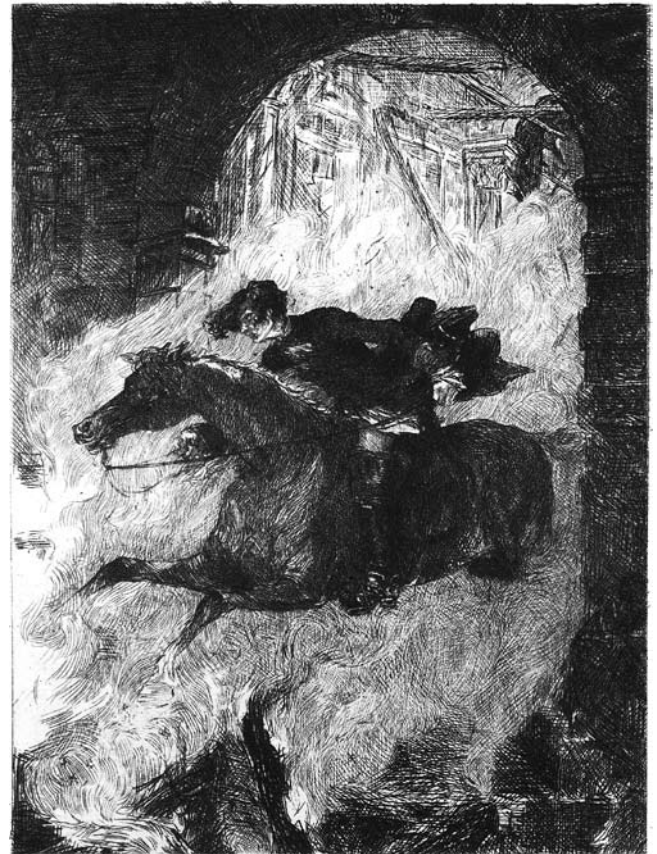
Thompson argued that the third-person narrator of the tale is not only stupid but also prone to superstition (*Fiction* 55f). According to him, the incongruities in the narration, the absurd plot, its melodramaticism and the hyperbolic style are all signs of Poe's subtle satirical intentions. Thompson's argumentation is quite detailed and he took it for granted that Poe was in absolute control of his means as early as 1831. Thompson even thought that Poe de-emphasized those passages which made the satire all too obvious (65).⁹¹ Although he did not refute Thompson's thesis, Wolf Kindermann considered the approach of the American scholar too narrow. Elucidating the text in biographical, historical, mythological and religious contexts, Kindermann suggested that "Metzengerstein" was neither an immature attempt nor a hastily written exercise in a hackneyed genre (cf. Fisher 488, 492),

but a serious effort, carefully researched and implicative of epistemological and poetic ideas which the author maintained until his death (78).

Suggestive as Thompson's and Kindermann's studies are, one has to consider that Poe was only twenty-two years old when he wrote this text. "Metzengerstein" belonged to his very first efforts in the field of the short story. In Poe's other early writings, in particular those published in the *Baltimore Saturday Courier*, technical flaws and other blunders have been attributed to the author's lack of maturity and expertise. Therefore, it is somewhat contradictory that Thompson, on the one hand, speaks of blatant absurdities and, on the other hand, of the author's subtle irony, which was seemingly so refined that it took more than a century before the first critics discovered it. It is more probable, that the stylistic blunders result from a "flawed" literary technique rather than from Poe's crafty manipulations of the Gothic formula. Nevertheless, Thompson's analysis of "Metzengerstein" is one of the strongest parts of his study, because it stimulated critical studies which transcended biographical approaches (cf. Bachinger; cf. Soule) and the understanding of the text as a treasure house of undeveloped themes which Poe brought to perfection later.

Mabbott remarked that the publication of the story started promisingly with its first printing in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, on January 14, 1832 (2: 15). This cannot be maintained for the publication of the story's first illustration, which never saw the light of print until now. In 1884, A. Quantin, the publisher of the first illustrated edition of Baudelaire's translations, collected the artists' original drawings and proof-prints and bound them for his private enjoyment in a thick volume now held by the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. Apart from the original artwork and rare prints the book contains several designs that do not appear in the printed edition. One of the rejected pictures was created by Hermann WÖGEL for "Metzengerstein" (1884; fig. 61). This illustration shows the Baron in a hallway, turning away from a horse behind him. Just like the story the picture invites divergent interpretations. The Baron's motion can be interpreted as if he were stealing away from the horse. His bent posture, the backward gaze over his shoulder, and his cramped left hand, with which he is groping for the wall in the dimly lit corridor, express anxiety and the tense state of his nerves. The horse's glaring eyes and steaming nostrils emphasize its ghostly appearance. This impression is strengthened further by the white and blue hues which make the animal look like a semi-transparent apparition emerging from the darkness of the hallway. Moreover, the animal's unusual appearance in a human residence, its quiet demeanor and its adjusted position, exactly paralleling the walls of the corridor, emphasize the impression of an unnatural phenomenon. The way in which the two main elements of the picture, the horse and the man, are presented support the interpretation of the text as a conventional Gothic tale. The tapestry on the wall behind the Baron, shows a scene with a mounted warrior, probably the very record of the past murder which is mentioned in the story.

The illustration, however, can also be read in a psychological vein. In this line of interpretation the unnatural apparition of the horse is not explained as a perceptible phantom but as chimera haunting the Baron's mind (see Hirsch



“Subconscious”). The Baron is standing below the aforementioned wall-hanging, and his musing over it might have caused him to imagine the horse appearing behind his back. Thus the horse can also be regarded as the visualization of the demons that haunt the baron’s mind: as the anticipation of the retaliation that awaits him, as a token of his personal and ancestral guilt, and as a symbol of his evil character. The baron’s monomaniacal obsession with the horse is conveyed by the picture’s composition graphically. The onlooker’s gaze is lead from the lower right over the man towards the horse and back to him. The to and fro between horse and man is further stressed by the fact that many lines leading into the spatial depth towards the vanishing point (e.g. the baseboard, the decorative border on the wall, the lower fringe of the tapestry) are running through the animals head, which thus becomes the visual center of the illustration. The posture and countenance of the baron can, however, also be understood quite differently. His clenched right fist demonstrates resolution and strength. The gaze over the shoulder can not only be interpreted as expressing despair but also his evil cunning. One way or another, the picture makes clear that the baron will have to yield to the horse: while the perspective makes the animal appear as if standing on a higher level with its head above the onlooker’s horizon, the baron’s crouched figure is completely below it, so that the viewer even looks a bit down on him. But besides these readings of the picture as a serious depiction of a supernatural phenomenon, the baron’s psychological state or his shrewd wickedness, the man’s posture may strike the onlooker as funny because of its exaggerated theatricality, and the horse in the hallway might arouse the amusement of a reader just as well.

Fig. 61 “Metzengerstein”: reproduction of Wögel’s original drawing (1884).

Courtesy of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Poe Collection, Baltimore, MD.

Fig. 62 “Metzengerstein”: the finally published illustration by Wögel (1884).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.



WÖGEL's illustration consents to divergent interpretations, and thus it resembles Poe's text in terms of ambiguity and polysemy. The picture also presents a typical Poe theme. Poe's narrators are often on a fatal journey. They are driven by a perverse power, and the passage through a literal or figurative darkness mostly ends in despair. The same pattern underlies "Metzengerstein", and it is partly visualized in WÖGEL's illustration. The young baron explores the vicious side of his character, and despite his tender age he commits some unspecified deeds which "out-Heroded Herod" (M 2: 21). The mysterious horse which suddenly appears in the baron's courtyard not only represents the instrument of Metzengerstein's downfall, but also the uncontrollable force which drives him ahead until it is too late for him to turn around. In WÖGEL's illustration, the baron has just reached the end of the obscure corridor where he is confronted by the ghostly horse. Though he attempts to abscond from his fate, it is evident that he will not manage to escape.

This hitherto unpublished illustration had to give way to another picture by the same artist. The publisher probably considered WÖGEL's approach to "Metzengerstein" as not sufficiently literal. Textual faithfulness was still a guideline for illustrators in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The other pictures in the Quantin edition are proof that the publisher favored very literal transformations of Poe's texts. WÖGEL's picture does only loosely correspond to a specific passage of the text, and in terms of the Baron's age it markedly contradicts the story, and thus it was replaced by a more conventional graphic approach. The plate finally published shows the baron riding the horse into the burning ruins of his castle (fig. 62), a picture devoid of the suggestive ambiguity which distinguishes the

Fig. 63 "Metzengerstein": Frederick S. Coburn (1902).
Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

Fig. 64 "Metzengerstein": Irving Docktor (1960).
Collection of the author.



unprinted design as well as Poe's tale. In the second picture Metzengerstein gives the impression as if he were in control of the horse. It has been noted before that the first illustrations for Poe's texts often set the standard for later artists, and this circumstance has had a particular impact on the graphic tradition of "Metzengerstein", too. Accordingly, generations of artists took up WÖGEL's model and depicted the young baron as a sportsmanlike rider on a racy stallion (e.g. Louis LEGRAND, W. A. DWIGGINS, Vladimir KIRIN, Alexis THOMAS). On the contrary, pictures which directly respond to the forelast paragraph of the story, that is to the panic of Metzengerstein, are very rare. In 1902, Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902) produced a cliché-ridden picture showing Death on a horse galloping next to a frenzied Metzengerstein (fig. 63). The baron's hopeless exposure to the uncontrollable force of the animal has usually been visualized by the contrast between the massive stallion and a puny man, but no illustration has been found in which the proportions are so extreme to create a ridiculous effect. Irving DOCKTOR (1960; fig. 64) and Giovanni GIANNINI (1978) chose to convey a sense of the baron's helplessness by depicting him naked. These two pictures are symptomatic for the fact that even in the more sensitive illustrations of the story's finale symbolism had to yield to the stylish presentation of a dynamic action scene.

Arthur RACKHAM's illustration (1935) is notable because it belongs to the few pictures which show another figure beside the baron and the horse (fig. 65). The narrator briefly refers to a mis-shapen boy, the only person being on social terms with Metzengerstein (M 2: 28), and this character is probably depicted here. But besides this rare presentation of the menial, the illustration is exceptional in that it suggests the narrative frame in which the story was originally embedded as a

Fig. 65 "Metzengerstein": Arthur Rackham (1935).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 66 "Metzengerstein": [Wilfried] Satty (1976).
Collection of the author.

part of the *Tales of the Folio Club*. The visual center of the picture is occupied by a fiercely looking baron trying hard to keep the rearing horse in check. This part of the picture is obstinately foregrounding the grim elements of the story. The reddish colorization of the scene makes it stand out against the more subdued blue and grey tones that surround the middle ground. Rider and horse are isolated from the rest of the illustration, so that they form a picture within a picture. Likewise, “Metzengerstein” was, according to Poe’s plans, set within the fictional framework of the Folio Club. In the picture, this framing effect is heightened by the wall on the right, which covers the hind-parts of rider and horse, so that it seems as if the two were entering a stage. The two figures of the framework convey a different impression than the two in the middle ground, for both suggest a sense of humor, an effect brought about by the twisted features and the extravagant behaviour of the freak and the amused visage of the supervising gargoyle at the top of the picture. In the illustration, comical and serious elements are not only contrasted, they are also set in relation to each other. The gesture of the freak and his prominent position in the lower left corner, which is where the onlooker’s eye enters the illustration, makes the twisted figure present the baron on the horse, just as Horribile Dictu was to relate the tale to his fellows at the Folio Club. G. R. Thompson points out to the play on words in the name, which can be read as “horrible to tell” and “horribly told” (*Fiction* 56). While “horrible to tell” alludes to the fact that the absurd incidents and the Gothic conventions make it difficult to create a good story from the given material, “horribly told” suggests that the inflated presentation and the story’s internal illogicalities are responsible for an awfully bad narration. According to Thompson, Horribile Dictu is thus not only a name of the story’s narrator, but also a key for the interpretation of the text as a mock Gothic, written in a deliberately and artfully flawed style to ridicule the absurdities and literary techniques of horror fiction.

One of Wilfried SATTY’s seven pictures for “Metzengerstein” is a humorously exaggerated graphic statement about the baron’s tender age (1976; fig. 66). The illustration, captioned “Frederick, Baron Metzengerstein, was, on the other hand, not yet of age”, shows a naked boy of about three years among three heavily armored men. Two of the them are eyeing the boy suspiciously, who is equipped with an over-sized helmet, a sword and a pair of angel’s wings on his back. Thompson would certainly argue that the illustration foregrounds the ridiculous aspects of the story. However, two other of SATTY’s illustrations are of a decidedly sinister nature, so that his series visualizes the comical as well as the conventionally Gothic elements of the text. Moreover, SATTY’s technique meets Poe’s method in terms of eclecticism, since the graphic artist culled the material for his montage pictures from various sources. Sometimes, the results look trashy or kitschy, and, just as in Poe’s works, there are arguments for both presumptions, that is whether these effects are intentional or not.

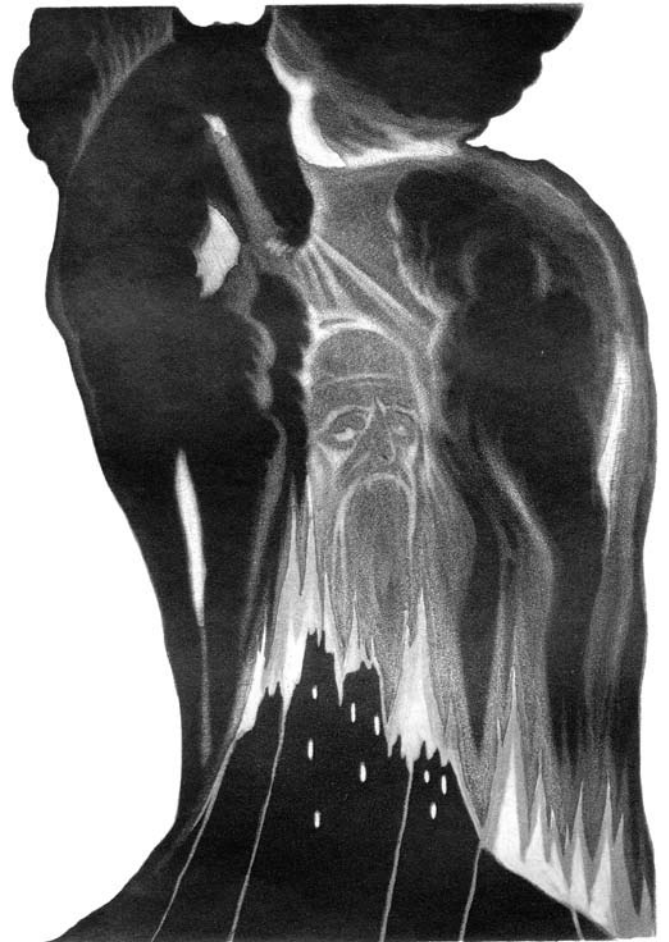
SATTY’s series of seven pictures is outstanding because most artists produced only one picture for “Metzengerstein”. Other exceptions are illustrations by Emilien Dufour, who produced five etchings for a French limited edition in 1927, Carlo FARNETI with three aquatints dating from the same year, and Hans FRONIUS,



who made four drawings for the tale for a German edition published in 1963. More than any other illustrator of “Metzengerstein”, save the comic book artist Alexis Thomas, Dufour concentrates on the depiction of the Baron. Dufour was one of the very few artists who took the protagonist’s adolescence into account. However, his illustrations do not afford any insight into the text. Like so many other illustrations for the story his pictures merely emphasizes the adventurous aspects of the story.

The horse dominates all four of Hans FRONIUS’ pictures (1963), which show its arrival at the Castle Metzengerstein, the confrontation between the steed and the baron, the powerless man vainly trying to tame the energetic animal, and, finally, the triumphant mount in front of a ruined castle. In the visual plot of the four drawings the baron plays only a marginal role, reflected by the fact that he is only depicted in two pictures. The first shows him in a theatrical pose expressing his lewd and haughty character (fig. 67). He is facing a fierce horse, which, on second sight, does not appear to be the depiction of a horse of flesh and blood but a representation on a wall hanging. As a result, Frederick’s melodramatic pose becomes even more ludicrous, and in the following picture the baron’s superciliousness is further ridiculed, in that he is depicted as a helpless, almost child-like figure ineffectually employing the whole weight of his body to move the horse into the wanted direction (fig. 68). In the last picture, he no longer appears at all, prob-

Figg. 67+68 “Metzengerstein”: Hans Fronius(1963).
Collection of the author.



ably because he had already been annihilated by the horse. The superiority of the horse is visualized by its increasing size inside the pictures. In the first drawing, the animal is shown as a tiny figure below the walls of the castle, but in the following three the horse occupies more and more space, until finally the proportions are turned topsy-turvy: in the last illustration a toppling tower becomes discernible below the animal's left flank. But FRONIUS' pictures cannot be qualified as either including or excluding the supernatural, since the varying size of the horse may be explained as a matter of perspective. Likewise, FRONIUS' pictures allow for serious as well as comical readings, so that his illustrations rather maintain than clarify the textual ambiguity.

Apart from the baron on the steed, the colossal figure of the horse, emerging from the smoke of the burning castle, was the second favourite motif of illustrators. As has been pointed out, Poe was fond of ambivalent imagery, not only in his poems, but also in the works of other authors. The cloudy apparition of the horse at the story's finale was one of his first efforts to create the effect of pictorial ambiguity in a prose text. There is a contradiction in the narrator's report in that the colossal figure is "distinct", although it consists of a "cloud of smoke" (M 2: 29). The final image of the story is Poe's pictorial comment on the text's ambiguity. The image can be either accepted as a supernatural phenomenon or as a delusion of the narrator, who merely imagines to see the figure of a horse in the smoke. The pictures for the story's very end differ in that most illustrations display the horse

Fig. 69 "Metzengerstein": William Sharp (1941).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 70 "Metzengerstein": Carlo Farneti (1927).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

as a substantial figure distinctly outlined (e.g. Byam SHAW, William SHARP, 1941; fig. 69), some others show either a cloudy formation distinctly presenting the animal (Alméry LOBEL-RICHE, 1927), or a shadowy, only vaguely discernible shape arising from the smoke (e.g. Carlo FARNETI, 1927; fig. 70). The first group of illustrations emphasize the 18th century Gothic heritage of “Metzengerstein”, especially its similarity with Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, in which, according to a mysterious prophecy, the continually growing statue of a knight turns a castle into a ruin. More than any other illustration of the final scene, FARNETI’s picture invites several interpretations. On the one hand, it can be read as depicting the supernatural appearance of the horse as reported by the narrator. On the other hand, the apparition of the horse is so ambiguous that the picture supports Thompson’s hypothesis: due to his superstition the narrator merely interprets coincidental formations of smoke as a colossal horse. Much more distinct than the horse is the huge appearance of an old man’s face above the burning walls, but the identity of the person is unclear. The face can either be a likeness of the young baron’s forefather who committed the first evil deed of the Metzengersteins, or his victim, the saracene. If the reader decides for the latter version, the ultimate downfall of the Metzengersteins becomes a matter of ancestral guilt rather than the direct result of the young baron’s misbehaviour. But if the reader interprets the face as a representation of a member of the Metzengerstein family, or as the protagonist himself, the collapsing house becomes a symbol of mental breakdown. It is insanity, not vice or some primeval deed that finally causes the decline of Metzengerstein. The madness itself is symbolized by the gigantic horse towering above the head and the building: an omnipresent and overwhelming power that beleaguers the building and the mind of Metzengerstein until both are destroyed. Some critics consider “Metzengerstein” a forerunner of “The Fall of the House of Usher”, and this presumption is visually supported by FARNETI’s picture.

“Metzengerstein” is subtitled “A Tale in Imitation of the German”, but the story owes as much to the English Gothic as to its continental counterpart. On the one hand, the text provides clues to explain any supernatural event as a result of the narrator’s superstition (or the baron’s imagination), on the other hand these rationalizations are not wholly convincing. Most illustrations for “Metzengerstein”, however, reduce the polysemy of the text in that they almost exclusively present the Gothic formula.

4.2.2 MS. Found in a Bottle

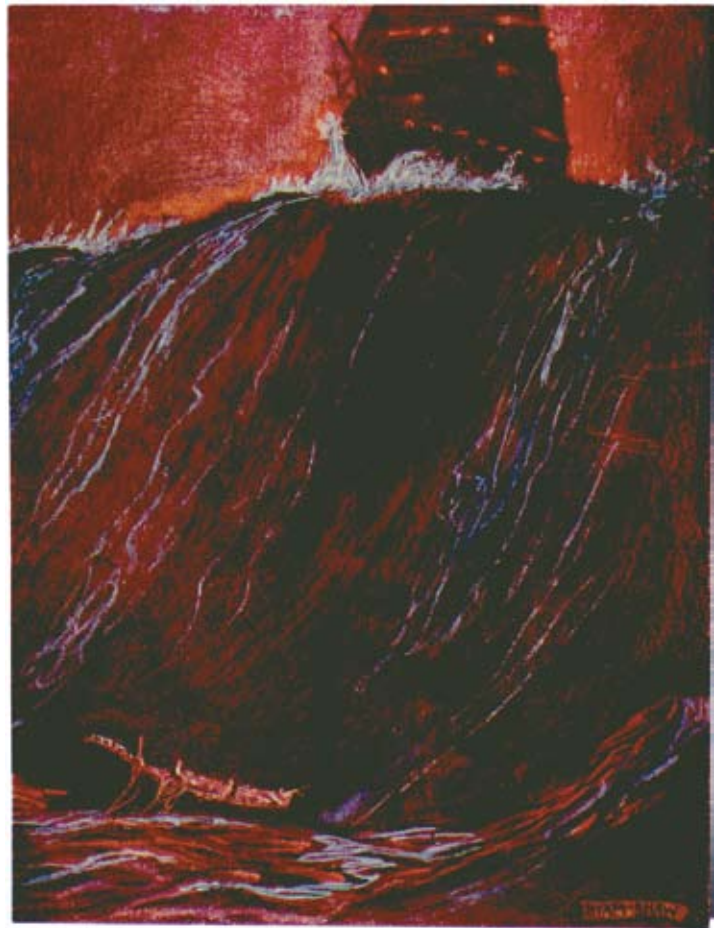
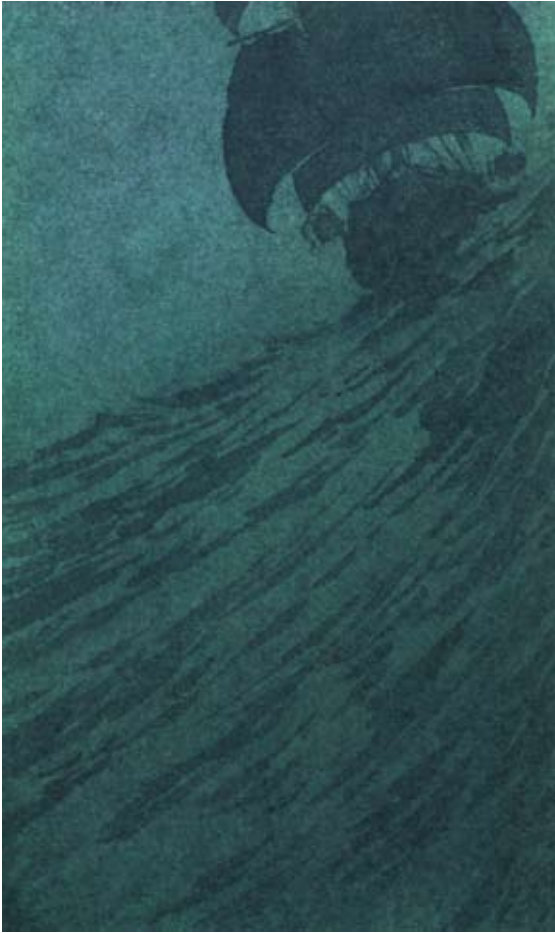
Like “Metzengerstein”, this story has been a Poe classic ever since its first publication in 1833. In that year it won Poe the first price in the contest of the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* and the premium of \$50. Thus, the tale became one of the author’s greatest financial successes during his lifetime. The committee of the *Visitor* founded its decision to reward the story on the argument that it was “distinguished by a wild, vigorous and poetical imagination, a rich style, a fertile invention and curious learning” and “highly graphic in its style of Composition” (qtd.

in Thomas and Jackson 133). The story contains motifs which were to reappear in his later works and many of which are “highly graphic”: the journey through the dark, the fantastic exoticism of the setting, the endlessness of space, the magnificent seascape, the dangerous sea-passage, the unfathomable abyss, mysterious lights and other visually striking descriptions. Despite the story’s popularity, the story elicited only little critical response before World War II. While Stovall thought Poe to have been influenced by Coleridge’s “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner”, Guilds pointed to William Gilmore Simms’ “A Picture of the Sea” (1828), a story inspired by the legend of the Flying Dutchman. Pollin unearthed two more sources, namely Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Études de la Nature* (1784) and Sir David Brewster’s *Letters on Natural Magic* (1831) (“Material”, “Brewster”). Another source for Poe was Captain John Cleves Symmes who promulgated that openings at the poles could be used to enter into habitable regions inside the allegedly hollow earth (cf. M 2: 131f). Claude Richard maintained Poe ridiculed one Captain Adam Seaborn’s pseudo-authentic text “Symzonia” (1820), a work based on Symmes’ ideas and probably written by himself, and a similar piece by Jane Porter, *Sir Edward Seaward’s Narrative* (1831) (“Folio” 23; cf. Bittner 90). However, since both these texts were already written tongue-in-cheek, it is unlikely that Poe used them as the targets of his alleged satire. More reasonably, Hammond argued that Solomon Seadrift, the narrator of the story within the framework of the *Tales of the Folio Club*, tried to fool his listeners just as Symmes did (“Reconstruction” 29), and according to Thompson Poe mocked the genre of sea-adventure in general (*Fiction* 167). Gary Scharnhorst interpreted “MS. Found in a Bottle” as “one of the most successful hoaxes Poe perpetrated, a misunderstood parable of conception and pregnancy” (208). Using information from the *Encycloedia Britannica* and *Ree’s Cyclopaedia*, Poe camouflaged the account of fertilization, pregnancy and birth from the viewpoint of a fetus as a sensational sea narrative.

Quite differently, Franz Link drew attention to the story’s serious meaning and its paradigmatic character. According to Link, “MS. Found in a Bottle” introduced the significant correlations of knowledge and destruction, and final fulfilment and annihilation into Poe’s works (“Interpretation” 33, 36). Similarly, Jules Zanger emphasized the theme of “forbidden knowledge” and the image of the whirl, thus providing an important link to “Morella” and “Ligeia” (534f). Zanger’s article was close to the psychoanalytical interpretations of Marie Bonaparte and Daniel Hoffman who understood the voyage into the center of the earth as the desire to return into the mother’s womb (442f; 146).

Illustrators had been attracted by the story much earlier than literary critics. However, there are only two pictures for the story dating from the 19th century, although the tale was frequently anthologized before 1902, when Frederick Simpson COBURN contributed the third illustration for the widely distributed 10-volume set of the Knickerbocker Press and its numerous reprints.⁹²

The great popularity of the text is reflected in its continual graphic transformation. Since Fortuné Louis MÉAULLE produced the first illustration for “MS. Found in a Bottle” (c. 1874),⁹³ at least eighty artists contributed pictures to the text. At the beginning of the twentieth century, COBURN’s picture was quickly followed by the

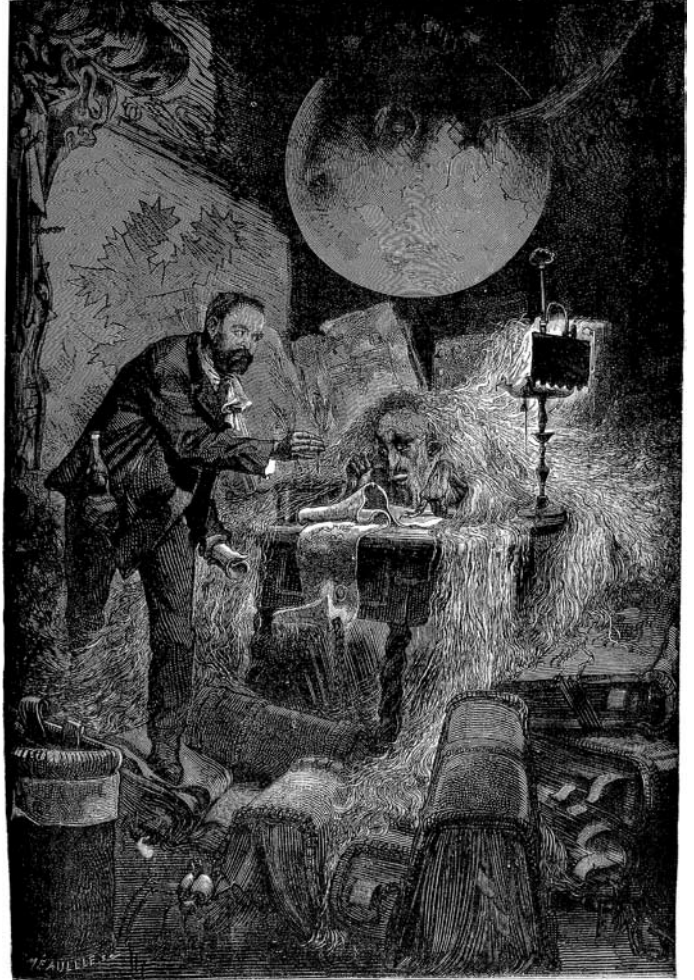


illustrations of Alice B. WOODWARD (1903), Alberto MARTINI (c. 1905), Arild ROSENKRANTZ (1908), Byam SHAW (1909) and Alfred KUBIN (1911). In the 1920s and 1930s the text regularly appeared with illustrations in French, Italian, English and American editions. After very few wartime illustrations (Jeanne Bieruma OOSTING, 1941; Gus BOFA, 1941; Pedro RIU, 1942; Ben GENAUX, 1943; Fritz EICHENBERG, 1944) the story's rich graphic tradition was continued. In the second half of the 1950s, the tale was a favorite with graphic artists once again. Illustrations originated from countries like Sweden, Portugal, Switzerland, Brazil, the former Soviet Union, and Japan, but the main output of illustrations kept coming from France and the USA. The year 1975 saw two comic book adaptations – one Spanish, the other American – which mark the end of the story's heyday as a favorite with illustrators. Since the late 1970s the output of illustrations has steadily decreased.

Despite the many pictures for the story there is not much variety. In 1921, Pierre FALKÉ produced more than thirty illustrations for a French limited edition, but this abundance of pictorial material is as exceptional as misleading. FALKÉ's colorful pictures are one-dimensional, in that they all stimulate the reading of the tale as one of boyish adventure. The first two illustrators of the story, MÉAULLE and WÖGEL, produced one standard motif, the narrator in the captain's cabin, a scene which was frequently depicted by later artists. A variation of this illustration shows the narrator among the aged sailors, or the ancient mariners without the protago-

Fig. 72 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Barry Moser (1991).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 71 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Byam Shaw (1909).
Collection of Jeffrey Savoye.



nist, but by far the greatest number of pictures presents the mysterious ship. Barry MOSER's illustration of 1991 (fig. 71) does only differ slightly from that of Byam SHAW (1909; fig. 72), who was among the first artist to depict the gigantic ghost ship in 1909, and the same applies to the pictures of Alfred KUBIN (1911), Carlo FARNETI (1927), Gladys PECK (1928), Ben GENAUX (1943) and Ugo FONTANA (1970), only to name a few representative examples from the history of the story's illustration. Sometimes the proportions of the two ships were put to the extreme. This is especially striking in the illustration of Carlos SANCHEZ, Gus BOFA, Léonor FINI and in the comic book adaptations of Alphonso FONT and Leo SOMMERS. Here, the trading ship is depicted as a puny vessel below the bow of the tremendous galleon. But while the illustrations of BOFA and FINI (fig. 73) rather stress a general topic of the author's works, in that they visualize man's vain struggle against an ominous, devastating doom, the other three illustrators indulged in that kind of fantastic exaggeration that characterizes the sensational level of Poe's story.

Some critics thought that Poe's hyperbolism, in terms of literary style and visual imagery, is an indication that "MS. Found in a Bottle" must be read as a mocking treatment of "Gothic" material. Clark Griffith ("Caves") and Donald Barlow Stauffer ("Styles") pointed out to the change of style in the narrator's account, from a matter-of-fact report to a feverish delusion. For G. R. Thompson, who evaluated

Fig. 73 "Manuscrit Trouvé dans une Bouteille": Léonor Fini (1966).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 74 "Manuscrit Trouvé dans une Bouteille": [Louis Fortuné] Méaulle (c. 1874).

Courtesy of the Alderman Library, Manuscripts Department, Poe-Ingram Collection, University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

the related events as “blatant absurdities” and as “the delusions of a man driven mad”, the irony of the story became manifest in the ridicule of “the narrator’s supercilious conception of his unshakable rationality” (Fiction 167f). Thompson concluded:

Seen as a voyage of “discovery”, the ludicrous “supernatural” events act as a grotesquerie of the discovery of what lies beyond the normal world or beyond death, for the tale abruptly ends at the very verge of revelation in apparent final destruction and silence. (168)

However, the narrator’s self-assured reasonableness is not as resolute as Thompson said, since the protagonist is well aware of “a kind of nervous restlessness which haunted [him] as a fiend” (M 2: 135). Once more, Poe offered the reader variable hints about the nature of the related events, and as so often these clues lead to contradictory conclusions. The reader has to decide whether he wants to accept the narration as a trustworthy report of supernatural events, or whether he regards it as an extravagant account and the story’s oddities as arbitrary and absurd.

There are only very few pictures which stimulate the reading of the tale as a deliberately absurd account. MÉAULLE’S crammed picture shows the narrator snatching a quill from the desk in the captain’s cabin (c. 1874; fig. 74). The captain’s long white mane covers the whole desk so that only his face and hands are discernible. The reader is confronted with a graphic transformation that ridicules the narrator’s feelings of horror, because the captain is not at all an awe-inspiring but rather a funny figure. The picture is crowded with books and scrolls, and the scene is virtually presented as if based on the oversized volumes. There is certainly a more than coincidental resemblance between this picture and Doré’s frontispiece for Cervantes’ *L’Ingénieux Hidalgo Don Quichotte de la Mancha*, first published in Paris, by Hachette in 1863. Doré depicts the hero amidst the books which inspire his adventures, and the room is crowded with figures from the hidalgo’s escapades. In MÉAULLE’S illustration, the narrator is even standing on an open book, and the volume behind his left foot demonstrates the disproportionate size of the tomes. Thus, the illustration may be understood as a commentary on the nature of the related events: they have their source in an extravagant imagination. They are the results of delusions stimulated by the perusal of weird and wonderful stories. There are more hints within the picture to support this interpretation: a moon-like globe hovering above the scene, seemingly defying the scientific laws of gravitation, suggests lunatic hallucinations devoid of any verifiable matter-of-factness; a bottle in the narrator’s jacket hints at a drunkard’s phantasy; and a very big spider in the lower left corner, as well as the thread-like appearance of the captain’s mane, may be understood as a visual equivalent of someone spinning a yarn. The middle of the picture is occupied by the scared narrator and the odd figure of the captain, but the visual center is surrounded by elements which render the scene ambiguous. The foreground of books visualizes the intertextual elements of Poe’s story. Claude Richard considered “MS. Found in a Bottle” an ironic pastiche on the pseudo-documentary voyages which were so popular in British publications in Poe’s time. On the one hand, Poe’s story is inspired by the fantastic travel reports (in that it exploits the conventions of these texts to satisfy the needs of a readership relishing



such sensational accounts), on the other hand the author ridiculed his British models at the same time.

A humorous reading of the story is also likely to be marshalled by Arthur RACKHAM's illustration for "MS. Found in a Bottle", in which two old sailors are depicted as toothless doddering greybeards (fig. 75). Although the caption indicates that the illustration is a literal interpretation of the text, the sailors are presented as droll figures. The combination of Poe's exaggerated descriptions with RACKHAM's typical graphic mannerism results in the presentation of caricatures. RACKHAM's sailors are wildly gesticulating as if involved in an argument, a scene which emphasizes their overall cantankerous appearance and which contradicts the mysterious silence on board of the ship in Poe's story. Like so many other figures in RACKHAM's Poe illustrations the two sailors seem to have migrated from the fairy tale worlds of Hans Christian Andersen or the Celtic Otherworld into a Gothic universe. The humorous aspects in RACKHAM's Poe illustrations, some of which might have been produced involuntarily, are not so much a matter of what the artist depicts but of how he does it. RACKHAM's choice of scenes was not particular, but his graphic style is. He tended to transform the figures of Poe's works into childish stereotypes. On the one hand, RACKHAM's indiscriminate approach to Poe's texts provides unity by means of visual consistency. On the other hand, his unvarying graphic transformation is reductive in that it emphasizes a sense of theatricality which often stresses humorous at the cost of serious aspects.

In Alphonso FONT's comic book adaptation (1974), most frames emphasize the fantastic character of the narration. The sailors are depicted in a serious way,

Fig. 75 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Arthur Rackham, (1935).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 76 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Alphonso Font (1974).

Collection of the author.



like very old human beings, and these portraits belong to the most impressive representations of the crew members ever made (fig. 76). However, there are also a few pictures which emphasize the absurd proportions on board of the ghost ship. The size of the ship's main mast varies. In one frame, it is of quite normal dimensions (cf. fig. 76) while in the next it is described and visualized as if belonging to a ship sailed by giants (fig. 77). These inconsistencies make the reader/viewer aware of the over-exaggerated descriptions and the internal blunders of Poe's text. FONT balances a serious against a subtle humorous version, in that he not only exploits the formulas of the fantastic adventure tale, but also introduced hints about the story's absurdities. Moreover, FONT indulged in a post-modern game with the text, duplicating the first person narrative perspective and conflating it with Poe's use of point of view. The first page of the adaptation introduces an old man resembling Poe, who finds the message washed ashore. Subsequently, the manuscript is read by the old man, who thus becomes reader and narrator at the same time. The author of the manuscript also looks like Poe, but since the old man adapts the first person perspective, this may be understood as the result of his identification with tale's protagonist. FONT's interlocking of narrative perspectives is reminiscent of Poe's later technique in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, of which "MS. Found in a Bottle" has always been considered a forerunner. The second frame on the last page shows the narrator writing the last lines of his manuscript. It is an unflattering clichéd portrait of Poe: in an obscure chamber, only sparsely illuminated by a candle, the unkempt poet, with an intensive gaze (ironically directed towards a bottle), is pondering about the right words to flow from his pen (fig. 78). The picture corresponds with Claude Richard's satirical reading of "MS. Found in a Bottle". He suggested that the narrator did not find a manuscript but his inspiration in the bottle ("Humorist" 193).

One notable exception from the mass of pictures is Ronald PORCELLI's illustration, dating from 1989 (fig. 79). It shows a man, presumably the narrator, as a figure-head of a ship with ragged sails. The ship is moving from right to left, against the flow of reading, which suggests that it is on a backward course. The sails, however, catch the wind from the left, so that the vessel would have to move in the other direction, to the right, or forward, respectively. The ship is shown flatly from the side, represented in a simplified way and without any effort to create a

Figg. 77+78 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Alphonso Font (1974).
Collection of the author.

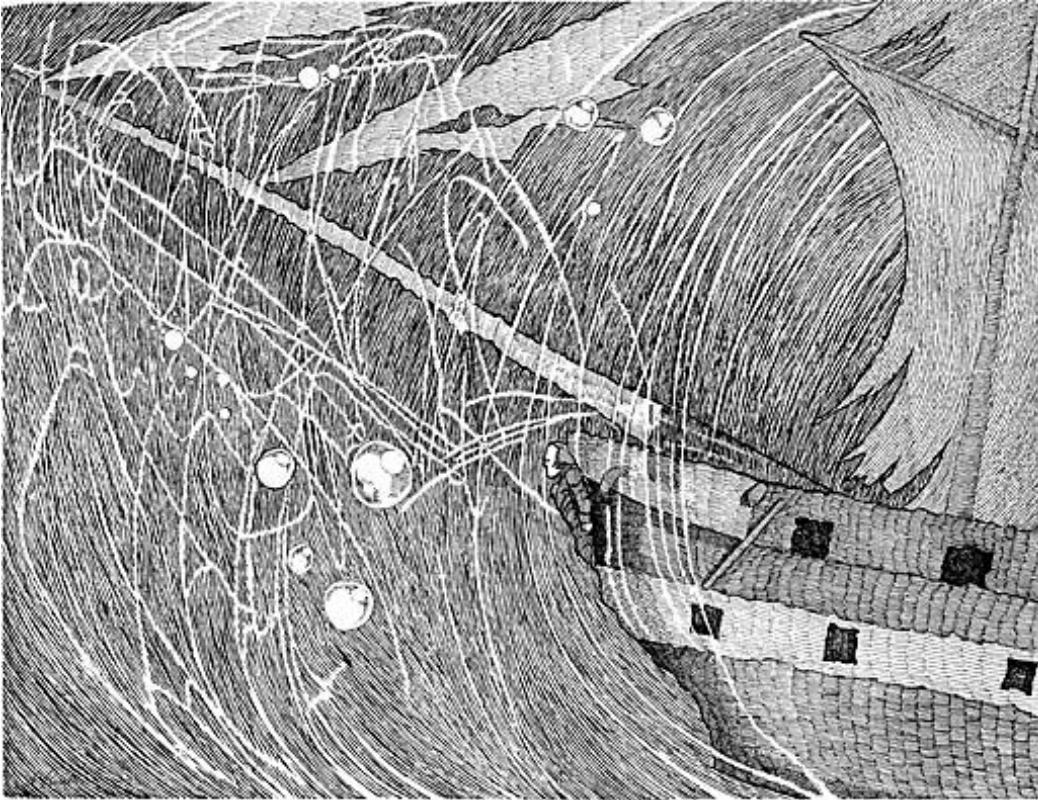


Fig. 79 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Ronald Porcelli, (1989).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

three-dimensional illusion. The ship looks as if driven by a mysterious force. The surrealist touch of the illustration is further emphasized by swirls and bubbles which surround the vessel like a tunnel and which evoke a dreamy atmosphere. The fact that the book has to be turned 90 degrees counterclockwise to be able to look at the picture as it is reprinted here, contributes to the overall disorienting effect. PORCELLI's illustration stresses the reading of the tale as a nightmarish journey or as a dream-like experience. PORCELLI's choice to depict the narrator as a figure-head of a ship caught in a storm visualizes two typical themes of the author: the precipitating and devastating journey into unknown and dangerous regions, as well as the irrational and uncontrolled forces that drive Poe's helpless narrators towards death and destruction.

Although there are ironic traits in Poe's story, it is not exclusively parodistic or satirical as Thompson and Richard argued. If these two critics were right, Poe's allegedly obvious humorous intention would have escaped the attention of more than seventy illustrators. One reason to regard the story as an effort in a serious genre are some passages which echo Poe's aesthetics, or foreshadow them, respectively. In his "Letter to Mr.—" Poe had concluded with a statement about the indefinite character of poetry, in his eyes the prime reason why lyrical works are superior to prose works. One paragraph from "MS. Found in a Bottle", set apart from the rest of the text by means of inserted blank lines, is a reverberation of Poe's early artistic credo:

A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul – a sensation which will admit of no analysis [...]. I shall never – I know that I shall never – be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. Yet it is not wonderful that these conceptions are indefinite, since they have their origin in sources so utterly novel. A new sense – a new entity is added to my soul.
(M 2: 141)

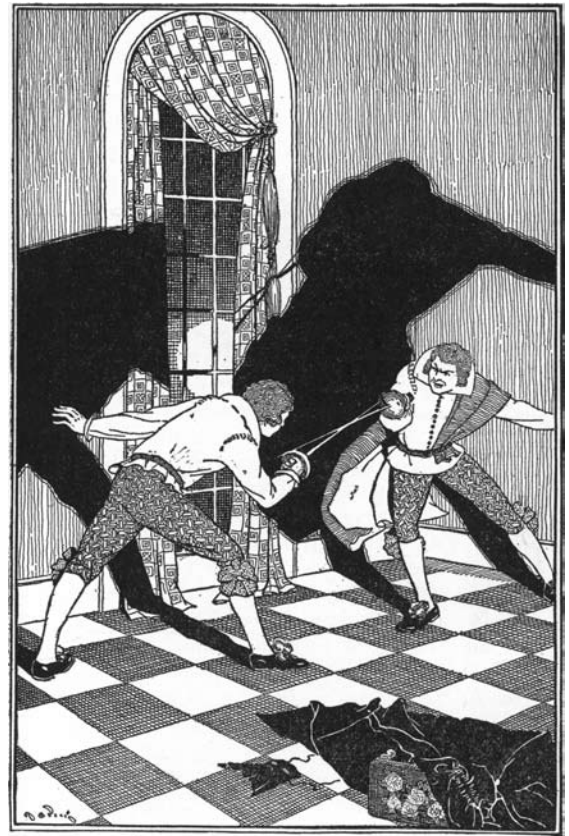
This passage hardly reads like an ironic statement. More than being just an echo of Poe's early aesthetic concept of indefinitiveness, it also suggests his later assertions about the importance of novelty and the soul as a source of poetic imagination. There are more examples for the text's aesthetic relevance. About the mysterious ship the narrator writes:

What she is not, I can easily perceive; what she is, I fear it is impossible to say. I know not how it is, but in scrutinizing her strange model and singular cast of spars, her huge size and overgrown suits of canvass, her severely simple bow and antiquated stern, there will occasionally flash across my mind a sensation of familiar things, and there is always mixed up with such indistinct shadows of recollection, an unaccountable memory of old foreign chronicles and ages long ago. (M 2: 142)⁹⁴

Very similar lines can be found in "Berenice" and "Ligeia", when the narrators describe the inexplicable and transitory beauty of the female protagonists. It has been mentioned that one reason for this indefinitiveness is Poe's commitment to Platonic aesthetics. In this context, the ship can be understood as a manifestation of the Ideal, as are Helen, the Marchesa Aphrodite, Berenice, Morella, Ligeia, Eleonora, the female on the oval portrait, and, in a decidedly humorous version, the two Mesdames Lalandes in "The Spectacles". In "MS. Found in a Bottle", of course, the ideal appears in quite a different shape than in the other works, but all stories correspond in that the experience of the ideal is connected with disaster. "MS. Found in a Bottle" was Poe's first prose work where the author transforms the aesthetics that governed his early poetry. Taken that "Metzengerstein" was either a too premature attempt of transformation, or that the story is indeed a mock imitation of the German Gothic tradition, "MS. Found in a Bottle" was Poe's first effort to refashion the imagery of his early poetry in a serious way. The comic tales were thematically inept to convey any sublime experience,⁹⁵ and it was still to take a few months before Poe had succeeded in transforming the ethereal female ideal of his early verses into the figure of the Marchesa Aphrodite. In the evolution of Poe's imagery, "MS. Found in a Bottle" is a missing link between Helen and Ligeia. The destructive power which Ligeia wields over the narrator has its source in the combination of discovery and death, a theme which is developed in "MS. Found in a Bottle" (cf. Zanger 536, 542) But like Helen, Ligeia is also a positive figure, a spiritual and intellectual guidance, who, however, introduces her husband too deeply into esoteric mysteries, the knowledge of which drives the narrator into madness. Says the narrator of "MS. Found in a Bottle":

To conceive the horror of my sensation is, I presume, utterly impossible; yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions, predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of death. It is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge – some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction. (M 2: 145)

"MS. Found in a Bottle" was the first of that kind of fatal journeys on which many of Poe's later protagonists had to embark. In his early prize-winning story the journey ultimately leads to the inside of the globe, into an inner world. In later stories, the bottomless chasm which opens at the end of the sea story is transformed into an unfathomable abyss of a different kind: the gazes of Morella and



In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting.

Ligeia. The eyes of Ligeia are simultaneously metaphorized as unfathomable wells and ethereal stars. These deep, star-like eyes are gateways to inner, yet limitless and unknown worlds. The faraway regions of the sea and the exotic settings are transformed into the interiors of gloomy Gothic mansions. Inside these buildings, Poe's protagonists encounter the otherworldly females, and here they explore, incited by the gaze of their wives, the inner world of their selves. Thus, the enigmatic cavity below the South Pole is transformed into Morella's and Ligeia's eyes, which are circumscribed as pathways leading into the mysterious depth of the soul. The only illustration for "MS. Found in a Bottle", which visually suggests this connection, is Frederick Simpson COBURN's picture of 1902. The image shows the ship in stormy seas, and from amidst the raging waters a huge smiling woman with spread arms is looking at the reader/viewer (fig. 80).

Fig. 80 "MS. Found in a Bottle": Frederick Simpson Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

Fig. 81 "William Wilson": A. Gladys Peck (1901).

Courtesy of the Butler Library, Columbia University, New York City.

4.2.3 William Wilson

"William Wilson" was one of Poe's most recent productions when *The Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* were published early in 1840. The story had been first printed in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in October 1839, and a little later in the *The Gift* for 1840. "William Wilson" belongs to Poe's most famous tales. Already in the 19th century, it was regularly and frequently reprinted, and unlike other classics such as "Berenice", it has always been popular in English speaking countries. The construction of the tale is a typical formula of the author: after a confessional begin-

ning of a first person narrator the middle part relates a series of similar events. The story's ending is the last of these incidents, a climactic finale that surpasses the events presented before and which finally results in an either tragic or comic catastrophe. Variations of this formula underly Poe's earlier tales "Loss of Breath", "The Man that Was Used up", and "Ligeia". In the 1840s, Poe made use of this pattern regularly, e.g. for such diverse tales as "The Business Man", "The Pit and the Pendulum", "The Spectacles", only to name a few. "William Wilson" is also related to Poe's other confessional narratives "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Black Cat" and "The Imp of the Perverse". Besides being the retrospective account of a narrator who has become guilty of a crime, "William Wilson" foreshadows the later tales stylistically. After an elaborate first paragraph, the narrator's account switches to a sober report, characterized by "reasonableness, a clarity, a perspicuous control" (Hoffman 209f; cf. Stauffer, "Meaning" 324f).

"William Wilson" is exceptional among the works of Poe because its meaning is, or rather seems to be, rather obvious. The story can be easily understood as an apparent allegory about man struggling with his conscience. By means of the story's motto, the reader's attention is directed towards this meaning from the beginning. The story was unequivocally appraised by Poe's contemporaries, partly because of its obvious meaning (cf. Thomas and Jackson 275–284 *passim*), a quality which many critics keep missing in the author's other works until today. Richard Wilbur, echoing Poe's contemporary critics, wrote that the story "embodies the conflict between the degraded will and the moral sense in the persons of Wilson and his double" (1; cf. P. Quinn, *French* 221). However, the story's meaning is double-bottomed. Poe gave the story a twist so that "William Wilson" does not offer a clear-cut moral.

If the reader accepts the second Wilson as a personification of the first Wilson's conscience or his "moral sense", one must attribute the narrator a high degree of moral integrity, since it is he himself who thwarts his mean plans before he can do any real harm. The important twist of Poe's story is that the conscience is not tormented by William Wilson's deeds, but the fact that William Wilson suffers from his conscience. It must be noted that the story does not relate one incident, in which Wilson really commits a crime. His schemes are spoilt before they are accomplished. The narrator's conscience does not make itself heard before the narrator is about to do something nasty. Although the narrator is involved in malevolent thoughts and plots, the sense of right is stronger than the urge to do wrong. Wilson's moral sense dominates until the final encounter. But at the end the continual intrusion of "conscience" into the thoughts and actions of William Wilson is instrumental in the ultimate disintegration of his personality. This interference, the operation of a restrictive moral sense, finally leads to the destruction of the self, and that means the loss of identity. Hoffman remarked:

"William Wilson" is perhaps the most vivid and memorable of Romantic tales of the divided self. In its psychological probing, and in the success of its objectifying the twin irrepressible impluses to *do evil* and to *judge oneself*, it makes Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* seem naïve. For how much closer to the inadmissible truth is Poe's resolution than Stevenson's, who makes the better of the two selves destroy its evil-doing double. (212f)

A happy ending such as Stevenson's is unimaginable in sight of Poe's general scepticism. But does the evil really succeed in William Wilson? His autobiographical confession, his self-accusation and his repentance, make it clear that the narrator is still under the spell of his moral sense, since, even after the murder of his *alter ego*, he shows a distressing awareness of his moral shortcomings. After the duel in Venice, he might have become able to suppress his conscience at times, but he still suffers from it. Note that Poe, in his made-up motto, provides conscience (capitalized) with the attribute "grim". An effective conscience, of the kind William Wilson may be proud of calling his own, does not seem to be a guarantee for a sane personality: conscience rather seems to be an imp of the perverse (cf. Hoffman 213), "a spectre in [his] path" (M 2: 426), which keeps haunting the narrator's mind. Considering these arguments, the conscience theory, that is the story's seemingly obvious allegorical meaning, is too limited and one-dimensional in that it falls short of taking into account the polysemic character of the story. Wrote Richard Wilbur:

"Wilson" may be atypical in its clarity, but is typical of Poe in its concerns, in its images and locutions, in its first-person narration, and in its symbolic or allegorical method. The thing to do, I think, is to push off from "Wilson" into the *mare tenebrarum* of the other works. (160)

I only partially agree with Wilbur's statement about the story's alleged clarity, but I fully consent to his notion about the importance of the text as a means to shed light on Poe's other works, such as "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher". Like "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion", "William Wilson" allows an insight into the interrelation of the imagery and the meaning of his works.

The most frequently illustrated scene of "William Wilson" is the duel at the end of the story. Among the very earliest illustrations for the duel scene are the pictures of F. C. TILNEY and Gladys PECK. Both images are generic sword-and-dagger illustrations, which might as well depict a dozen of scenes from the works of Dumas, Sabatini or Ferval. If one came across these pictures without the text at their sides, one would have difficulties in identifying them as illustrations for "William Wilson" at all. It's only because of their similar clothes that the two opponents resemble each other at least a bit, so that the pictures do not visualize that the two men are each other's double. Both illustrations limit themselves to the graphic transformation of the narrative surface without emphasizing that the duel is the symbolic visualization of a psychological conflict. PECK's picture (fig. 81) is a bit more suggestive than TILNEY's. The background shows three of Poe's favourite symbols of transcendence: a curtain, a window and the moon. These pictorial details may be classified as mere background furnishings or as stock motifs of the sword-and-dagger genre – just like the swashbuckling action, the dramatic shadows on the wall, the cast-off black cloak, the mask on the floor, and the fluttering cape of one swordsman, all of which rather suggest "Zorro" than "William Wilson" – but they also stimulate to interpret the illustration within the context of the overall imagery of Poe's works. Thus the discarded cloak in the lower right corner can be understood as the dropped veil, which usually divides two opposing powers in Poe's works and which now are in conflict with each other directly; the moon

(depicted above the right swordsman's head) becomes a token for lunacy and the formless shadows recall the vague apparitions that sometimes cross the borderline between the two worlds mentioned above. Even the chequered floor can be interpreted according to Poe's imagery of dualism, in that the contrast of the tiles visualizes the antagonism of the two incompatible forces. However, such a speculative interpretation generates meaning for each single aspect without arranging them convincingly into a coherent pattern. PECK's picture is an example for a kind of illustration, which does not challenge the text. All prominent pictorial elements can be neatly subordinated to the story. This hierarchy between story and illustration conditions that the reader's organization of meaning relies on the text exclusively. All aspects of the image, and as a result the illustration as a whole, are filled with meaning that is generated in the act of reading, into which the picture does not actively interfere. The only indeterminacy which occurs in PECK's picture, is the identity of the two swordsmen. It is difficult to define who of the two is the narrator. The only discernible face has a somewhat fierce expression, but the mien can also be interpreted as showing concern. If the right man is accepted as representing the narrator, the face would speak of either his "evil" character or of his anxiety in sight of his opponent. The other swordsman's appearance is rendered mysterious, because his face, his identity, cannot be made out. If the reader/viewer considers the man on the right as the second Wilson, the facial expression of worry is easily explained, but how to interpret his furious gaze? It does recall the adjective "grim" in the story's motto and thus the illustration might direct the reader's attention towards the circumstance that the two Wilsons do not simply represent the good and the evil side of one character.

The majority of illustrations is more specific about the identity of the two Wilsons. Michael AYRTON (1957), one of the very few notable British Poe illustrators after Harry CLARKE (1919), depicted the two opponents side by side. However, the two figures both seem to be real, so that the picture neglects the symbolic impact of the duel and the murder of the second Wilson as the death of one part of the narrator's self. The Dutch illustrator A. HAHN jr. visualized the two opposing forces by means of a strong black and white contrast. At first sight it seems to be obvious, who of the two depicted men represents the narrator (1930; fig. 82). The latter is rendered as an ominous dark figure staring right into the face of his wounded adversary, whose features are brightly illuminated by three candles and a second unspecified source of light. The distribution of light and darkness in HAHN's picture is a conventional colorization to visualize good and evil. However, the illustration is not as unequivocal as the first impression conveys. It is surprising that the second Wilson is clearly delineated, although in the story he mostly appears as a shadowy spectre. In HAHN's picture the spot is directed towards the second Wilson, who thus becomes the "protagonist", while the narrator is rendered as an ominous figure emerging from the darkness. Daniel Hoffman has pointed out that Wilson's confessional report "cannot but fail to involve the reader in his fate" (210). By means of the first person perspective and a remorseful protagonist Poe built up empathy between the reader and Wilson, and this is the peculiar twist of the story. Because of this identification, the reader does not condemn the narrator, but rather



feels pity with him. In HAHN's picture, however, the wounded Wilson is the pitiable figure, so that the viewer's empathy is transposed. The result is a conflict between the reader of the story and the implied viewer of the picture, both of which represent, of course, the same person. The illustration brings about a disorienting effect in that it divides the sympathies of the reader/viewer, who thus re-experiences the narrator's confusion and his emotionally split state. The confusion becomes even more intricate, when one considers the depicted scene as if it was reflected in a mirror, a circumstance suggested by the concave and convex lines inside the picture. If the reader identifies with the narrator, which means that he adopts his spatial perspective, he sees himself mirrored in the wounded figure. Consequently, the narrator is the pitiable man (again). This interpretation of the picture is dubitable because it accepts two contradictions between text and illustration, namely that the narrator Wilson lost the duel and that it was him who was heavily wounded. The question is whether the reader/viewer regards the picture as an illustration of the story's narrative surface, or whether he/she is inclined to evaluate it as the externalization of a psychological process. The double role of the second Wilson, as the personification of the narrator's moral sense and as his imp of the perverse is visually transformed in HAHN's illustration. Thus, the picture, which at first sight illustrates the action of a specific scene, may involve the reader in an interpretative game, at the end of which nothing remains certain. HAHN's

Fig. 82 "William Wilson":
A. Hahn, jr. (1930).

Collection of the author.

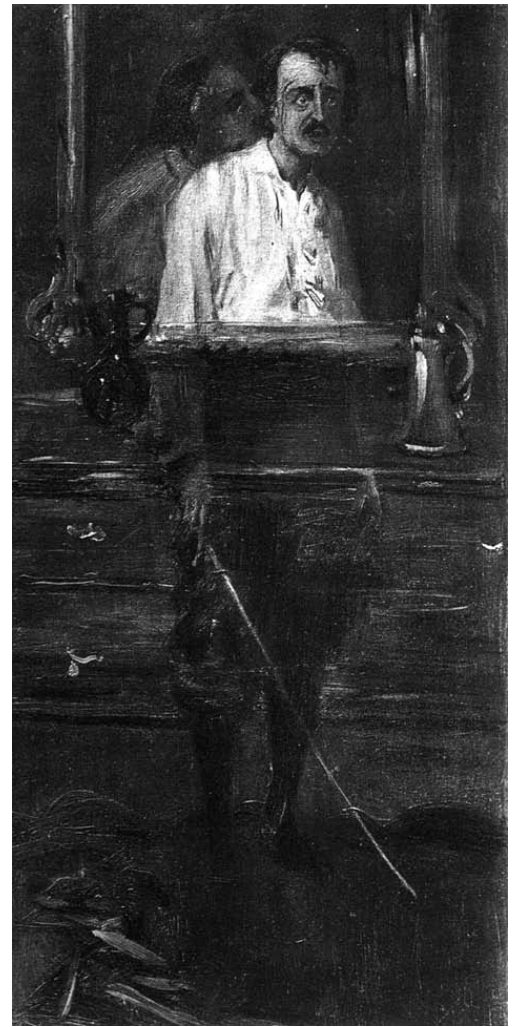
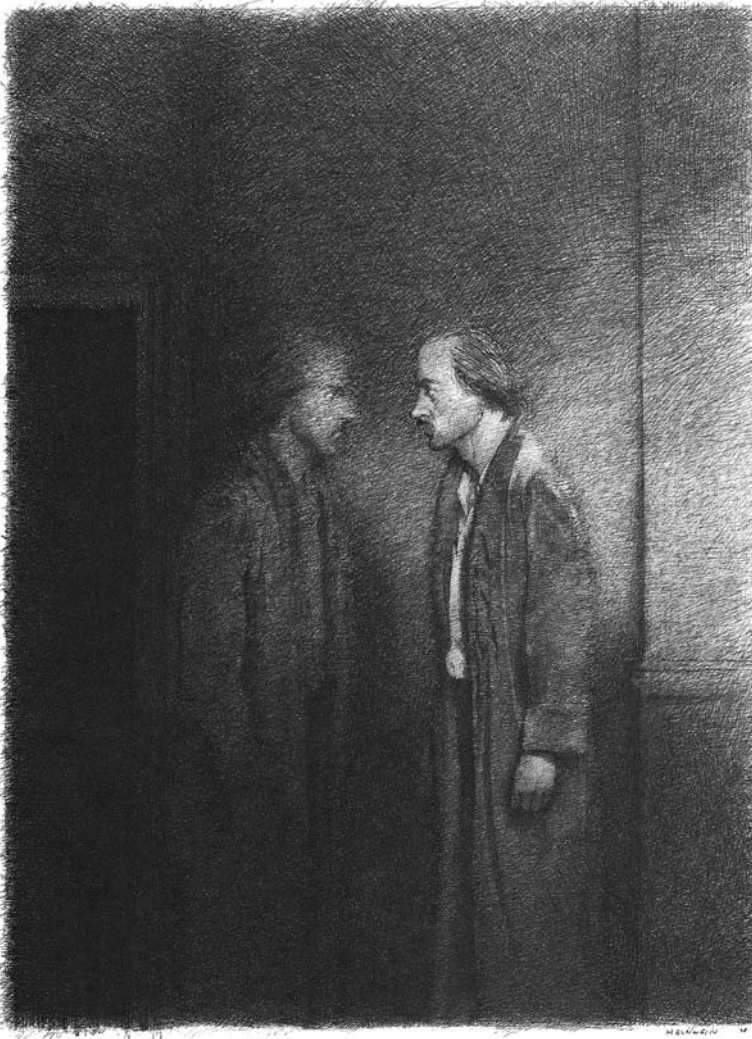
Fig. 83 "William Wilson":
J. Monsell (1912).

Collection of the author.

illustration is like a mirror cabinet in which the textual elements are reflected and by means of which they are back-reflected. Thus, the hermeneutic activity becomes an endless series of projections and reflections.⁹⁶

J. MONSELL's picture (1912) challenges a similar interpretation. In MONSELL's illustration (fig. 83) the two Wilsons are approaching each other. There is no mirror as in Poe's text, but the two figures are each other's reflection, since not only their outward appearance but also their postures are the same. The confrontation occurs in a dark room. The obscurity of the scene delivers a natural explanation why the man in the picture's left half looks like a spectre, as if he was fading away. But who is the man on the left? Wilson or his counterpart? The illustration gives no clue like HAHN's or AYRTON's pictures. The man on the left might as well be the narrator, whose fatal psychological state is visualized by the shadows surrounding him. MONSELL's picture successfully maintains the ambiguity of Poe's story, because the figure swallowed by the darkness either signifies the narrator's loss of identity or the dissolution of his moral sense. It can as well be understood as being devoid of any symbolism, as an illustration of the story's narrative surface. MONSELL's illustration stimulates the awareness of various levels of meaning, but simultaneously, it keeps up the ambivalent character of Poe's story.

Harry CLARKE (1919), William SHARP (1941) and Gottfried HELNWEIN (1979) are just three more artists who took the following sentence literally: "It was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution" (448). While in many pictures the viewer is involved by means of a perspective that imitates or at least conveys the point of view of one of the two opponents, the viewer's standpoint is not aligned with one of the two Wilsons in the illustrations of CLARKE, SHARP, AYRTON and HELNWEIN. HELNWEIN's picture is notable because it renounces the theatricality, which characterizes many other illustrations for the final scene (fig. 84). His picture shows the two men in profile, so that both faces are equally discernible. In contrast with most other illustrations, such as the pictures of TILNEY (1895), PECK, DWIGGINS (1930), KUBIN (1910), RACKHAM (1935), SHARP, or CALSINA (1970), the drawing is devoid of details like fluttering capes, carnival costumes and flashing blades. The scene is rendered in a way that may be labelled as visual understatement. On the one hand, HELNWEIN faithfully reproduces the dissolution of Wilson, on the other hand, he ignores the textual details mentioned above. This reduction cannot but turn the reader's awareness to the symbolic impact of the final scene, but this emphasis is at the cost of the story's narrative surface. Another variant of the dissolution is the illustration of Albert Edward STERNER, produced as early as 1894. Here we have two Wilsons fading away. The double is the more active of the two, although he is already gone except shoulders and head which cling to the narrator's back. The narrator is a pitiable figure, and it is obvious that the dominance of his double will not vanish (fig. 85). STERNER chose to present Wilson resembling Poe, a fact hardly surprising, since the story contains several autobiographical elements: the Wilsons' shared date of birth, Bransby's school and the narrator's fondness of card games. It is rather astonishing, that Wilson has not been depicted more frequently as Poe, since the autobiographical hints were already pointed out by 19th century critics. However,



Poe was neither exactly born on the date mentioned in the story, nor are the school and the school ground in the story identical with Stoke Newington. There is also no evidence that Poe was ever accused of being a card-sharper (M 2: 425).⁹⁷

The ambiguity of the *doppelgänger* motif was often maintained by illustrators in that they did not specify whether the second Wilson is merely a mirror reflection of the first. Fernand SIMÉON (1924) and Jacques GRANGE (1946) show two identical men facing each other, but their pictures give no hint whether Wilson stares at his mirror image or whether he confronts an opponent of flesh and blood. Carl HOFFMANN's illustration (1977) is more specific about the meaning of the mirror image (fig. 86). His picture shows the reflection of a frightened Wilson in a scattered looking glass. The reflected image is turned upside down, a visual hint at the loss of normality and Wilson's mental breakdown. The same can be said about the pictures of Gösta KRILAND (1954) and Hans FRONIUS (1963). While the Swedish illustrator depicts an armed man facing his shadow, FRONIUS' Wilson is fencing against the blank wall, which is not even furnished with a mirror. The absence of one Wilson in KRILAND's picture can be explained by regarding the illustration as capturing the moment after the duel: one Wilson is shown in a state of exhaustion, and the other is simply not depicted, a circumstance which does not necessarily mean that he does not exist outside the narrator's mind. FRONIUS' illustra-

Fig. 84 "William Wilson":
Gottfried Helnwein (1979).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 85 "William Wilson":
Albert Edward Sterner
(1894).
Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek Freie Hansestadt Bremen.



tion, however, leaves no room for such an evasive interpretation (fig. 87). His picture suggests that there is no and that there has never been a second William Wilson. From the beginning, the double was nothing but a chimera haunting the narrator's mind (cf. P. Quinn, French 221). Wilson's attack against his own shadow cast on the wall symbolizes the loss of reality and the futility of his actions: he is fighting against nobody but himself. His charge looks ridiculous, but the irony is that while he believes in his victory his attack against the wall is a sign for his defeat, the proof for his insanity: his blade pierces his own shadow through the head. FRONIUS' illustration is another example for the artist's ability to combine the serious with the ludicrous, and to create a sense of tragi-comedy.

Hans FRONIUS made seven drawings for "William Wilson", and in three of these a mysterious second figure appears. FRONIUS' first picture (fig. 88), which was used as the story's frontispiece, shows an alley with two figures: one leaning against a tree, waiting for a tiny figure walking down the avenue. The second figure is so small that it is impossible to explain its diminutive size through the employed perspective. As in so many other pictures the distribution of roles is left to the imagination of the reader/viewer. Does the figure in the foreground represent the schoolboy Wilson, who is waiting for his adversary in order to revenge himself for an imagined act of offence? Or does the gigantic figure represent the personification of the overpowering and inescapable force within the narrator's mind? The

Fig. 86 "William Wilson":
Carl Hoffmann (1977).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 87 "William Wilson":
Hans Fronius (1963).

Collection of the author.

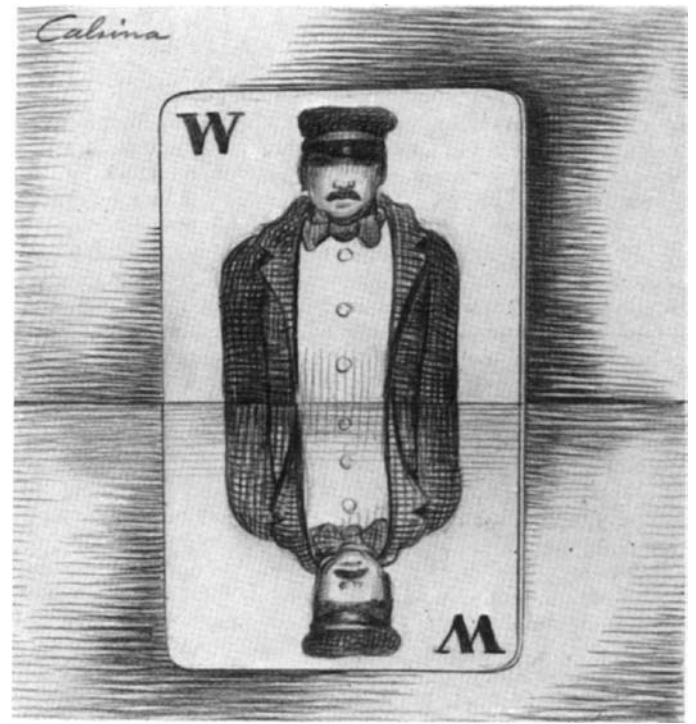
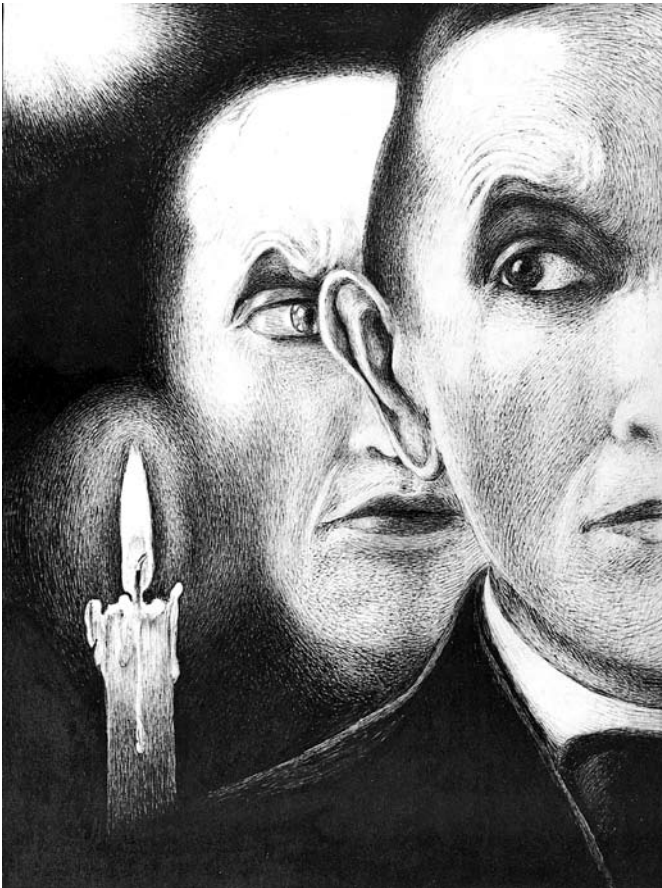


illustration alludes to the story's motto, to the grim spectre in the path of Wilson, a notion that is visualized in at least two more of FRONIUS' drawings. In the only illustration for the story by the French artist Louis JAMES, the relation between the two can be also explained in very different terms. The picture shows a boy of a about ten years of age, backed by a double twice his size. Do we have to interpret the big-sized Wilson as the super-ego of the small Wilson, or is the little one the imp of the perverse inside the tall one? These insoluble questions arise through the contemplation of the pictures, and so stir the reader's awareness for the psychological drama, which might go unnoticed at first reading or when the story is perused without the illustrations in question. Likewise, Ramon CALSINA's illustration visualizes the theme of domination without indicating which side of Wilson's personality is the repressed one. CALSINA's picture alludes to the gamble scene in Oxford (fig. 89). He depicted the two Wilsons as jacks or jokers on a deck of cards. This picture emphasizes that the two Wilsons are part of an entity, but also that their opposition cannot be undone without destroying the whole. On another level, CALSINA's drawing can be understood as a visual commentary on the story's ambivalent meaning. Just like the card you can turn Poe's story around and around, for once foregrounding the textual elements which indicate one meaning, and for another time highlighting those aspects of the text which disprove the previous arguments. CALSINA's picture leaves it to the reader's/viewer's imagination, who of the two Wilsons has ruffed the other, and which of the interpretations overtrumps its rival reading.

Loosely resembling Louis JAMES's picture, Alberto MARTINI's image suggests that the first Wilson (the one in the foreground) is prone to instigations prompted from behind his back (fig. 90). The second Wilson looks like the impersonation of evil inciting the narrator to do wrong rather than a personification of conscience

Fig. 88 "William Wilson": Hans Fronius (1963).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 89 "William Wilson": Ramón Calsina (1970).
Collection of Burton Pollin.



or moral sense. Whatever is the nature of the advice whispered into Wilson's ear, the picture suggests an evil dominance of the second Wilson over the narrator. In a similar vein, the comic book artist Alphonso FONT depicted the second Wilson as anything but a sympathetic figure, so that it can hardly be accepted as a personification of conscience or moral integrity. It is true that the narrator behaves badly throughout the eight pages of FONT's version of the story, but he almost arouses compassion when he is once more publicly compromised by his mischievous double. According to Nancy Bate Berkowitz, it was Poe's intention to make his readers sympathize with the dishonorable narrator, a person that would usually deserve no commiseration. The pictures of MARTINI and FONT help to work out Poe's plan, which was devised to pull the legs of the moralizing critics of his times (32f).⁹⁸

As has been shown, only few illustrations can be squeezed into the pattern of good and evil, of innocence and guilt, of moral integrity and depravation, a pattern which some critics have accepted as the backbone of the story. So what is it about? Richard Wilbur's statement about the story's clarity was quoted, but what did he mean by it? It is absurd to assume that the trapfalls of the story have slipped his attention. His remark, for one thing, refers to the intelligibility of the story's imagery, specifically to the motif of the double, the motif of the mirror, the meaning of light and the symbolism of space. Patrick Quinn mentioned that the *doppelgänger* motif was foreshadowed by "The Fall of the House of Usher" (French 229, 245), ignoring that almost all elements of "William Wilson" were already part of Poe's

Fig. 90 "William Wilson":
Alberto Martini (1936).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 91 "William Wilson":
Albert Dubout (1948).

Collection of the author.

earliest prose works. Later they were to occur again, but nowhere else have they been presented with such clarity as in “William Wilson”.

One crucial passage in “William Wilson” is the narrator’s remembrance of his days as a pupil in Bransby’s boarding school. This period in the narrator’s life abruptly ends when he flees after the nightly visit in the chamber of his adversary. The narrator describes the interior of the building, which is an intricate structure: “countless subdivisions [...] large chambers communicating with each other [...], many little nooks and recesses, the odds and ends of the structure” (436). The school is an “enclosure” – “irregular”, “extensive” and “quaint” – with “capacious recesses” and “incomprehensible subdivisions”. The narrator reports:

From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable – inconceivable – and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. (428)

Through this endless “wilderness of narrow passages” (437) the narrator meanders towards his goal, the chamber of his adversary, in order to commit some sort of rancorous deed as retaliation for his insubordination. The description of the building recalls Poe’s other interiors, most apparently those in “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”. The difference is that in “William Wilson”, the narrator’s journey through the dark and winding hallways is more openly presented as the protagonist’s exploration of the self. Wilson’s meandrous passage through the building is an allegory on his psychological probings in order to explain the nature of the enemy within.

As in so many other of Poe’s works, the protagonist of “William Wilson” is engaged in a quest, but as soon as the final goal is reached, a shock of recognition occurs, and the journey becomes a headlong escape ending in madness. The flights of Wilson and Poe’s other narrators are all in vain, since they cannot run away from themselves. The exploration of the obscure regions of the soul, in modern terms the probing of the subconscious, is visualized in “William Wilson” by the illumination of the sleeping double, who resides in an obscure chamber amidst a labyrinth. The description of the building is a map of Wilson’s inner landscape, just like the Gothic interiors in “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher” allegorize the mental states of the protagonists. The exploration turned inward, along the intricate passages, is a dangerous undertaking, because nobody returns without psychological damage. Apart from these poetics of space, “William Wilson” also illuminates the development of the symbolism of light in the author’s works. When Wilson lowers the lantern to scrutinize the face of his adversary, he, of course, sees nobody but himself. The ethereal light of the stars, a token of eternal happiness and a source of inspiration, has become instrumental in the fatal self-illumination which results in emotional pain and mental confusion.

The narrator’s passage through the darkness of the intricate building has been illustrated rarely. Mostly, the scene has been reduced to the presentation of Wilson holding a lamp, so that most pictures pay no attention to the nature of the building at all. Albert DUBOUT and Gottfried HELNWEIN depicted Wilson in the dark, dramatically illuminated from below by the light in his hand. DUBOUT’s Wilson stares



Fig. 92 "William Wilson":
Frederick S. Coburn (1902).
*Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst
Library, New York University.*

Fig. 93 "William Wilson":
Pedro Riu (1942).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

the onlooker flatly in the face. Assuming that the empathy between reader and narrator was established, the picture's viewer has the impression to look into a mirror, which might challenge him/her to probe their own psychological depths (fig. 91). Wilson's nightly excursion into his adversary's bedchamber was also illustrated by Frederick Simpson COBURN, Jacques WÉLY (1910), W. A. DWIGGINS (1930), Pedro RIU (1942) and LÉONOR FINI (1966). They all depicted the moment Wilson illuminates the face of his rival, only to see that he is his exact double. This moment is one climax of the story. For Wilson, the experience is so disturbing that he leaves the boarding school head over heels. This hysterical reaction comes as a surprise, since the reader was long prepared for that moment, because the narrator spends a considerable part of his story to point out in detail the many striking similarities between him and his *doppelgänger*. As a result, the reader must either suppose that the narrator does not state frankly what he really perceived, or he/she becomes aware of the symbolic impact of the scene, because the recognition of the outward resemblance certainly does not fully account for his flight. In the bedchamber scene, the symbolic meaning of the story penetrates its narrative surface more than in any other part, except the finale. Here, at latest, it becomes apparent that the second Wilson must be understood as the externalization of a part of the narrator's psyche. However, the mentioned illustrations contribute little to foreground the symbolic meaning of the scene. COBURN's picture can be regarded as an exception, because here the identity of the sleeping Wilson is not clearly discern-



ible (fig. 92). Thus, the picture does not only leave a blank where the text is very specific, but it also stimulates the reader to adopt the point of view of the narrator in order to imagine what he perceives so as to understand his intense emotions in sight of his rival. Pedro RIU depicts the two Wilsons not as schoolboys, but as young men with sideburns (fig. 93). This obvious contradiction between picture and text is likely to challenge the reader's hermeneutic activity in order to explain for the apparent inconsistency. One solution is to evaluate the picture as visualizing the relationship of the two Wilsons in general, so that the illustration probably helps to make the reader aware of the symbolic meaning underneath the narrative surface.

Alfred KUBIN depicted Wilson, clad in a nightgown, walking through an obscure hallway, where he is about to descend a staircase (fig. 94). The picture contains no signs suggesting Poe's symbolism of space, but the illustration recalls Poe's motif of the downward passage. This topic surfaces in the story several times, although it is not as apparent as in "MS. Found in a Bottle" or "A Descent into the Maelström".

When the narrator describes the intricacy of the building, he states that it is difficult to decide "with certainty upon which of the two stories one happened to be" (428f), which means that Wilson never really knows which part of his personality is in control.⁹⁹ The confrontations between the two Wilsons usually occur in dimly lit small rooms, recalling the narrow bedchambers in the boarding school. The first meeting after the narrator's escape from Bransby's school takes place in a similar location. Wilson is just about to give "a toast of more than wonted profanity" (438), when a door opens and a servant announces the arrival of a visitor.

Fig. 94 "William Wilson": Alfred Kubin (1910).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 95 "William Wilson": Gus Bofa (1941).

Collection of the author.

[M]y attention was suddenly diverted by the violent, although partial unclosing of the door of the apartment [...]. Wildly excited with wine, the unexpected interruption rather delighted than surprised me. I staggered forward at once, and a few steps brought me to the vestibule of the building. In this low and small room there hung no lamp; and now no light at all was admitted, save that of the exceedingly feeble dawn which made its way through the semi-circular window. As I put my foot over the threshold, I became aware of the figure [...]. This the faint light enabled me to perceive; but the features of his face I could not distinguish. (438f)¹⁰⁰

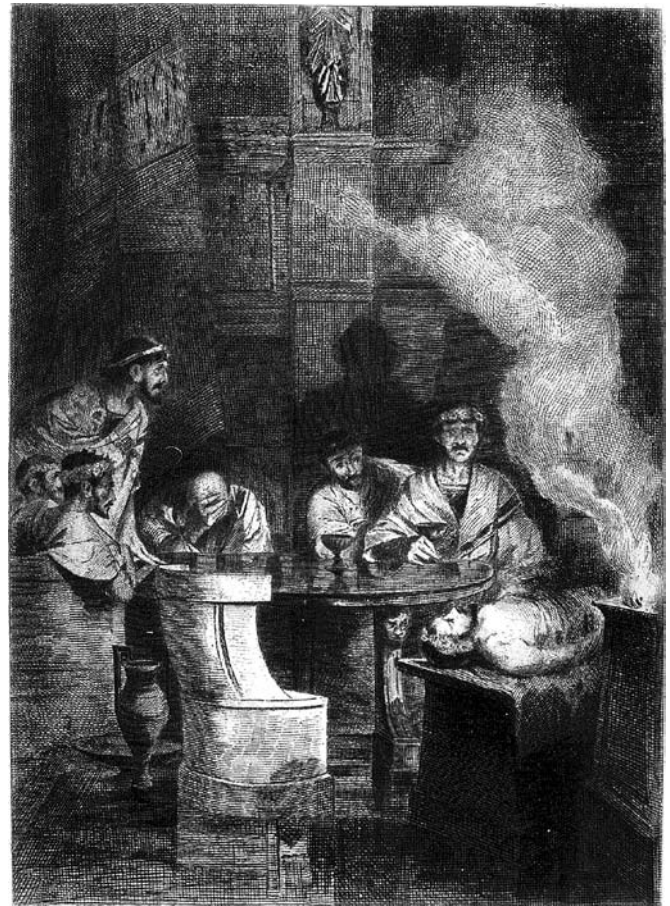
The opening of the door signifies that Wilson's "conscience" is about to creep into his consciousness. In the description of the school house the narrator had referred to "communicating chambers". According to mid-19th-century phrenology, a science enthusiastically heralded by Poe, these rooms can be interpreted as the faculties of the brain. Wilson has to descend some stairs before he meets his opponent, and characteristically the confrontation takes place in a vestibule, so to speak in the foyer of consciousness. The lighting conditions are poor, the ceiling is low and the semi-circular window visually suggests an eye. The only illustration for this scene, Gus BOFA's picture dating from 1941, responds to Poe's motif of the downward passage, but the other implications of the author's poetics of space, the interior as a symbolic image of the human mind, remained undepicted (fig. 95). Like BOFA, Norbert PRANGENBERG (1978) foregrounded the ominous appearance of the second Wilson, thus presenting him as the spectre mentioned in the story's motto. Contrary to BOFA, PRANGENBERG depicted only one Wilson, who is standing in a doorway. The figure is fully confronting the viewer, so that like DUBOUT's picture this illustration makes use of the empathy between the reader and the narrator by a transformation of the story's point of view into a corresponding spatial position of the onlooker.

To conclude, I would like to point out to the indefiniteness of the narrator's sensual perceptions when he meets his double. Wilson remembers his school, lying in a "misty-looking village" as "a dream-like and spirit-soothing place" (427f). He goes on:

At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight, at the deep hollow note of the church bell, breaking [...] upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere. (428)

This description recalls Egæus' library, and just as he calls his favorite chamber a "palace of imagination" (210), Wilson designates the school a "palace of enchantment" (429). The boarding school is an idyllic place where Wilson lives in harmony with himself and his environment – until suddenly his *doppelgänger* appears on the scene. The second Wilson encroaches upon the world of the narrator just like Berenice intrudes into Egæus' library. The spell is broken and the "thrill of undefinable delight" is gone. Words like "shadowed", "undefinable" and "dusky" are reminiscent of Platon's "shadows of shadows".

Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow – a weak and irregular remembrance – an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. (430)



Wilson's carefree boyhood, a state of ideal existence, is comparable to the state of *anamnesis*, in which the soul, yet unconfined to a human body, existed happily in the world of ideas. It is not surprising that Wilson wants to restore that state, "a world of rich incident, an universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring" (431). But the narrator's spiritual quest, his wish to return to his boyhood innocence, is made impossible by the second Wilson. Psychologically, the appearance of the double must be explained as an increasing awareness of the complex self in a child growing up. In the context of Platon's Idealism, the notion of the divided self is embodied in Aristophanes' report about the once existing perfect entity of the third sex, at the very beginning of the *Symposium*, a text which is very likely to have been Poe's prime source of the Greek philosopher. Wilson strives for harmony like the divided parts of the third sex are eager to (re-)unite each other. Note that he says that during the school days "Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions" (433). The disruption of Wilson's personality as well as his will to engender himself in the form of one person is expressed in his name, which simultaneously signifies two similar entities and the will to make the loss of unity undone, to bring into being a self that unites both halves of the split individuality. The shadowy appearance of the second Wilson suggests that he is a being from the other side, like the spectre in "Shadow" or *Ligeia*. The vagueness of his appearance visualizes the indefiniteness of what he represents. For one thing, he is that part of Wilson's self with which he narrator wants to be reconciled, like the human soul striving for its return into the ideal

Fig. 96 "William Wilson":
Carlo Farneti (1928).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 97 "Ombre":
Wögel (1884).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

state of *anamnesis*, on the other hand, the spectre is a frightening figure that brings madness and death.

These elements of the story have gone unnoticed in the illustrator's interpretations of "William Wilson". Carlo FARNETI is the only illustrator whose illustration shows an awareness for the ambiguous meaning of Wilson as a portent of bliss and misery (fig. 96). His etching, showing an angelic figure clutching his double amidst a scene dominated by frightening apparitions, may be understood as a visualization of Wilson's need for harmony and security, but simultaneously the picture emphasizes the oppressive force of the second Wilson.

Likewise, the narrator's idyllic description of the school and its surroundings have been neglected. Wilson conveys his multi-sensory impressions in a way that recalls Poe's "Letter to Mr.—" and his "Poetic Principle". The early school days, the times of undisturbed harmony, represent that sort of happiness that Poe defined as the ultimate object of human existence (H 7: xxxviii). Wilson mentions his "undefinable delight", echoing the "indefinite sensations" in the "Letter to Mr.—", brought about by the smell of volatile fragrances, the musical sound of the bells and the sight of the surroundings, which look like as if enveloped in a dream-like haze. All this demonstrates that there is also a poetological and aesthetical discourse in "William Wilson", but the illustrations referring to Wilson's description all foreground the gloomy aspects of the edifice. While many illustrations for the story's finale evince the artists' aspirations to capture the suggestive ambiguity of the story, that is not to reduce it to one specific meaning, the full range and depth of the other text passages were not visualized.

It seems as if for some illustrators there was not so much clarity as for Wilbur. Other artists, on the contrary, were eager to blur the clarity, in that they produced graphic interpretations which defy a simplistic reading of the story as a struggle between good and evil, between conscience and moral depravation. However, the reader/viewer who has accompanied William Wilson through the windings of the school building, must be supposed to have a better orientation amidst "the dark and intricate passages" of the house of Usher (cf. 5.1).

4.2.4 Shadow

This story was first published in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of September 1835, along with "King Pest the First" and "Loss of Breath". Although no evidence has been found, there are strong reasons that "Shadow" was originally intended for publication in Poe's projected *Tales of the Folio Club*. A plague provides the background of "King Pest" and "Shadow", although the tone differs in the two tales. While "King Pest" deals with the plague in a somewhat humorous way (see 4.3), "Shadow" was characterized as a "rhapsody of gloom" (Woodberry 82; qtd. in M 2: 187). Poe considered both stories as companion tales, since besides their simultaneous publication in the *Messenger*, Poe wanted the stories to follow each other in his *Phantasy Pieces*.¹⁰¹ "Shadow" has been considered a prelude to "The Masque of the Red Death", Poe's third story dealing with the pest (cf. Pollin, "Prelude").

While in his earlier tales the author chose to convey the horror by means of detailed descriptions, in “Shadow” this effect is created by the indefinite apparition of the phantom and a general atmosphere of gloom. The horror in “Metzengerstein” loses much of its impact, since the horse is furnished with conventional gothic details such as gleaming eyes and steaming nostrils, and thus it is something like a well-known acquaintance for the reader. Its corporeal presence in the fictional world of “Metzengerstein” makes it part of the tale’s everyday world, which presents itself to the reader with only few ambiguities. Quite contrary, “Shadow” is about the confrontation of man with some unknown and supernatural entity, whose nature defies rationalization.

And lo! from among those sable draperies where the sounds of the song departed, there came forth a dark and undefined shadow – a shadow such as the moon, when low in heaven, might fashion from the figure of a man: but it was the shadow neither of man, nor of God, nor of any familiar thing. And, quivering awhile among the draperies of the room, it at length rested in full view upon the surface of the door of brass. But the shadow was vague, and formless, and indefinite. (M 2: 190)

The figure is characterized as being “dark”, “undefined”, “[un]familiar”, “quivering”, “vague”, “formless”, and “indefinite”. The central figure of the story is without a distinct form and thus withstands a clear presentation. The result is an indefinite image. Poe’s early axiom that poetry is “presenting [...] images [...] with indefinite sensations”, is here transformed into a work of prose. Apart from the visual vagueness of Shadow, the story’s overall effect of indefiniteness is enhanced by Poe’s phraseology. Repetitions of phrases and sounds, the imitation of a typically biblical diction, the use of antiquated vocabulary, syntactic inversions and classical figures of speech all create the impression of a strange incident set in an obscure past. Poe’s style in “Shadow” shows all the lyrical features which the author defined as “the quaint in phraseology and of the grotesque in rhythm” (H 9: 94).

Several times Oinos alludes to the inexplicability of the phenomena that haunt the days of the tale, circumscribing them as “strange things, [...] for which there is no name upon earth”. Considering his “indefinite sensations”, Oinos reports:

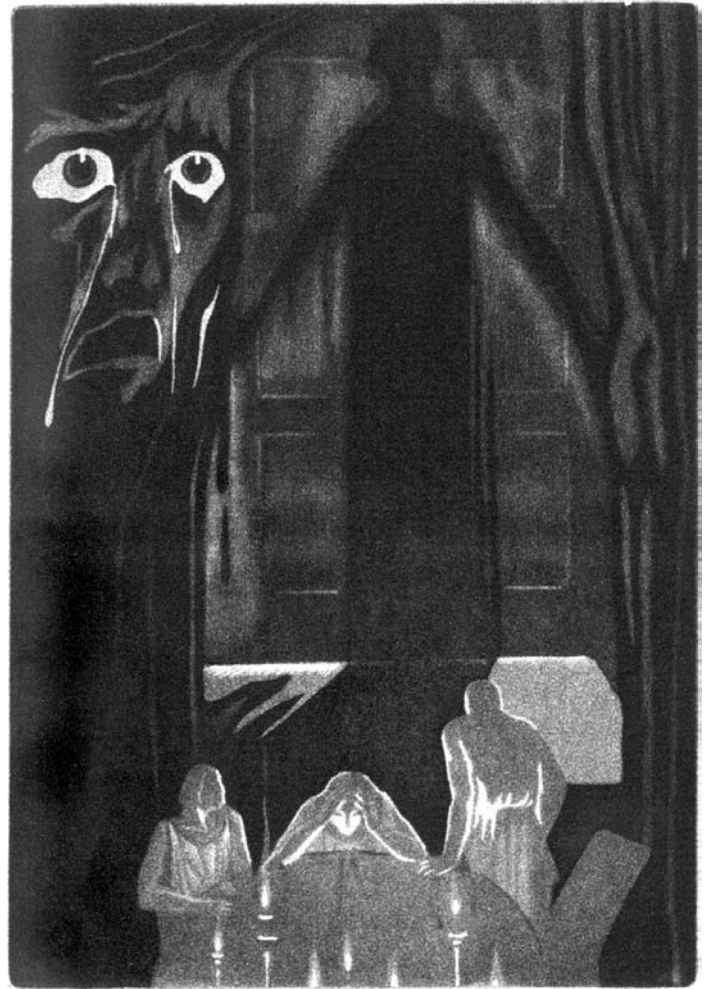
There were things around us and about of which I can render no distinct account – things material and spiritual – heaviness in the atmosphere – a sense of suffocation – anxiety –, and above all, that terrible state of existence which the nervous experience when the senses are keenly living and awake, and meanwhile the powers of thought lie dormant. (M 2: 189; H 2: 147f)¹⁰²

The whole story is abundant with allusions to obscurity, mysticism and vagueness. The emergence of Shadow is the climactic presentation of the unrepresentable, which necessarily remains indefinite.

The first illustration to accompany “Shadow” was a picture by Hermann WÖGEL, published in 1884 in the famous Quantin edition of Baudelaire’s translations (fig. 97). WÖGEL depicted the company of six mourners who have withdrawn into a hall, together with the corpse of Zoilus. Three persons at the left hand of the table, all given in profile, are staring to the right, presumably towards Oinos, who frightfully gazes towards the onlooker of the scene. One of the men is burying his head in his hands and another is pensively fixing his eyes on the smoke of a smoul-

dering fire right next to the corpse. In his illustration for “The Fall of the House of Usher”, WÖGEL made use of the same compositional trick, that is placing the onlooker’s point of view at the very spot where the source of terror lies. By this means the onlooker is directly involved in the scene, and the mourners’ sensations described by Poe are conveyed very intensely. WÖGEL renounced any theatrical gestures and postures. The men are struck by something which is not depicted in the picture. In the lower right corner a vague shadow is cast over the floor and the foot of a seat. More prominent, however, is the amorphous fume originating from the hearth and its shadow or the silhouettes of two mourners on the wall. WÖGEL is successful in creating an eerie scene, effectively stressed by the dramatic lighting conditions. Like Poe, WÖGEL merely suggested the ominous apparition of Shadow. Some of the details of Poe’s text are neglected or changed, such as the seven candles (symbolizing the seven heavenly spheres alluded to in Oinos’ prologue), the mirror-like ebony table, the position of Zoilus and the Shadow. As far as the obscurity of the densely cross-hatched background allows such an identification, the room is made up in a neo-classical rather than an antique style. However, these deviations from the text, the stiff postures, and the poor technical execution of the engraving do not decrease the sense of dreadful apprehension conveyed by the picture.

Almost two decades later, in 1902, the American illustrator Frederick Simpson COBURN devised another method to avoid the direct representation of Shadow (fig. 98). He produced a dark scene, sparsely but dramatically illuminated by seven candles on a table. The whole company of the seven mourners is shown in a state of agitation. Most of them are staring frightfully into the impenetrable dark in the upper right quarter of the picture, where nothing more than some very scarcely highlighted details, which might be the draperies’ folds, can be discerned. A diffuse cloud or shadow is coming forth from this dark corner, dividing the picture into two triangular halves. This diagonal line from the upper left towards the lower right corner recurs in the row of glasses and candles on the table as well as in the grouping of the recoiling mourners. The emanating cloud is about to sink down towards the frightened company. Some quenched candles symbolize the extinguished lights of the mourners’ lives, thus visualizing their impending deaths through the approaching shadow. Even more pronounced than WÖGEL, COBURN was successful in catching the gloomy ambience and the reactions of the terrified mourners. By the compositional and symbolical use of the candles COBURN’s illustration incorporates much more of the story than WÖGEL’s engraving does. COBURN’s solution to give a visual impression of the formless Shadow without becoming too distinct has not been surpassed by later artists. The American illustrator is also one of the very few artists who managed to visualize the ultimate threat of Shadow without showing any distinctive part of it. Like Poe, COBURN left it to the imagination of the viewer to form a more distinct image of Shadow. The viewer can project his own image into the “empty” space in the picture’s upper right corner. A few years later than COBURN, Alberto MARTINI could not do better than portraying the apparition with such hackneyed details as ghostly staring eyes and a brutish muzzle.



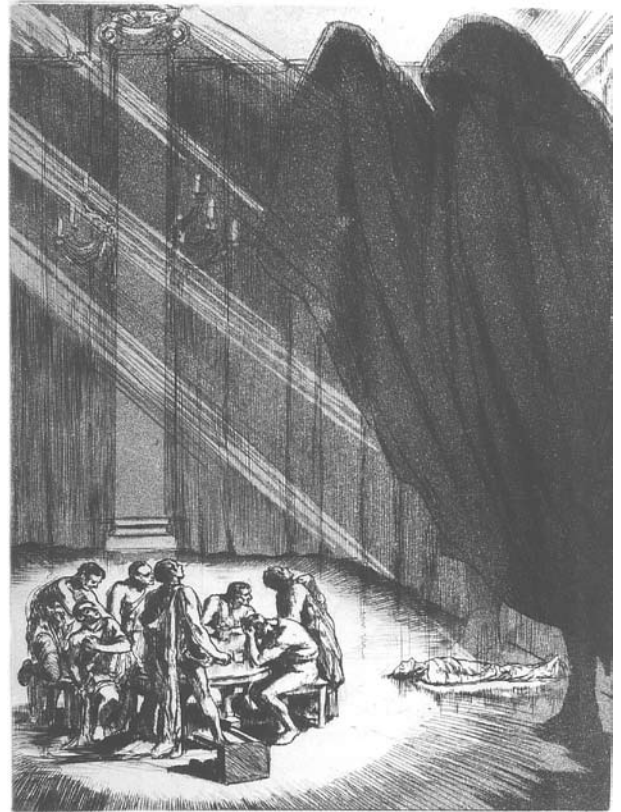
The 1920s yielded several illustrations of the final scene, among them pictures by Fernand SIMÉON (1924), Alois BÍLEK (1926), Alméry LOBEL-RICHE (1927) and Carlo FARNETI (1928). Carlo FARNETI, whose “eaux-fortes à la manière noire” are a most suitable technique for the illustration of “Shadow”, was surprisingly unimaginative. The same must be said of Fernand SIMÉON, who produced one of the outstanding French sets of Poe illustrations, but for “Shadow” he limits his graphic interpretation to a stiff scene showing some bust-like Aristotelian Greeks just noticing a shadow behind their backs. Like SIMÉON, FARNETI represented only three mourners (fig. 99). Although FARNETI’s picture is similar to COBURN’s, especially in regard to the point of view, the pervading despondency and the depiction of Shadow was much better realized in the American illustration. FARNETI’s shadow looks like a full size silhouette cast over the brazen door. The forms of a body, a head and two arms are clearly discernible, as are all the features of the room. Additionally, the symmetric composition suffers from the superfluous presentation of a gigantic weeping face in the upper left corner. In most of his other illustrations, FARNETI uses spectral forms to great advantage, visualizing the supernatural forces or the psychological impulses that haunt the world and the characters in Poe’s stories. These apparitions are delicately shaded, sometimes almost indiscernibly merging with or emanating from other forms, such as a skeleton below the rippled surface of the Seine in “The Mystery of Marie Rôget” (1927: 276),

Fig. 98 “Shadow”: Frederick S. Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

Fig. 99 “Ombre”: Carlo Farneti (1928).

Collection of Burton Pollin.



Figgs. 100+101 "Ombre":
Alméry Lobel-Riche (1927).
*Courtesy of the Free Library of
Philadelphia, Rare Book Department,
Richard Gimbel Collection.*

a cloudy skull in the stormy skies in "MS. Found in a Bottle" (1927: 154), or the ghost of Fortunato clinging to Montresor's back in "The Cask of Amontillado" (1928: between pages 124 and 125). The presentation of obscure and vague forms was unquestionably FARNETI's forte, but in his illustration for "Shadow", none of his outstanding qualities are apparent.

At the same time as FARNETI, Alméry LOBEL-RICHE produced two pictures for "Shadow". One of them illustrates the appearance of the phantom (fig. 100). The scene is set in a high hall and viewed from an elevated point of view. On the one hand, this perspective allowed the artist to contrast the puny men with a gigantic Shadow. On the other hand, the viewer, who, as a reader, is directly involved in the text through the first person narration, is somewhat distanced from the scene. Thus, the immediacy of Oinos' report is spoilt, since the perspectives of text and picture are incompatible. Although STERNER's illustration employs a similar perspective, he managed to convey the point of view of the mourners, because the viewer enters the picture in the lower left corner of the picture. The eye moves over the position of the men before it looks at the dark shadows in the upper right corner, thus following the upward gaze of the mourners. While STERNER's composition, just like Poe's narrative perspective, creates empathy between the viewer and the men, LOBEL-RICHE's point of view destroys the effect. The French artist depicts Shadow as rising from the amorously formed draperies, which are suggestive of an arm and a head hidden under a cloak. This presentation followed the nineteenth century graphic formula of representing spectres as if covered with shrouds. Although this is not very original, the picture is true to Poe's text, since Shadow emerges from the curtains. The artist did not care about an elaboration of

the lighting conditions, so that the tense atmosphere of the scene as well as the indefiniteness of the spectacle remain undepicted. The whole hall, from floor to the ceiling, is bathed in a bright light, seemingly devoid of a source. Four rays of light are falling diagonally into the room from the upper left without creating an appropriate effect of illumination. LOBEL-RICHE's other etching for "Shadow" is more inventive, since it is the first of the very few pictures illustrating the opening paragraphs of the story, where Oinos tells of ominous forebodings and strange portents. With respect to the contents and the style of these paragraphs Poe set a keynote of gloom and weirdness which is developed into a climactic finale in the appearance of Shadow. LOBEL-RICHE depicted a naked man who makes a wild escape through a mythological Arcadian landscape (fig. 101). The source of his terror is symbolized by the gigantic head of a young man whose face arises above the dark clouds.¹⁰³ The wings growing from the youth's neck and his crown of snakes suggest that he is the symbol of doom, combining the iconographical presentations of the ancient God of Death, Thanatos, and the Gorgon Medusa. The atmosphere of death and desolation is also brought about by the vast landscape whose seemingly boundless depth is stressed by the steep vanishing line provided by a long row of cypresses, themselves a symbol of life and death. LOBEL-RICHE's landscape is in accordance with the mythological model of the Arcadian landscape, the archetype of a Greek countryside panorama and the pseudo-geographical framework for a whole lyrical genre, but it does not correspond with the setting of Poe's story.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the illustration is successful in transforming Oinos' elegiac prologue into a visual impression of hopelessness and inevitability. Twenty years later, LOBEL-RICHE's compatriot Edouard Goerg emphasized this sense of desolation in two of his three pictures for "Shadow". The first shows a dark mask with eye slits and wings growing from its cheeks, slightly reminiscent of LOBEL-RICHE's gigantic head, hovering above four faces looking out of a water pool. The other is an existentialist group portrait of six partly naked figures helplessly staring towards the beholder.

The pictures discussed so far all visualize the story's gloomy atmosphere or a sense of menace. While WÖGEL's and STERNER' depictions of the apparition are indefinite, so that the viewer cannot decide about the nature of Shadow, FARNETI's and LOBEL-RICHE's illustrations emphasize supernatural aspects, in that they present an ominous and threatening being of superhuman size. Alfred KUBIN's drawing of 1920 can be regarded as a combination of these pictures (fig. 102). Like STERNER and LOBEL-RICHE, the Austrian artist depicted Shadow in the every moment it is emerging from the dark draperies, but KUBIN also focused on the reactions of the company.

The reactions of the mourners in KUBIN's picture are more ambiguous than in WÖGEL's, and thus the illustration matches Poe's indefiniteness on yet another level. The seven men seem to have recoiled from the phantom behind the table, but they do not look all too scared. Their attitudes tell of disbelief, but not of fear, and some faces even show an amused expression. They rather make the impression of being a gang of boozers than a company of melancholy mourners. This impression is even stronger in Fritz EICHENBERG's wood engraving, dating from 1944



(fig. 103). The foreground of his picture is dominated by a pitcher and a man taking a deep draft from his chalice. A second man holds his throat as if he does not feel well, while a lute player in the middle-ground stares absently at the corpse of Zoilus behind him. Apart from the corpse, the background of the picture shows a curtain and a mask-like horned head with a fierce expression. The picture suggests that the apparition of Shadow is a drunkard's fantasy, stimulated by excessive consumption of "some flasks of the red Chian wine", the "gloomy room" and situation, the "loud and sonorous" rendition of "the songs of Anacreon" and the designs on the "lofty door of brass [...] fashioned by the artisan Corinnos" (M 2: 189f). However, the viewer can arrange these aspects in a completely different way, so as to construct a storyline which would resemble the version supported by the majority of critics. The overall darkness of the illustration emphasizes the gloomy atmosphere of the story. The drinking man tries to drown his fear in wine, the second already feels the first signs of approaching death, and the lute-player just becomes aware of Shadow, represented by the fierce mask, emerging from the draperies behind him. Most critics accept the supernaturalism of the story, and as a result, they consider Shadow as a being from a world beyond our own. But the many hints that the "transcendental" experience is nothing but a result of too much wine cannot be ignored. Mabbott, pointing to the meaning of the name Oinos in a footnote, even discards the idea that it could be intended to suggest "wine" as "pointless". The critic, stating that "Poe was interested in words of unity", reads Oinos as "One" (188).¹⁰⁵ Unity is certainly an aspect of the story, though it goes beyond a mere interest in words: death-doomed Oinos is to become one with

Fig. 102 "Schatten": Alfred Kubin (1920).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 103 "Schatten": Fritz Eichenberg (1944, first published 1987).
Collection of the author.

Shadow, who has already absorbed “many thousand departed friends” (191). However, it is hard to decide whether Poe treated a topic like this seriously. Is the union with Shadow to be interpreted as the typically romantic yearning for death? Is it Poe’s fictionalization of the Eins, or do we have to understand Oinos’ transition into the “shadows of shadows” in Platonic terms, as a return into a state comparable to *anamnesis*? Any of these assumptions is legitimate, but one also has to consider that Poe, at times, ridiculed these ideas, and moreover, the vision of a life beyond death, as presented in “Shadow”, promises no bliss. Poe’s handling of the topics in question was either very serious or cynical.

On yet another level, “Shadow” exemplifies Poe’s process of creation. Because of the lethal menace of the plague and the inexplicable incidents alluded to, the narrator is in a state of emotional agitation. Simultaneously, his senses are dulled through the consumption of too much wine. As a result, Oinos’ attention is directed away from the happenings of everyday life and the superficial appearance of things, so that he becomes aware of another world beyond, a world which usually remains hidden in the shadows. Just like so many other of Poe’s protagonists, Oinos’ finds himself on a threshold between life and death, or consciousness and delirium. His mental state is oscillating between sobriety and inebriation, as his report is wavering between keen observation and hallucinatory illusion. It is useful to compare this with Poe’s later report about poetic inspiration, as laid down in his *Marginalia* No. 150. Here, the author stated that his imagination is especially active “at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams” (P 2: 258). In this threshold state the author was capable of “a glimpse of the spirit’s outer world”, envisioning a world crowded with “shadows of shadows”, just like Oinos does in “Shadow”. But, again, one cannot be sure whether this poetic discourse can be taken seriously. If Oinos is merely drunk, it follows that excessive consumption of alcohol is not only a prerequisite for “transcendental” vision but also a necessary stimulus for the poetic imagination.

One way or the other, in his peculiar situation Oinos’ song seems to conjure up the indefinite apparition of Shadow, just as if his sonorous voice called it forth from the draperies, Poe’s favorite symbol of the division line between our world and another beyond. Once again, this is reminiscent of Poe’s “Letter to Mr.—”, in particular the statement about the connection between the musicalness of poetry and the indefiniteness of the images evoked.

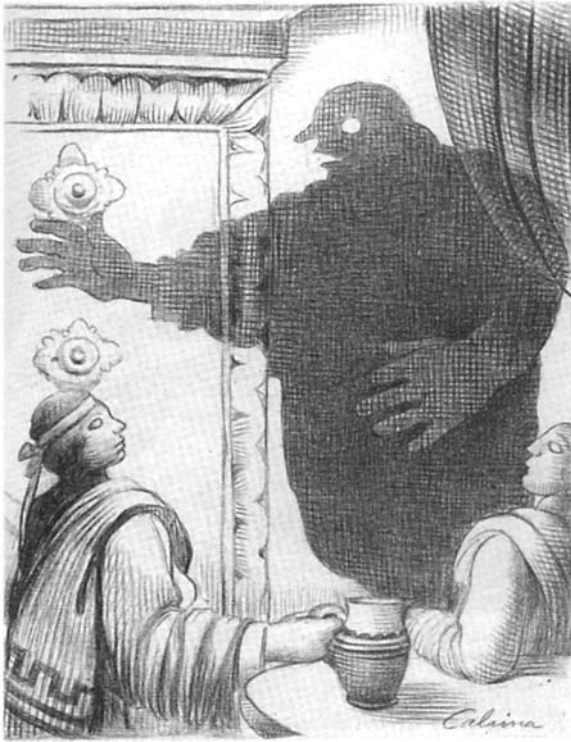
But gradually my songs they ceased and their echoes, rolling afar off among the sable draperies of the chamber, became weak, and undistinguishable, and so faded away. An lo! from among those sable draperies of the room where the sounds of the song departed, there came forth a dark and undefined shadow ... (M 2: 190; H 2: 149)

It seems as if the sonorous and indistinguishable sounds of Oinos’ gloomy verses were converted into the indefiniteness of the shadowy apparition. Thus, “Shadow” is paradigmatic for the re-orientation in Poe’s career. As has been pointed out, Poe abandoned poetry, but he was eager to transform many of his ideas into short stories. The many lyrical devices in “Shadow” make the story a “prose-poem”, the ideal literary hybrid which Poe tried to develop until the end of his career.

KUBIN's peculiar scribbling style creates the impression as if it was unsteady and quivering. It transforms the pictorial aspect of Poe's notion of indefiniteness visually: there are no fixed outlines which clearly define the object in question. Several overlapping lines are employed to circumscribe Shadow. As a result, the sketchy presentation of Shadow is vague and shifting, as is the meaning of Poe's suggestive tale. Shadow can be understood as an epitome of Poe's concept of indefiniteness. The shadowiness of the apparition represents such different notions as obscurity, vagueness, ambiguity of presentation, suggestiveness, and multiplicity of meanings. Is there really a shadow emerging from the draperies? And if so, what exactly is it? How can it be imagined and how can it be described? Why is it (or why does it look) vague and shapeless, but not so vague that it cannot be discerned as a figure at all? And what is its meaning beyond its function within the plot? What does Shadow represent for the reader? These are all questions challenged by the text, and despite the fact that several critics have analyzed the story, there has been no unequivocal answer to any of them. The only definite about the story is that its meaning is as elusive and indefinite as Shadow himself.

Although "Shadow" is widely accepted as a story of gloom, its humorous and ironical potential has been pointed out as well. The illustrations of KUBIN, whose drawings convey humorous notions very rarely, and EICHENBERG may help the reader to detect subtle ironies under the heavy surface of gloom and dreariness. These two artists were successful in keeping the balance between serious and ironical aspects, that is, just as in Poe's text, these aspects are ambiguous and therefore multivalent.

In 1970, the Spanish illustrator Ramón CALSINA produced two pencil drawings for "Shadow", and these two are the most humorous pictures ever produced to illustrate the story (figg. 104+105). CALSINA's style is characterized by clear outlines diligently filled with minute cross-hatching to allow varied greyscales. The presentation of the figures is simplified and stiff, and their faces are lifeless. Their anatomy and movements make many of them look like rag dolls, an impression enhanced by their marble-like eyes. The pictures' compositions are straight and without depth in their childish perspectives, giving the illustrations either an air of peep-show boxes or of glove puppet theatre performances. Thus, CALSINA's Shadow has a discernible human shape (fig. 104). The profile projection of head with a nose worthy of Cyrano de Bergerac and a hole in the head for an eye is incompatible with the dimensional representation of his huge hands which are depicted with much more anatomical correctness than the extremities of many of his other figures. Whether this incompatibility between a flat and seemingly dimensional representation is suitable to convey the ambiguity of Shadow's appearance must be doubted. Two relaxed Greeks are staring at the phantom in a disinterested way or at best with mild surprise. This picture communicates a funny notion rather than the terror felt by the mourners in Poe's tale. Likewise, CALSINA's second picture tends to produce a humorous effect, showing a face and two stalking zigzag legs emerging from the ring of Saturn (fig. 105). This cartoon-like personification of the planet is about to spill onto another planet's surface, probably the Earth, with something interpretable as contagious blotches of the pestilence.



Regarding pictures like these, one may easily come to the conclusion that the *Obras Selectas* are a juvenile edition, but the sumptuous leather binding embossed with golden letters as well as the 13-page introduction written by Carlos Rojas clearly show that the books were intended for an adult readership. So what to make of these illustrations? Is it legitimate to discard them as inadequate, or as meaningless, since they obviously contradict the predominantly gloomy character of Poe's tale? However, it must be taken into account, that these pictures challenge the reader's hermeneutic activity because he/she will try to explain the inconsistencies between text and illustrations. As a result, the reader's attention may be directed towards the text's ambiguities and subtle allusions. CALSINA's illustrations extrapolate a light-hearted layer of meaning that lies below the text's dark surface. Thus, the childish presentation of the vomiting planet can be understood as a hint at the Saturnalia, the antique festival of Saturn, a period of licentiousness and unrepressed hilarity and merrymaking. If the reader accepts CALSINA's pictures, he/she will conclude that "Shadow" is a hoax, ridiculing the horror tales which were still the fashion of the day in 1835. Oinos and Poe's reader are the witnesses of a tricky theater performance, since the appearance of Shadow, emerging from the draperies [sic], is nothing but a well-planned practical joke to make fun of an audience all too willing to believe in supernatural spectacles.

Figgs. 104+105 "Sombra":
Ramón Calsina (1970).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

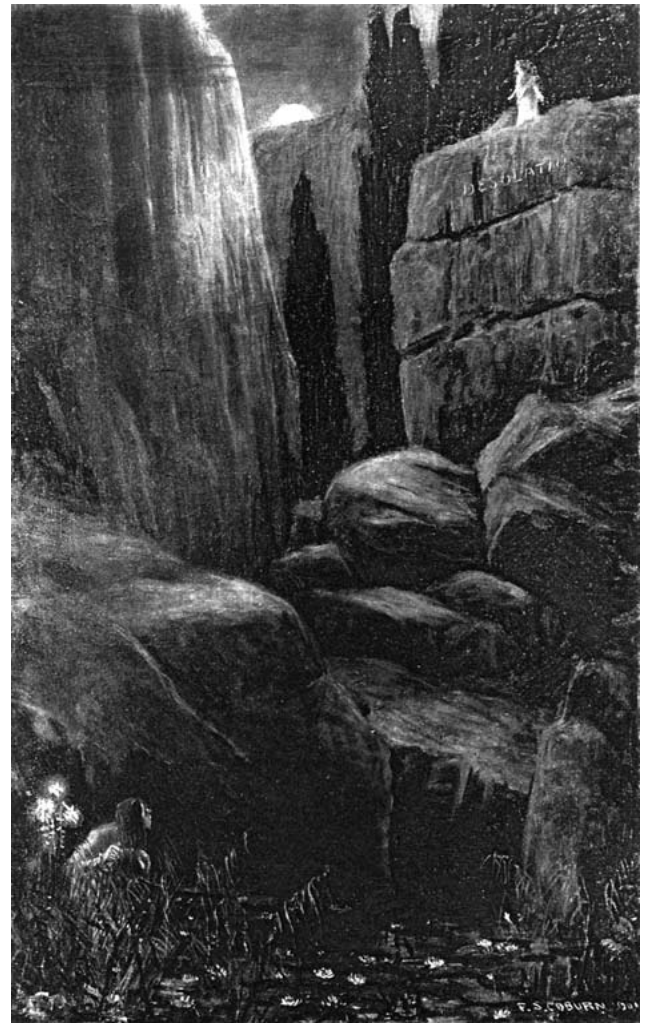
4.2.5 Silence

"Silence" is one of Poe's most puzzling texts. The author's hint in the subtitle that it is written "[i]n the manner of the Psychological Autobiographists" is not very helpful for its understanding, since it can only be guessed who Poe thought to

belong to this group.¹⁰⁶ Clark Griffith claimed that the story is characterized by “inarguable irony” and considered it “a ruthless parody of Transcendentalism” (“Romantics” 120). Griffith and Claudel followed James Southall Wilson’s thesis that the text satirizes the New England Transcendentalists and English Romantics (“Devil”), among them some candidates to be counted among the mysterious group, namely Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey. However, if “Silence” embodies an ironic edge against contemporary English authors, it is rather directed against Wordsworth. Some passages of the tale can be understood as satirical commentaries on his well-known “Prelude”, first published in 1812, and often reprinted after that date. As early as 1831, Poe expressed his dislike for Wordsworth. On the one hand, Poe kept complaining about the so-called “metaphysicianism”¹⁰⁷ of the Lakeside poet – note the position of the rock at the banks of a water in Poe’s story –, on the other hand he ridiculed Wordsworth’s habit to poetize about trifles and simple topics culled from everyday life (H 7: xxxix ff.). Thus, the high forehead “lofty with thought” (M 2: 196) can be understood as an allusion to Wordsworth’s “intellectual” attitude, or as Poe understood it, respectively. Moreover, Wordsworth argued that the true poet’s source of inspiration is nature, and that “contemplation in tranquillity” is a necessary part of the process of poetic creation. However, in “Silence”, nature is far from poetic, and the final silence is anything but inspiring.

G. R. Thompson, brushing over the story in a few lines, cursorily stated that under the “mystic and ‘poetic’ (and flawed) surface[s] [...] ‘Silence’ develops the theme of a deceptive and illusory world” (*Fiction* 169). Thompson did not succeed in subsuming the story under his general thesis about Romantic Irony. His single argument that the lynx is “a symbol of the ironic vision peering unflinchingly into the face of perversity”, rather emphasizes the serious than the mocking aspects of the story. The text becomes anything but ironic, when it finally stresses the dignity of man. Thompson’s evaluation of “Silence” as a piece of satire derived from the circumstance that it was very likely to be one of the *Tales of the Folio Club*. Poe said of these stories that they were of “a bizarre and generally whimsical character” and that were to be discussed by the party members in a manner that was “intended as a burlesque upon criticism generally” (O 1: 103). But these statements must not necessarily allude to all the tales. A serious work can well challenge absurd critical remarks. The marked difference of the diverse critical speculations about “Silence” suggests a “burlesque on criticism” of another sort, if the pun and some self-irony are allowed here. Poe would certainly rejoice in the post-war debate about his work, which must be supposed to resemble the heated arguments at the Folio Club meetings.

Like Thompson, Hammond and Cantalupo referred to the framework of the *The Tales of the Folio Club*. However, their interpretation focused on Poe’s statement that the stories “were originally written to illustrate a large work ‘On the Imaginative Faculties’” (O 1: 103). Identifying the narrator with Poe, Hammond interpreted the story as a self-ironic and deliberately exaggerated allegory of his own poetic process of creation (“Reconstruction” 28). Hammond supported this thesis by means of reference to the first title of the story, under which it was originally published



in the *Baltimore Book* in 1838. He suggested that “Siope”, the Greek word for “silence”, is an anagram for “is Poe” (*ibid.*). Quite differently, Cantalupo concluded that the power of words enables man to create a world of its own in which the demon’s curse is ineffective (4). Like Cantalupo, A. H. Quinn, Mabbott, Kennedy and Silverman all emphasized the story’s gravity, and Ketterer propounded that “there is even room to read it as the devil’s version of Christ’s temptation in the wilderness” (*Rationale* 147). In terms of style and sinister setting, “Silence” resembles “Shadow”, which is usually considered its companion piece. These two stories, the style of which Mabbott labelled as “poetic prose” (2: 192; cf. Silverman 131), are closest to Poe’s lyrical works, because of their settings and the excessive use of repetitions, inversions, and other stylistic devices which Poe also employed in his poetry (cf. Hammond *ibid.*). Additionally, “Silence” is linked to the author’s poetry, in that mood and setting are similar to “The Valley of Unrest” and “Dream-Land”, a point stressed by Fisher who considered the story a serious piece of dream fiction (“Power” 61). The story’s title and the themes of solitude and stillness foreshadow Poe’s equally enigmatic lyrical text “Sonnet – To Silence”.

In contrast to the variable critical approaches, the majority of illustrations for “Silence” is characterized by similarity. “Silence” is very likely the most uniformly illustrated work of Poe. The first two pictures appeared in France, in 1879 and 1884.

Fig. 106 “Silence”:
[Louis Fortuné] Méaulle
(1884).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

Fig. 107 “Silence”:
Frederick S. Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.



MÉAULLE's depiction of the man on the rock was to become the standard motif, so that the central image of the story became the almost exclusive focal point for generations of illustrators (fig. 106). Thus, later illustrations do not differ substantially from MÉAULLE's picture, as a survey of the graphic tradition of the story shows. Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902), Alfred KUBIN (1911), Martin VAN MAËLE (1912), Harry CLARKE (1919), Fernand SIMÉON (1924), Alméry LOBELRICHE (1927), A. HAHN jr. (1930), Fritz EICHENBERG (1944), Edouard GOERG (1947), Fumio YAMANA (1949), Ramón CALSINA (1970), Peter COLLIEN (1976), Wilfried SATTY (1976), Giovanni GIANNINI (1978) and Suzanne CLEE (1983) all depicted the figure on the rock amidst an alien landscape. Most of these illustrations create a sense of desolation, so that alleged ironical or satirical aspects of the text seem to have gone unnoticed by visual artists. Thus, the reader's attention is distracted from possible tongue-in-cheek allusions, which are not only subtle and obscure by themselves, but which are also overruled by illustrations which emphasize despondency and desolation.

In some pictures, the man on the rock is observed by another figure, usually inconspicuously positioned in the lower parts of the picture. This figure either represents the demon, watching the man in the desert of Zaïre, or the first person narrator of the tale, whose involvement in the story is thus visually transformed. In SATTY's montage picture man and demon are depicted below the rock, the latter looking like a feathered dragon. In COBURN's illustration the observer does look quite human (fig. 107), and Fritz EICHENBERG provided the watching figure with

Fig. 108 "Stille":
Fritz Eichenberg (1944,
first published 1987).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 109 "Silêncio":
Ramón Calsina (1970).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

a brutish and demonic countenance (fig. 108). Because of his slight caricatural graphic style, Eichenberg's picture is the one of two illustrations that may arouse the reader's/viewer's awareness for interpretations of the kind brought forth by Thompson and Hammond.

The other illustration is Ramón CALSINA's picture. The Spanish illustrator depicted the very first sentence of the story: the demon, presented as the devil with a horned head and cloven hooves, lays his hand on the narrator's head, just as if he was about to hypnotize him (fig. 109). This illustration is remarkable because it stimulates the reader to think twice about the relationship between demon and narrator, as well as about their connection with the mysterious man on the rock. In CALSINA's illustration the narrator and the demon are located in an environment resembling the landscape of Zaïre. Thus, the picture suggests that the narrator and the man on the rock are identical. Being in the hands of the demon, the narrator has to listen to the story of his fate, probably again and again. The demon enjoys the situation, as is indicated by his smile and his laughter at the end of the story. But this smile may also direct the reader's attention to the ambiguous meaning of the demon's mirth. Does he laugh at the narrator, the man on the rock or the reader?

Kenneth Silverman suggested that Poe resembles the demon, because they both take delight in pestering the protagonists of their tales, as well as their audiences, with one scary situation after another. Thus, the narrator of "Silence" is exposed to the demon just like the reader, entranced by the poetic prose and the bizarre setting, is in the hands of the author (131). Poe was always eager to spell-bind his readers. In May 1842, Poe wrote in *Graham's Magazine*: "During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control" (H 11: 108). The demon's laughter at the very end is a proof for those critics who regard the tale as characterized by biting wit. Revealing it all as a hoax, Poe/the demon laughs right into the face of the audience, after having baffled it with the weird happenings in the desolate landscape in far away Zaïre. Thus, the pleasure of the Poe/the demon is not only about having a tight grip on the audience, but also to scoff at those readers who are caught by such fantastic narrations.

However, Silverman detected an essentially human concern in the tale: "The Malignity in the universe is not disease, decay, or destruction; what terrifies above all is human awareness of a derealized unworld of inexistence, the chill of unbeing" (131). Here, Poe's biographer points to a theme the reader encounters even in such predominantly humorous tales like "Loss of Breath" (see next chapter), in which Mr. Lackobreath endures a series of life-endangering and humiliating afflictions, but when he finds himself locked in a vault, unable to move or to make himself heard, yet fully aware of his dilemma, he finally recognizes that he undergoes the most horrible experience imaginable: utter and eternal loneliness. Mr. Lackobreath and the man on the rock suffer a shock of recognition in comparison to which all previous predicaments are insignificant. This, one more time, demonstrates the ambiguity of Poe's works. The borderline between humorous and serious tales does not divide his body of works into two neatly separated groups, but it runs right through any story in a zig-zag line.

4.2.6 The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion

“The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” is the first in a series of three texts which are dialogues between spirits of deceased human beings who meet in after-life. The first third of the dialogue functions as an introduction of the two interlocutors Eiros and Charmion. They had already known each other as human beings, although under different names. Charmion died in a natural way ten years before earth was completely devastated by a gigantic comet, so that this spirit has a superior knowledge about eternal life and Aidenn, the place where the two meet. Aidenn remains unspecified, and there are only a few hints about the nature of the *post mortem* existence. The reader learns that no one suffers pain there. However, the passage to this place is terrible. Aidenn can only be entered through the darkness of death. Eiros is “overburdened with the majesty of all things” (456), which appear as in a dream. Charmion soothes Eiros’ feelings promising to introduce the unknown spirit into the new state of being the following day.

Charmion is more interested in gathering the details of the collision between the comet and earth. At this point the dialogue turns into a monologue. Eiros report about the destruction of earth brings along with it a change of tone. While the first third of the dialogue is dominated by a phraseology characterized by syntactical inversions and old-fashioned words, the story turns into the straight prosaic account of Eiros. This report about the devastation of earth by fire is the prominent part of the story. Poe’s use of the comet as the instrument of the apocalypse guaranteed the contemporary readers’ interest in his story (M 2: 452; see A. H. Quinn 187). However, “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” is not merely a sensational tale.

Mabbott labelled “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” and its two later companion pieces as “Platonic dialogues”, because it recalls the conversations between teacher and pupil in Platon’s works. There is, however, another reason to justify this classification. The three tales all evince Poe’s informal use of (Neo)-Platonic Idealism, which he had instrumentalized for the “philosophical” foundation of his poetology and his aesthetic universe. As has been demonstrated in this study several times, Platon’s Idealism not only provided Poe with a basic pattern for many of his works, it also influenced the development of his imagery.¹⁰⁸ This influence is more obvious in the poetry than in the tales.

Among the texts in the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” shows the relationship with his early poetry (and with Platonic ideas) more apparently than any story written before 1840. The “Platonic dialogues” hold the middleground between the poetic and the prose works. The circumstance that they are presented in dramatic form is just one evidence of their intermediate character. “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” was one of the last stories that Poe wrote, before the collection was issued early in 1840. The tale’s date of publication shows that the Platonic ideas of Poe’s early poetry were still having an impact on his story-writing in the late 1830s. Until the beginning of the 1840s, Platonic ideas – that is in particular the basic dualism, the aesthetics of ethereal beauty and the topic of man longing for an exalted existence – kept remain-

ing to be the larger “philosophical” framework of Poe’s œuvre. Poe reserved the prominent place at the very end of the collection for “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion”. Thus, all other stories were put into parentheses between “Morella” (preceded by a motto from Platon) and the dialogue between Eiros and Charmion.¹⁰⁹

The scenery and the imagery of “Eiros and Charmion” bears resemblance with that of his first major effort in verse, “Al Aaraaf”. In his early poetry, Poe shifted the perspective from the earthbound star-gazer in “Evening Star” to the inhabitants of the planet of Beauty itself. “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” offers another point of view, in that the story combines these perspectives. The two protagonists have once been human beings, before they have been turned into spirits living in the realm of beauty and eternal happiness. Another point of resemblance is the destructive power of the brilliant celestial body. The star Al Aaraaf is on its way to devastate the planet Earth, but whereas in the poem the destruction is not reported, the comet in “Eiros and Charmion” finally annihilates all human life, so that the story embodies one more occurrence of Poe’s favourite topic of the connection between discovery and destruction. The introduction into a formerly unexperienced knowledge, into a supernatural mystery, is once again connected with annihilation. As has been shown, this pattern underlies such tales as “MS. Found in a Bottle” and “Ligeia”. In “The Assigination” and “Berenice” the efforts to get hold of the unearthly beauty is at the expense of the heroïnes lives and/or the narrators’ sanity. However, “Eiros and Charmion” takes the reader one step further than the tales just mentioned. The dialogue tale does not deal with the vain and fatal efforts to reach the desired state of transcendental existence, but it is reported from the perspective of someone who has successfully entered the eternal realm.

Eiros reports the details of the apocalypse to Charmion. He tells of the various feelings, the different apprehensions and the changing predictions of the scientists in sight of the unknown experience. Among the human beings, reactions towards the approach of the comet vary. When the comet comes into view, there is a sense of excited awe that distracts attention from all other activities. Something entirely new is going to happen to mankind. Nobody knows how this novel experience will end. At first, the effect on mankind is beneficial. All hearts are inspired with a hitherto unexperienced sentiment of joyful expectation. Scientists dedicate their learning to explain for the real nature of the comet, and not, as usual, to the display of obscure theories of no use to anybody save themselves.

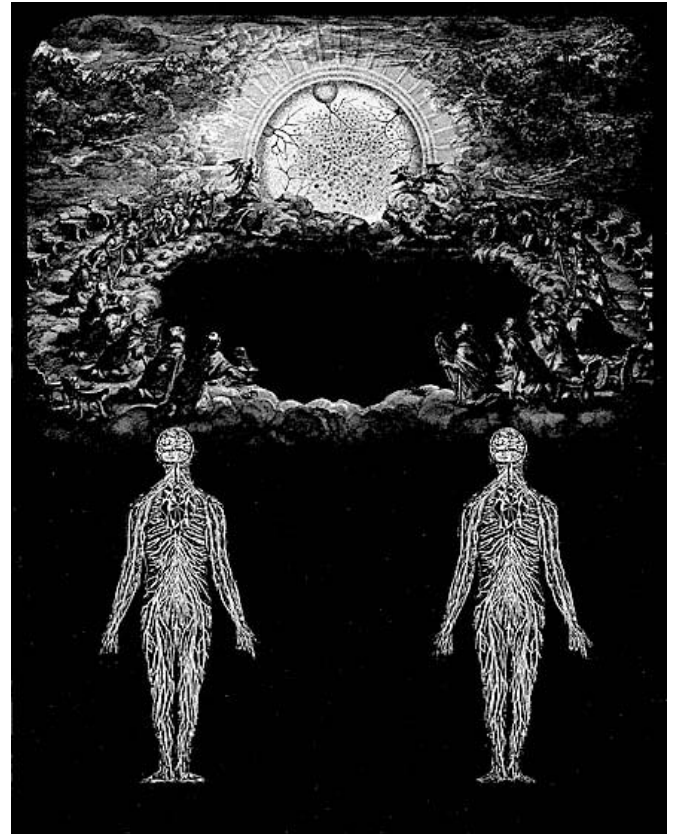
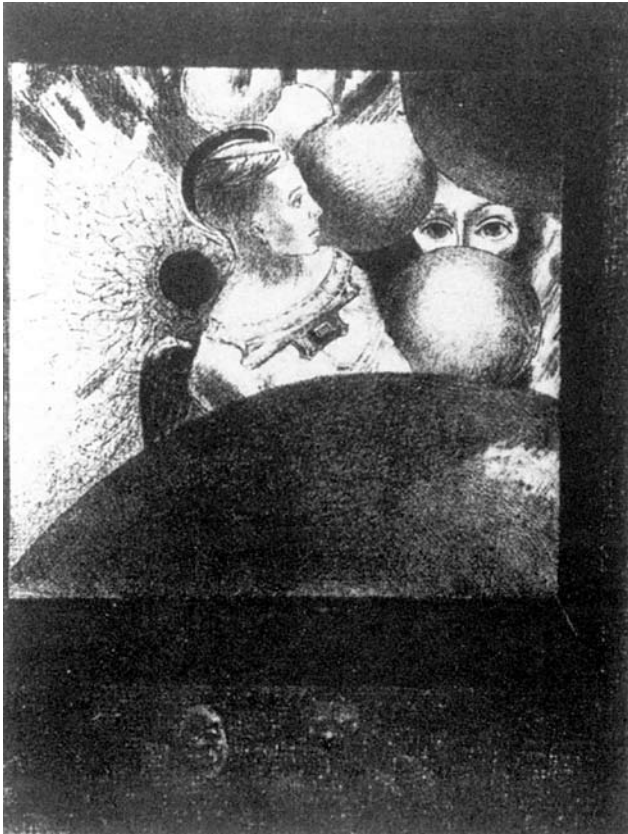
The learned *now* gave their intellect – their soul – to no such points as the allaying of fear, or to the sustenance of loved theory. They sought – they panted for right views. They groaned for perfected knowledge. *Truth* arose in the purity of her strength and exceeding majesty, and the wise bowed down and adored. [...] As if by some sudden convulsive exertion, reason had at once hurled superstition from her throne. The feeblest intellect had derived vigor from excessive interest. (M 2: 458f)

The initial enthusiasm for the unknown resembles the utter devotion of Poe’s narrators to their wives (or their wives-to-be, respectively). The visual experience of unearthly splendour, the beauty of Poe’s heroïnes and the brilliance of the approach-

ing comet, all inspire a sense of unknown harmony and happiness. Under the influence of the comet all human beings feel as belonging to a happy community. The effect on natural and philosophical science is equally advantageous, because both are no longer ends in themselves, but professions bestowed to the welfare of mankind. But this utopian state of mankind is only short-lived. There is a shock of recognition that the world will come to an end. Subsequently, the overall euphoria turns into a universal feeling of terror. This emotional development parallels the changing attitude of Poe's narrators towards Berenice, Morella and Ligeia. Fascination gives way to horror, and all ends in a devastating disaster. While in Poe's so-called Gothic tales the climactic catastrophe is of an individual kind, it is universal in "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion". However, in Poe's dialogue tale the catastrophe does not result in darkness and despair. The destruction of the earth terminates all physical life, but it is also the beginning of a higher state of being, an existence in eternal happiness after which so many of Poe's narrators are striving for in vain. Eiros and Charmion have undergone the shocking experience of death, but after that they find what Poe entitled to be the "ecstasy beyond the grave" (H 11: 72, see H 14: 273f).

In the story's Platonic context, the "novel existence" (455) of Eiros and Charmion means that they have returned to the state of *anamnesis*, in which the soul, unbound by earthly limitations, is part of the world of ideas. Many of Poe's narrators report about their vague and indefinite sensations, of a shadowy remembrance of things long forgotten. As human beings they have lost the capability to perceive the things as they exist in their ideal state. This is why Charmion remarks that "the film of the shadow has already passed from off [Eiros'] eyes" (*ibid.*). And Eiros says his "senses are bewildered [...] with the keenness of their perception of the *new*" (456).¹¹⁰ Eiros and Charmion have happily succeeded in passing through the veil which usually divides Poe's protagonists from the contact with a world beyond. This veil appears in different variants in Poe's works. In "Eiros and Charmion" it takes the form of the gaseous comet, through which the earthy inhabitants can still see the firmament: "The exceeding tenuity of the object of our dread was apparent; for all heavenly objects were plainly visible through it" (460). Here, as in Poe's early poetry, looking at the stars is connected with the visual appreciation of the ideal. However, this is more than just seeing the heavens. The gaseous comet finally enveils the planet earth, and there is physical contact between man and the realm of the stars. But the veil disappears in a gigantic glaring blaze, which not only destroys human life on earth but which also causes the spirits of the dead to change over from Earth to Aidenn. While the narrators of Poe's Gothic tales do only temporarily succeed in lifting the veil, Eiros and Charmion manage to pass through.

Illustrations for "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" have remained scarce. One reason for the lack of popularity among graphic artists is the publication history of the tale. All three of the colloquies had been printed as part of a book during Poe's lifetime. They were included among the just twelve texts of the 1845 Putnam edition of Poe's *Tales*, compiled by Evert A. Duyckinck, but later the texts appeared infrequently. The popularity of "Eiros and Charmion" and its



companion pieces was greater in Europe, especially in France, than in English speaking countries. Baudelaire had included all three tales in the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires*. Consequently, more than half of all existent illustrations for “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion” originated from France.

A lithography of Odilon REDON, dating from 1882, is the first illustration for the story (fig. 110). The French symbolist had produced several pictures for a edition of the *Contes Extraordinaires*. They were intended to be published in Paris, but this project suffered the same fate as the *Histoires Extraordinaires*, to be issued by Poulet-Malassis with the illustrations of Alphonse LEGROS two decades earlier. The Hennequin edition never appeared and thus seven of REDON’s lithographies were issued in a suite without Poe’s texts. There has been some disagreement about the kind and the degree of correspondence between the two artist’s works (see Sandström 116, Tannenbaum 125). In 1898, REDON downplayed the alleged strong influence of Poe on his works, seemingly annoyed by the great popularity of the American author among French turn-of-the-century artists he was eager to stand out from. When REDON’s lithographies were published, the title of the suite *A Edgar Poe* suggested that they were intended to be a homage to Poe (Conzen-Meairs 69f). The pictures loosely parallel the author’s texts, being reminiscent of Poe’s imagery and his poetic themes. They do not illustrate specific scenes. The relation is further complicated by the pictures’ captions, which are not, as originally surmised, culled from Poe’s works, but which were written by REDON himself. REDON substituted Poe’s texts by his own, and thus an analysis of his seven lithographies as illustrations for Poe’s works must encompass the relation between the captions and the pictures, between the captions and the author’s texts, and,

Fig. 110 [“Conversation d’Eiros avec Charmion”]: Odilon Redon (1882).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 111 “Silence”: [Wilfried] Satty (1976).
Collection of the author.

finally, between the pictures and the relevant stories. The attribution of REDON's pictures to specific texts is difficult. However, it is generally accepted that the fifth lithography of the series is based on "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion". Sven Sandström (88f) understood the picture's caption – "La soufflé qui conduit les êtres est aussis dans le sphères" – as indicative of REDON's pantheism, a notion of divinity which is anything but similar to Poe's materialistic and mechanistic concept of the universe. According to some of Poe's texts (e.g. "Mesmeric Revelation", "The Power of Words" or "Eureka") anything, inclusive God, consists of particled matter. The subtitle, however, can be understood differently, so that there is a correspondence with Poe's aesthetics. If one does not translate the word "soufflé" literally as "breath" or as "breeze" (which recalls the ancient idea of *pneuma*), but as "spirit", the caption suggests Poe's earlier aesthetic universe based on idealistic notions. REDON tried to enhance the ambiguity of the captions by means of syntactical inversions (Conzen-Meairs 71). If the hypallactic construction is restored into a prosaic order, the caption would read (in English): "The spirit of the spheres also guides the (human) beings".¹¹¹ Here we have Poe's notion of an ethereal realm as suggested in, for instance, "Evening Star", "Al Aaraaf", "Ligeia" and "The Poetic Principle". Men's final destination is a place somewhere in the heavens, a sphere, which wields a vague magic charm over all mankind, and into which all human beings long to return during the whole of their earthbound lives. Like the picture, REDON's caption merely alludes to Poe's works.

Besides these basic similarities some graphic details in REDON's picture correspond with the descriptions in Poe's story. The caption indicates, that the round objects in the lithography are spheres, or planets, and the persons are "beings", either human beings or their spirits or souls in heaven, respectively. A glowing dark planet at the left can be interpreted as the approaching comet, and at least one of the other spheres is damaged, so that the picture visually suggests the apocalyptic destruction of the earth. At the same time, however, the glowing comet may also be the pupil of an eye, its rays either representing the structure of the retina or the fine blood vessels in the eyeball. Since all graphic elements are depicted out of proportion – the "beings" are bigger than the spheres, the face in the background is larger than the one in the foreground – it is legitimate to assume that the picture's utmost depth consists of a gigantic eye. Thus, the picture manages to respond to the details of the text as well as to the aesthetics of the author, who, in some of his seminal works, metaphorized lustrous eyes as gleaming stars. The look into such eyes is a mystic experience or something like a preview of a happier life to come. Moreover, the obvious overall disproportions recall Poe's poem "Dream-Land", with its famous line "out of space – out of time". This line generally characterizes Poe's works, most of which defy concretization in terms of their historical or local setting. In Poe's works, the confines of space and time are often either blurred or they are completely set out of order. In "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" the end of the world, the destruction of a limited space where mortals dwell, is replaced by Aidenn's temporal and spatial infinity and by the eternal existence of the conversing spirits.

As has been mentioned, the access to the ethereal sphere leads through an obscure passage. This circumstance is visually reflected by the composition and the internal frame of REDON's picture. The depiction of Eiros and Charmion amidst the heavenly bodies is framed by something which looks like the end of a dark channel, with an outlet resembling a window. In some of Poe's works, the protagonists are able to throw a glimpse into the otherworldly sphere. This experience is the result of reading in mystical writings, the introduction into hidden mysteries (mostly laid open to them by their wives), the marriage with a beautiful woman, a voyage to the very edge of human knowledge or to the end of the known world. REDON chose the window as the customary symbol of transcendence to convey this notion, but the dark frame around of the heavenly sphere also suggests another topic in Poe's works. The bliss of Poe's characters is usually engulfed by some sort threatening gloom. Happiness in Poe's works is only short-lived, and it is usually followed by a nightmarish experience. One more point of the picture's correspondence with Poe's works are some vaguely discernible faces full of agony and sadness in the shaft's darkness. In many of Poe's works the protagonists undergo a journey through the shadows, hoping to find the solution of a mystery or happiness. Those who do not succeed end in despair. In this context, the tormented faces represent the distress of Poe's characters, who are afflicted with pain in the course or at the end of their fatal journey. REDON's lithography reflects Poe's works on various levels, because it not only refers to the story but also to Poe's aesthetics and his overall imagery in general.

Another symbolist approach to "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" was delivered by the French artist Edouard GOERG, who produced four etchings for the story in 1947.¹¹² His first picture shows a hovering dark figure approaching a second brilliant one. One may interpret the two figures as the story's interlocutors, but it is impossible to decide unequivocally who is who. If the obscure figure represents Eiros, who has just emerged from the darkness of death, the brilliant apparition would be the angelic form of Charmion. The shadow is a menacing appearance, but the text does not yield any information about a threatening figure. Interpreting the shadowy apparition as Eiros emerging from the darkness means to semanticize the picture from the position of the text, that is to subject the picture to the text, in order to even out the conflict between the illustration and the story. One can expand the frame of reference within which the picture can be interpreted and relate it to the overall imagery of Poe's works. Thus, the illustration can be understood as a visual transformation of Poe's topic of dualism, that is of the confrontation between two different worlds, between this and the other side. Menacing figures approaching and overwhelming others appear in many of Poe's works, be it the horse in "Metzengerstein", the harbinger of death in "Shadow" or Madeline in "The Fall of the House of Usher". However, explaining the dark figure in Goerg's picture in this aesthetic context reveals the same strategy of interpreting the illustration, namely to import meaning into it from the text. This method of interpretation, that is harmonizing illustrations and texts, is usually at the cost of the pictures, since they are made part of the textual system. When one regards illustrations merely as offsprings of the text, this approach to the pictures is legitimate.

REDON's and Goerg's pictures can also modify the text in that they stimulate the reader's awareness of subtle aspects. In Poe's story, man's innate longing for immortality has come true for Eiros and Charmion. Why then do the two figures in REDON's lithography look sad? This melancholy cannot be overlooked, so that there is an inexplicable difference between text and picture. The general ambiguity of Poe's tale, brought about by the lack of information concerning the setting, and the polysemic nature of REDON's picture allow some interpretative latitude. In regard to the obvious melancholy in the lithography, there is no matching aspect in the story which equally stresses the the sadness of the protagonist. However, Charmion states that even after ten years there is still a vivid remembrance of death. There is one more covert evidence that Charmion is still emotionally involved with earthly life, when he/she asks Eiros about the reactions on his/her death (M 2: 456f).¹¹³ Charmion's distinct memories of his former life and departure are surprising. One would expect a being who has changed over into an eternal *post mortem* existence to forget about his earthbound life, unless the earlier existence was happier. This question is certainly not of central importance for the understanding of the story. Nevertheless it shows how a single divergent aspect of a picture is capable of stimulating a re-reading of the text in order to find an explanation for the difference between story and illustration. But one can push the point even further. In the story, Charmion's remarks about his/her passing are only mentioned marginally. In REDON's lithography, however, the cheerless facial expressions of the spirits are a prominent focal point of the onlooker, so that the picture emphasizes the melancholy much stronger than the text. Even the reference to the inconspicuous text passages cannot explain the prominence of unhappiness in the illustration, especially because Charmion says that no one suffers pain in Aidenn. It is here, at latest, where the picture begins to develop a story of its own. But this does not mean that text and picture drift apart and that the illustration can be dismissed as arbitrary. As has been stated in chapter 3.1, text and illustration can be imagined as two mutually elucidating planes of projection, which function as mirrors for each other. In the case of REDON's lithography, the sad faces not only emphasize a minor aspect of the text, they also expand the story in that they add a new dimension to the text. REDON's picture suggests the interpretation that life in Aideen is not devoid of misery, an interpretation of the story which would not have come into existence, if the text was read without the accompanying picture. This new meaning neither wholly belongs to the picture nor to the text, since it is the result of the reader's adjustment of the given pictorial and textual material.

However, the reader may dismiss a single illustration as arbitrary or inadequate, when it cannot be subordinated to the text, especially when it is obviously amateurish in style and execution (see below). This is not so easy with a series of pictures. Goerg's third picture, which shows some forlorn naked human beings amidst huge flowers, must also strike the reader as inconsistent with the text. This illustration overtly contradicts the text. In the story the hearts are filled with hope when a splendid vegetation comes into flower under the comet's influence. But Goerg depicted the human beings as desperate, paralyzed figures in an alien environment. The familiar proportions are reversed. Man has completely lost his abil-

ity to mould his fate himself. Two more etchings strike an equally sinister tone. Goerg's second illustration (55) presents a dark comet as a gigantic bomb with fierce eyes racing through the universe, and the last etching shows an ominous dark angel (facing 60). There is no hint in any of Goerg's pictures about the bliss of eternal life or any other joyful sentiment. In Goerg's suite, the story is put into graphic parentheses by two pictures: one of them introduces the story and the other concludes it, like a prologue and an epilogue. These two etchings provide an overall visual frame into which the dialogue is embedded. Therefore, it is debatable whether the illustrations are set into the text or whether the dialogue is interspersed between the pictures. While the first etching shows the confrontation between a brilliant and a dark angel, there remains only an obscure figure in the end-vignette, just as if the former was absorbed by the latter. In order to restore the traditional hierarchy of text and illustration, one may argue that the etchings all focus on the story's central description of apprehension and destruction. However, it is as legitimate to consider the illustrations to question the story's internal narrative frame, in which the immortal life is suggested as one of exciting delight. Goerg's pictures visualize a fatal vision of eternity as a state essentially alien to the human condition. Goerg's four pictures tell a consistent story of their own, and it seems impossible to adjust the two different storylines to each other. But this does not mean that the illustrations are inappropriate, they rather challenge the reader to adopt an alternative perspective which otherwise would have remained out of focus.

However, a series of illustrations for one text is no guarantee that the pictorial material is capable of modifying the text, as is demonstrated by Wilfried SATTY's five pictures for "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion". SATTY's montage illustrations are put together from pictorial material of different origins. The first illustration (fig. 111) immediately preceding the story shows two transparent bodies, an idea which SATTY probably derived from Alexandre Alexeïeff's aquatint etchings for "The Colloquy of Monos and Una", first issued in 1929. The two figures, which originate from some anatomical text-book, are combined with an old-style engraving of Judgement Day and the enlarged stylized representation of a single cell resembling a glowing sun. SATTY's use of two identical figures, whose cores are facet-diamonds, in front of a nucleus of life suggest Poe's ideas of an universal unity. In the following illustrations neither of these contexts is developed further. SATTY's series is characterized by numerous inconsistencies inside the single pictures as well as between the images, which thus do not form a continual visual storyline. SATTY's second picture, for example, shows a gigantic, old-fashioned apparatus (presumably for watching the skies) in front of the panorama of a futuristic city (inclusive a flying saucer). The three elements differ stylistically, so that the picture makes the impression of an arbitrary montage of materials. The indifference with which the artist has put together the montage pictures for the "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" has a disintegrating effect on the series as a whole. Moreover, none of the pictures is consistent in itself. Thus, the illustrations do not manage to guide the reader's attention into a specific direction. SATTY's set of illustrations offers too many unconnected segments, within each picture and between the five pictures, so that the effect of the series is one of con-



fusion. The reader is likely to turn away from the illustrations and focus his attention exclusively on the text.

The landscape in John Buckland WRIGHT's illustration for "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (fig. 112) resembles the idyllic scenery he depicted for "The Island of the Fay". Quite contrary to Poe's story, in which annihilation is a pre-condition of man's changeover to the eternal realm of happiness, WRIGHT depicted earth as some sort of rural paradise about to be destroyed by the comet. Another source of ambivalence are the gestures of the depicted people, which can not only be interpreted as expressions of hysterical fear, but also as attitudes of ecstatic worship directed towards the light in the center of the picture, respectively. The comet itself is ambiguously depicted. The radiant circles not only suggest the brilliant planet but also a gigantic glaring eye. Moreover, the depiction of the skies can be viewed as a tunnel leading upward into heaven. Thus, WRIGHT's picture pays tribute to the author's symbolism of the eye as a gateway leading into a mysterious unknown region. WRIGHT's woodcut illustrates Poe's aesthetics rather than the specific story. The picture visually transforms Poe's blend of metaphors and allegories, a fusion of images which cannot be found in the text.

Quite contrary to the images discussed so far, there is little ambiguity in the illustrations of Carlo FARNETI and the two Spanish artists Pedro RIU and Ramón CALSINA. Carlo FARNETI provided the story with an ancient background, probably stimulated by the old Greek names of the two spirits. Though the picture's setting does not contradict the story, the depicted destruction of earth by a gigantic flood definitely does. In Poe's story earth is scourged by fire, as prophesied in the Bible, and Poe's later publication of "A Prediction" suggests that the author took his thoughts about a comet as a possible instrument of earth's destruction

Fig. 112 "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion": John Buckland Wright (1932).

Courtesy of the New York Public Library, Rare Books Division.

Fig. 113 "Conversación de Eiros y Charmion": Ramón Calsina (1970).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

pretty seriously (M 2: 452). RIU limited himself to the general depiction of people running away from an explosion. Like FARNETI, CALSINA was more specific than RIU, especially in his second picture, which shows a group of people watching the brightly illuminated skies. While the setting in RIU's illustration remains out of focus, because the picture is devoid of details, the persons' garments in CALSINA's drawing specify the setting as that of Poe's times (fig. 113). Gus BOFA's picture shows the same approach to the story as the illustration of CALSINA, though the French artist was more successful in conveying a sense of anxious anticipation. Both illustrations simultaneously expand and reduce the story, in that, on the one hand, they add the dimension of a definite setting which the story lacks, and, on the other hand, they destroy the ambiguity of space and time which characterizes Poe's story. Since the story does not deliver any background information, the pictures of CALSINA and BOFA fill this gap, thus modifying the story.

The comparison of the illustrations of CALSINA and ROBINSON (see 4.1) demonstrates visually that Poe's short stories of the 1830s remained under the spell of the imagery of his poetry. Between 1827, the year he published "Evening Star", and 1840, when the last story for the collection *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* was written, Poe had only modified and extended his imagery, but a wholesale revision did not occur. The meaning of his images, however, had undergone greater changes. In the early poem gazing at the star Venus is a blissful experience promising the fulfilment of the desire for a happier life to come. In the short story, the approaching comet inspires feelings of happiness before beauty turns into horror. In many of his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe concentrated on horrifying experiences, and bliss is a feeling which his protagonists can enjoy only temporarily, and often not at all.

In the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* the heritage of Poe's poetry is notable in the basic dualism that underlies such diverse stories as "MS. Found in a Bottle", "Shadow" or "William Wilson". Poe's narrators undergo threshold experiences. They lose contact with ordinary life and are exposed to situations that lie outside human understanding. While Poe thematized the other side as an idyllic but completely inaccessible region in his poetry, the protagonists of his short stories often venture into the unknown, where they make horrifying discoveries. On the other side, they are no longer welcomed by a heavenly figure like Helen. Demons, shadowy apparitions, ghost ships or disturbing doubles accompany Poe's narrators, who are searching for something that satisfies their human desires, but at the end they are driven towards death and destruction by their companions. Searching for light and enlightenment, their gaze has turned away from the bright stars into deep vortices, dark corridors and dimly lit chambers. The dualism is the unifying frame of Poe's tales of mystery, inside which the participating figures and settings are modified superficially. The next chapter will show that Poe used this basic formula for some of his tales of "humor", too.

4.3 Tales of "humor"

In the 20th century, Poe's reputation as a writer of fiction is still primarily based on his stories which deal with horror, mysterious adventures or detective "ratiocination". This appreciation equally applies to "the popular and the critical taste", as Poe once put it himself (H 14: 196), that is, these texts have not only been most popular among readers but they also keep attracting the greatest share of critical attention. Edward Davidson wrote that Poe's humorous stories are "undirected and objectless" (*Critical* 140), and he was not the only critic who considered them inferior to the "gothic" or "arabesque" tales. Since Mooney complained, about forty years ago, that "[t]he pathological, the hysterical, the phantasmagorical, the unspeakable have all been meticulously exposed and over-exposed, but the comic has been largely ignored" ("Comic" 433), little has been done to change these state of affairs. Critical studies and collections of Poe's fiction alike are still dominated by the so-called "arabesque" tales (see the previous chapters), a corpus of texts on which the main focus of critical interest has almost exclusively concentrated for several decades. Texts like "Ligeia", "The Gold-Bug", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", and "The Black Cat" have been frequently anthologized and made the subject of critical studies, but Poe's humoresque stories have been marginalized within the canon of his works. Collections of Poe's humorous writings are very small in number, and one has to refer to the most complete editions of Poe's works to find texts like "A Tale of Jerusalem", "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.", or "X-ing a Paragrab" in print. The *gros* of Poe's comic stories have only attracted scarce attention of a few literary scholars. Critical approaches are mainly source studies. Interpretations and analyses are rare, and authors of full-fledged approaches to Poe's works, life and times usually brush over most of the comic writings, if they are mentioned at all. Only recently, since there is a distinct tendency in Poe studies to locate the author and his works in the contemporary American context, the satires are graced with more critical interest (cf. Renza; cf. Beuka). Nevertheless, the amount of critical articles on "The Fall of the House of Usher" is by far greater than the number of studies of Poe's total output of humorous stories.

With regard to their visualization in illustrated books, Poe's humorous writings have suffered a similar fate. With the exception of half a dozen stories, for which a substantial number of pictures exists, Poe's comic tales have been neglected by the illustrators ever since. In spite of thousands of Poe illustrations, stories like "The Duc de l'Omelette", "Mystification", "The Business Man", "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" and "Mellonta Tauta" have not challenged more than five or six illustrations each, and "Bon-Bon", "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling" and "Raising the Wind" have only been illustrated once or twice in the course of more than 150 years. One has to look out for such illustrations in the most profusely illustrated collections of Poe's works. More than half of the pictures produced for Poe's humorous writings were provided by a handful of artists who lavishly illustrated wholesale collections of Poe's works: Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902), Alberto MARTINI (1905ff), Alfred KUBIN (1909ff), Carlo

FARNETI (1927f), Ramón CALSINA (1970f), and Suzanne CLEE (1983). In 1852, the title of the first posthumous illustrated edition of Poe's works, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination and Humour; and Poems*, paid homage to the importance of humor in the author's oeuvre, but among the 42 wood-engravings, the two books only contained six, or arguably seven, illustrations for Poe's comic tales.¹¹⁴ However, this early edition paid more respect to Poe's humor than most later collections of his tales. Exclusive editions of Poe's comic tales are extremely rare, and even more so if one expects to find illustrations between their covers. The research for this study did not unearth any illustrated edition of Poe's humorous writings other than those listed in Burton Pollin's extensive bibliography: a tiny Italian book called *Stravaganze* (1929), with scarcely two dozen vignette pictures and head-pieces by Luigi SERVOLINI, and the *Scottish Comic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (1973), including six illustrations by Stephan MCKEOWN (cf. *Images* entries 725 and 513).

All these facts are surprising, since Poe's humorous writings are anything but marginal in number. Among Poe's first six tales, arguably only "Metzengerstein" is not written in a humorous tone (see the previous chapter). In his earliest plans to publish his stories as a book, as *The Tales of the Folio Club*, the comic are equal in number to the serious stories. The contents of Poe's biggest prose collection, which appeared during his lifetime, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, expose an overweight of four humorous texts.¹¹⁵ The author's manuscript list of contents for his projected second, revised and updated, edition of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, under the title *Phantasy Pieces*, not only reveals a balance between comic and serious tales, but also Poe's intention to intersperse both types of texts.¹¹⁶ In the critical edition of Poe's works, T. O. Mabbott includes about eighty tales, including such fugitive and informal pieces as "Instinct vs. Reason", "Theatrical Rats", and the author's alleged contributions to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. Among these are about thirty humorous tales, a number which more than balances the horror, adventure and detective stories for which Poe is widely known.¹¹⁷

However, there is no sharp dividing-line between comic and serious tales in Poe's oeuvre. This circumstance complicates the classification of Poe's stories. Some critics proposed that, for example, the above mentioned "Metzengerstein" can be read as a burlesque on Gothicism (Mooney, "Criteria" 432; Richard "Vocation" 195; Thompson *Fiction* 55ff; see the previous section), and thus made it a case for the subtle humorous vein in Poe's works. In his influential study about "Romantic Irony" in the author's works, G. R. Thompson suggested that the overwrought tone of Poe's allegedly serious tales is not an indication of a "flawed" literary technique but of a conscious ironic treatment of the Gothic formula. But the problem is a double-edged one. While Thompson's provocative thesis about an overall irony in Poe's Gothic has widened the scope of critical approaches to Poe in the last three decades, he ignored that some of Poe's so-called comic tales are anything but exclusively humorous, as will be seen below. Nevertheless, it was Thompson's achievement to have obviated the idea of an aesthetic dualism in Poe's works, with the tales of the grotesque on the one, and the tales of the arabesque on the other side. But it is not only the question whether the dualism must be differentiated because Poe's serious tales are likewise interpretable as ironic pas-

tiches, but also because the humor in Poe's comic tales is often weird and double-bottomed. Robert Kiely aptly remarked that in the majority of Poe's humorous works "the comic mode breaks down and gives way to unreason and horror" (31). And Daniel Royot added:

Poe's black humor is a form of bravado designed to articulate genuine fears and partly allay such fears. Its violence even sometimes invites readers to enjoy the feel of killing and mutilating. Fanciful though this comic spirit may be, it entertains no illusion. It is nurtured on anguish but seeking to evade pain through chaos, remains a shared experience as opposed to satanic laughter that chills the listener to the bones. [...] [Poe] introduces absurdities to remove the crust of exclusive meaning and create a paroxystic experience. (68, 70)

The ambiguity of Poe's humorous works may be one reason for their lack of popularity, and another that the modern reader will have difficulties in noticing many of the "jokes" that might have been more apparent to Poe's contemporaries. Donald Stauffer, one of the few critics who attempted a broader approach to Poe's humor, observed that "Poe's early humor is seldom good-natured or light-hearted; it was not until later in his life that he was able to relax and to indulge in a kind of playfulness" (Merry 9). David Tomlinson echoed Stauffer's judgment, writing that Poe's "humor was sardonic, not lighthearted" (186). In fact, Poe's earliest humorous stories are over-burdened with literary allusions and puns, the source of which are obscure to anyone but for scholars studying the literary world of the author's times. While, at the end of his career, Poe postulated "the poem simply for the poem's sake" (H 14: 271) he was only rarely able to indulge in humor simply for the humor's sake. Stauffer's introductory remark that Poe had probably more fun in writing his comic tales than we do in reading them, can hardly be disputed (Merry 1). Less benevolent with Poe, Tom Quirk remarked that "there is no echo in his humor, but the muffled snicker of self-satisfaction" (45), a reaction that Trieber characterized as a "humor of scorn" (33). Answering his own question, "What if Poe's Humorous Tales Were Funny?," Quirk concluded that Poe's humor was "anti-social" because he cultivated a private sense for the ridiculous which had only little humorous appeal to the contemporary readership (40f). In a similar vein, Tomlinson wrote about Poe's use a satire, hoax and the grotesque:

For Poe, these techniques were instruments of wit and therefore served to show an incisive mind rather than provide a way to laugh. As a consequence, then, he did not try to make his humor accessible to all. Only those whose insightfulness allowed them to see the wit he used would be entertained by it. (188)

Charles Frederick Briggs, Poe's colleague at the *Broadway Journal*, and his later enemy, once wrote to James Russell Lowell that Poe had "an inconceivably extravagant idea of his capacities as a humorist" (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 576). Although one must suspect that Briggs was eager to do damage to Poe's reputation, there is some evidence for the truthfulness of his account of Poe's self-esteem as a humorist. Henry S. Canby thought Poe's tales originated from a "childish and almost unbalanced delight in a hoax of any kind" (268), a genre that Weissbuch considered as Poe's *forte*. Quite the contrary, Donald Weeks was confident about the timeless quality of Poe's comical works and he pointed to his influence on

several later American humorists such as Peter Benchley (1889–1945), Fred Allen (1894–1956) and Corey Ford (1902–69). Weeks concluded:

Poe, so desperately and personally bound by the intricacies of tragedy, attempted to produce a release from any such turbulences within his fellow men which haunted him [...]. And, in doing this, he may have found a certain immediate release himself from the pressures encumbering him. (89)

Poe tried his hand in several different kinds of humor. “A Bargain Lost” (later titled “Bon-Bon”), “A Tale of Jerusalem”, and “The Duc de l’Omelette”, all first published in 1832, must be ranked as Poe’s efforts at some sort of “sophisticated” humor dwelling in satiric allusions. Poe’s targets and sources were the works and doings of his contemporaries Nathaniel Parker Willis, Horatio Smith and Benjamin Disraeli. To a modern reader, unaware of Poe’s insinuations or the 19th century literary tradition which introduces the devil within a comic frame, the humor of some tales may appear as flat, meaningless or even scaring and blasphemous. “Lionizing” and “Epimanes” (later published as “Four Beasts in One”), both also issued in 1832, are also satires depending on sources which are obscure today, but these stories also develop some sort of fun on their own. “Lionizing”, another satire on Willis (and, generally, on other literary celebrities of the day), unfolds some situation comic besides its verbal humor, and “Epimanes”, a story which the 20th century critic Wolfgang Kayser would have ranked as a specimen of the grotesque *par excellence*, displays a visual comic of a quite different kind. Many critics, among them T. O. Mabbott, were inclined to subsume all these tales under the heading of Poe’s catchword “grotesque”. Ironically, these stories were to be incorporated in Poe’s projected, but never accomplished collection *Eleven Tales of the Arabesque* (see O 1: 53). Offering his tales to the editors Joseph and Edwin Buckingham, Poe included “Epimanes” in his letter of May 4, 1833, seemingly as a self-explanatory specimen of what he considered to be understood under the term “Arabesque”.¹¹⁸ The publishers did not print the collection, and subsequently the stories were rejected by H. C. Carey, Harper & Brothers and Saunders & Otley. The Harpers declined Poe’s stories in 1836, because they were “too learned and mystical” (see A. H. Quinn 251), a judgment referring to all of the tales offered. However, not all of his contemporaries assessed Poe’s comic tales in this way. Poe’s intercessor James Kirke Paulding encouraged the young author to cultivate his humorous vein. In March 1836, Paulding wrote to Poe’s employer T. W. White:

I regret this decision of the Harpers [...] [T]he interest I feel in his [Poe’s] success should prompt me to take this occasion to suggest to him to apply his fine humor, and his extensive acquirements, to more familiar subjects of satire; to the faults and foibles of our own people, their peculiarities of habits and manners, and above all to the ridiculous affectations and extravagances of the fashionable English Literature of the day [...] (rpt. in Thomas and Jackson 193)

Contemporary reviews of the *Tales* were generally favorable, and some were even enthusiastic. Some papers, however, were more reserved. The influential *The Knickerbocker* never fulfilled its announcement, in its December issue of 1839, to publish a review in the first number of 1840, and *The North American* only slightly praised Poe’s talents, but criticized the contents and style of the tales severely (cf.

Thomas and Jackson 279f). Most reviews, whether commendatory or not, referred to Poe's Germanism, despite the author's disclamatory preface in the first volume, and Poe's comic tales were only mentioned at random. One exception was the review in *Godey's Lady's Book*, where Morton McMichael expressly praised that Poe had "a fine perception of the ludicrous, and his humorous stories are instinct with the principles of mirth" (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 285). *The Boston Notion*, however, published a slashing critique on December 14, 1839, in which the reviewer particularly condemned Poe's humorous writings:

We have read a goodly number of these tales, and verily must say that they fall below the average of newspaper trash. [...] They consist of a wild, unmeaning, pointless, aimless set of stories, outraging all manner of probability, and without anything of elevated fancy or fine humor to redeem them. The style is slipshod, [...] and the congregation of nonsense is merely caricature run mad. (rpt. Clarke 2: 98)¹¹⁹

While in 1832 the first publications of Poe's early humorous tales in the Philadelphia *Saturday Courier* had gone unnoticed, their reprint in *The Southern Literary Messenger* elicited more critical response. "The Duc de l'Omelette", "Loss of Breath" and "Lionizing" received the biggest share of the typical laudatory reviews of the day, the kind of eloquent but insubstantial "cant" which Poe, the critic, used to condemn.¹²⁰

It seems as if Paulding was especially fond of "Lionizing" and "Loss of Breath" (cf. Thomas and Jackson 159, 162, 164, 169, 171, 175), two tales which he considered two types of humorous stories that Poe ought to develop. In this study "Lionizing" is loosely grouped with other tales in which the author more or less obviously satirizes the social and literary life of the day. Besides Poe's early tales "The Duc de l'Omelette" and "Bon-Bon", "Von Jung" (later to be retitled "Mystification"), "The Man that Was Used up" and "The Devil in the Belfry" are included in this category. Besides that, there is a little inconspicuous group of stories which are characterized by some sort of situation comedy or which are constructed to end with a *pointe*: "A Tale of Jerusalem" and "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His hand in a Sling". Quite differently, in "Epimanes" and "King Pest", Poe indulges in a kind of humor which can be labelled as "fantastic" or "bizarre". "Loss of Breath" and "How to Write a Blackwood Article" are Poe's most obvious literary satires, both ridiculing the sensational tales à la *Blackwood*. As such, they belong to the first group lead by "Lionizing". These two stories, however, contain serious discourses below their satirical surfaces, so that they are isolated at the end of this chapter.

In his article on Poe's use of humor, Donald Stauffer circumnavigated the task to categorize Poe's humor (5), being aware of the many problems connected with such an attempt.¹²¹ The arrangement of texts in this study does not pretend to be exclusive. The divisions between the groupings are considered to be fluent. "King Pest", for example, can likewise be read as a political satire (Whipple) and as a parody on a chapter in Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (Hudson), but here the story is considered to be dwelling in a grotesque, double-bottomed humor.

4.3.1 Lionizing

Among Poe's comic tales, "Lionizing" has always been considered one of the best. As already mentioned, James Kirke Paulding was especially fond of the tale, and Evert A. Duyckinck, editor of Wiley & Putnam's, chose only this one humorous story for inclusion in the 1845 *Tales* (M 2: 169f.) In *The Southern Literary Messenger* of May 1836, Edward V. Sparhawk remarked that "Lionizing" is "an inimitable piece of wit and satire" (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 155). It is well known that the author was not satisfied with Duyckinck's selections. Poe's objections were directed against the omission of tales which he thought to be better than some of those included, especially "Ligeia". Moreover, Poe's brief letter to Duyckinck of January 8, 1846, also shows that the author considered his humorous writings to be under-represented, since he suggested "The Spectacles", "The Thousand-and-second Tale of Scheherazade" and "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether" (early in 1845 all rather recent productions) for inclusion in a second volume (O 2: 309, 328f). Despite his complaint about Duyckinck's choices, Poe did not object to the inclusion of "Lionizing". His ambition to improve the tale by means of elaborate changes in the course of ten years, and two puffs, supposedly written by Poe himself, reveal that "Lionizing" was one of the author's favorites (cf. M 2: 171).

Richard P. Benton identified several satirical targets in the story, among them N. P. Willis and his *Pencillings by the Way* ("Quiz"), and Thompson made out Bulwer-Lytton as Poe's object of ridicule ("Nose"), but the story can also be read in a very general way. In 1836, in a letter to John P. Kennedy, Poe designated "Lionizing" a proper satire "of the rage for Lions and the facility of becoming one" (O 1: 84). However, Poe's ridicule of the pseudo-intellectualism of the fashionable social and literary circles is ambivalent. First of all, Poe played a trick on his readers by suggesting that "nosology", the protagonist's special field of expertise, meant the science of noses, though it must be correctly understood as the classification or a catalogue of diseases. Readers who enjoy Poe's satire, but who are unaware of the author's verbal joke, are being fooled themselves. Moreover, the story as well as the author's comments on it, reveal some sort of self-parody. In the two puffs above mentioned, the reviewer stated that the story "displays much reading" and that it speaks of the author's, that is his own, "high powers of fancy and humor". On the one hand, Poe derided the absurdly overspecific erudition and half-education of the "Lions and *Recherchés*" (M 2: 175), on the other hand he was praising himself for the ostentatious display of the very same learning. The self-parody may even be involuntary, since one does not know whether Poe wrote the two comments in the *Baltimore Republican* with tongue-in-cheek or whether he meant them seriously. Poe's tendency to feign an extensive reading of little known sources, most of which he only knew second-hand, has been well demonstrated,¹²² but as a literary critic he did not evince the ironic distance towards obscure learning which is satirized in his tale. But there is still one more level on which the humor of the tale works. According to Edward H. Davidson, the story is full of sexual connotations, which are centered around the meaning of "nose" as "penis" (146; cf. Bonaparte 2: 497; Arnold; Galloway 9).



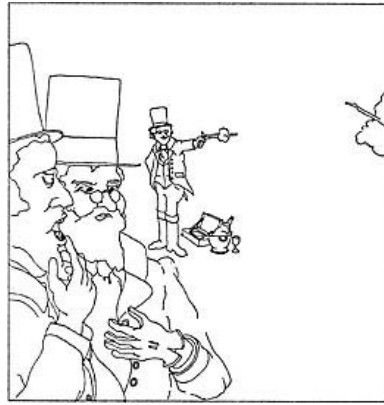
As it is, the story is characterized by several types of humor. In the *Baltimore Republican* reviews the humor of the story was designated as satirical, burlesque and extravagant, but, to return to one of the crucial questions of this study: is it grotesque, and if not, which other label is more appropriate? The few illustrations made for the story are not very helpful to elucidate this point. Most artists produced a portrait of the protagonist, naturally depicting his nose with much detail, but none of these illustrations visually suggests the double meaning of proboscis to which Davidson and Bonaparte referred. There are, however, sexual implications in the illustrations of Alméry LOBEL-RICHE (1927) and Paul SCHARFF (1961). In two etchings, the French artist depicted the protagonist as a dandy in an affected posture. While his full-page plate depicts the lion in close contact with an attractive, seemingly half-naked woman who is about to entice him, the head-piece shows a somewhat ecstatic woman kneeling before him in a reverential attitude. Several of LOBEL-RICHE's pictures offer a voyeuristic view of female nudity, so that sexual implications in his illustrations for "Lionizing" are not surprising. The extra sheet with *remarques* for "Lionizing" (fig. 113) included in the lower numbers of the limited edition of the *Vingt Histoires*, clearly shows LOBEL-RICHE's sexual allusions. But while, as Davidson stated, Poe could not afford to speak of the thing by its name, it would have been impossible for LOBEL-RICHE to depict a penis.¹²³ However, the position of the initial "J", which is part of the artist's etching, is suggestive of a male sexual organ. Paul SCHARFF depicted the stiff protagonist in the

Fig. 113 "Lionnerie": Alméry Lobel-Riche (1927).

Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Richard Gimbel Collection.

Fig. 114 "Lionizing": Paul Scharff (1961).

Collection of Burton Pollin.



embrace of a maternal duchess, who is kissing his nose, but the organ is a quite normal one (fig. 114). The artist's neglect of the most important visual detail of the story confuses the reader and thus text and picture become inconsistent. The obvious contradiction challenges the reader to explain the difference between text and illustration. The reader has to make up his mind about the nature of the protagonist's "proboscis", since the picture does definitely exclude the nose as the over-sized organ in question. Thus the reader's attention is directed towards under-currents of meanings under the narrative surface of the text.

Martin VAN MAËLE (1912) was particularly inventive in depicting noses galore. Like LOBEL-RICHE, the initial "J" is combined with a picture, but in VAN MAËLE's version the nose has the exact form of the letter. Two illustrations insinuate the ridicule of the science of phrenology: one of these pictures recalls Leonardo's famous sketches of grotesque faces (1490), the other shows a room in which noses of all kinds and the fruits of the protagonist's "nosological" scholarship are exhibited. VAN MAËLE's illustrations demonstrate that the artist took the story much too literally, and even where his approach is allegorical, the pictures neither reveal an insight into the text nor do they convey much humor. One picture, showing a man kicking a huge nose with his feet (fig. 115), conveys a faint notion of the slapstick comedy which characterizes the protagonist's dismissal from his home, but the satire of Poe's tale remains unreflected in all of VAN MAËLE's seven pictures. Ramón CALSINA depicted the same scene for a Spanish edition in 1970 without penetrating the narrative surface either.

Stephen MCKEOWN (1973) devoted a two-part drawing to the duel scene (fig. 116). The illustration shows the very moment in which Bluddenoff loses his nose. The humor of the picture does not so much arise from the situation as from the reactions of the presented persons, especially the two seconds at the left side. Moreover, there is a basic similarity between the victorious duelist and Poe. If the onlooker is ready to accept the identification of the protagonist as Poe, the story's latent tendencies of self-parody may become more apparent to the reader. It must be taken into account that Poe himself was a prominent figure, making quite an impression in the literary salons of New Yorker society. At the so-called *conversazione* parties of Anne Lynch at Washington Square, Poe often recited his poem "The Raven", and some rumours about his mesmeric experiments made him even more fascinating, especially for the "blue-stockings". Among others, Anne Lynch

Fig. 115 "Lionnerie":
Martin van Maële (1912).
Courtesy of the New York Public Library.
Fig. 116 "Lionizing":
Stephen McKeown (1973).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

remembered Poe as a polite and neatly dressed guest. Evert A. Duyckinck acknowledged that the notorious critic knew well how to behave like a gentleman. But at the beginning of 1846 Poe had fallen into disfavour and was no longer received at the literary salons. This was probably the result of the gossip which surrounded his affairs with Fanny Osgood and Elizabeth Fries Ellet, two married women both of whom he had first met at Anne Lynch's soirées. The hostess also reported that Poe was anything but on good terms with some other guests, and that his behaviour had gotten worse, so that she did not invite him any longer. His liaisons with two married women, innocent as these relationships may have been, were probably too much to bear for the genteel society. Moreover, his personal charisma and the frequent and much applauded reading of his works might have aroused the envy of other, less-considered writers (Silverman 278–92 *passim*). Last but not least, some harsh reviews, Poe's continuation of the Longfellow War in *The Broadway Journal*, and his feud with Thomas Dunn English were not apt to improve his standing in the literary society of New York. Perhaps Poe had overshot himself, just like the protagonist of "Lionizing". For about a year Poe was one of the literary lions of the New York drawing rooms, but, whether by his own fault or through the schemes of malevolent contemporaries, he became an outsider in the first half of 1846. The damage to his reputation and the discontinuation of *The Broadway Journal* deprived Poe of a sound status, a development of events which parallels those in his tale.¹²⁴

While the basic resemblance of the duelist with Poe in MCKEOWN's picture directs the attention of the reader towards a possible biographical relevance of the story, there is no illustration with a visual reference to the target of the author's satire, namely N. P. Willis. Although the biggest part of illustrations for "Lionizing" are portraits, none of these shows a similarity with Willis, whose fashionable outfit could have been caricatured easily. As it is, the illustrations do not reflect the satire of the tale, because its source is too obscure. Where they are successful in creating mirth at all, they do so on their own and independently from the text. The visualization of a huge nose and one or two rather suggested slapstick situations offer the best opportunities to convey some sort of fun graphically, but it is not the predominant type of humor of the story. The source of fun in the story is essentially verbal. The salon conversations, which Kenneth Silverman characterized as "rapid-fire dialogue" (110), are almost as absurd as those of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. Moreover, Poe's joke on "nosology", several puns, allusive names and other innuendos cannot be transposed from verbal into iconic signs.

4.3.2 The Man that Was Used up

This tale is another so-called satire from the pen of Poe, which, just like "Lionizing", has been largely neglected by Poe's illustrators.¹²⁵ Poe thought highly of the tale, as is demonstrated by its inclusion in the *Prose Romances* aside "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", four years after its first publication. For his projected *Phantasy Pieces*, the story was also coupled with his first Dupin tale, both being at the top of the

lists of contents. The two tales are connected by the theme of detection, although both differ in that in the satire everybody but the narrator knows about the mystery surrounding General A. B. C. Smith, quite contrary to the solution of the Parisian murders, which is an enigma to everybody else but the detective. The chronology of publication makes a self-parody impossible, of course (unless Poe had already outlined his first detective tale as early as 1839, a conjecture for which no indication exists), but there are many good reasons to assume that “The Man that Was Used up” is, in part, an ironic pastiche on “Ligeia” (cf. Thompson, *Fiction* 83ff; cf. Beuka 29). The point of view of a first person narrator who is aware of his peculiar frame of mind are points of resemblance, and the syntax and contents of the satire’s initial paragraph echo the first sentences of “Ligeia”. The two tales also share the extended description of their protagonists, with many corresponding details. The first version of “The Man that Was Used up” contains Poe’s favorite quotation from Bacon (cf. M 2: 379n), which is of central importance to the author’s aesthetics of beauty (see 3.2 and 4.1). It has been pointed out that Ligeia’s beauty is eclectic, being composed of ideal physiognomical features of different origin, and the same is with the General’s perfect appearance, although his magnificence must be understood as a composition in a definitely literal sense. Another point of correspondence is that both narrators cling to the protagonists in order to be introduced into some sort of mystery, which is of fundamental importance to them. Moreover, the tales are similar on a structural level, in that the narrator’s futile attempts to discover the mystery of the General parallel the various futile efforts of resurrection in “Ligeia”. Finally, the corresponding pattern of expectancy and frustration culminates in a climactic revelation which horrifies the narrator of each tale.

In a letter to Joseph Evans Snodgrass, dated September 19, 1841, Poe commented on his later story “Never Bet the Devil Your Head”: “The tale in question is a mere Extravaganza levelled at no one in particular, but hitting right & left at things in general” (O 1: 183). Poe was weakening Snodgrass’ assumption that he was directly satirizing the contributions to *The Dial*, the basically Transcendentalist quarterly edited by Margaret Fuller. Poe’s comments about “Never Bet the Devil Your Head” can likewise be applied to many of his other satirical writings. For “The Man that Was Used up”, literary scholars have unearthed different targets for Poe’s satire, but the story’s witticisms are also interpretable in a rather general way.¹²⁶ Just like “Lionizing”, the tale ridicules the superficial talk and gossip at social meetings. General A. B. C. Smith, whose name reflects the mixture of commonplaces that characterizes his one-dimensional conversation, is another lion of the drawing rooms, and his social standing is probably as shaky as that of his namesake Thomas Smith.¹²⁷ For Joan Tyler Mead the General was “a fitting image of his smug and pretentious society which espouses hollow values” (281; cf. Mooney, “Comic”, 439, 441; cf. Marchand). In a wider social context, the tale can also be read as a satire on the dehumanizing tendencies, imperfections and cultural side effects of technological progress in 19th century America (cf. *ibid.* 438). Quite contrary to “Lionizing”, Poe’s sources refer to a serious background of actual human suffering, so that even today the story’s wit cannot be enjoyed without a vague feeling of horror. Poe’s most obvious reference is indicated in the story’s subtitle, “A Tale of



the Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaign”. Mabbott pointed out to the extensive contemporary newspaper reports about the Second Seminole War (1835–42), in which the native population of Florida fought against regular U.S. troops. These accounts mentioned that captives had to endure mutilations and scalping, and that some victims survived the cruel procedures (M 2: 377).

The gruesome historical background of the story is accentuated by an illustration which appeared in 1956 in a Brazilian edition of Poe’s works: the artist, either Eugenio HIRSCH or Augusto Iriarte GIRONAZ (1956),¹²⁸ depicted nothing but a skull. Luigi SERVOLINI produced two wood-cuts which foreground the Florida campaign, representing the Kickapoos and Bugaboos as ominous figures with only a touch of caricature (1929; fig. 117). Moreover, the symmetrical composition and the absence of any three-dimensional illusion creates a sense of staginess that also visualizes the superficiality of things (see below). SERVOLINI’s head-piece of withering flowers may allude to the General’s feeble state of health as well as to a degenerating society, mocking the human condition and turning away from nature towards an uncritical appreciation of mechanical inventions.¹²⁹

Russell HOBAN’s illustration (fig. 118), published in 1963 in England and in the US simultaneously, presents the final scene in which the narrator enters the officer’s dressing room. The narrator does not recognize the “odd-looking bundle” as the General’s torso, so that he, in ill temper, kicks him with his feet. This humiliating act, though not carried out as a deliberate offence, foregrounds the theme of dehumanization and human tragedy. In HOBAN’s picture, the General,

Fig. 117 “L’uomo ‘usato’”: Luigi Servolini (1929).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 118 “The Man that Was Used up”: Russell Hoban (1963).

Collection of the author.



decomposed, distorted, toothless and with only one eye, is a helpless, amorphous mass, that arouses compassion rather than laughter.

Poe used to represent blacks as stupid, laughable, and servile people, and, in the case of the natives of Tsalal in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, capable of cunning and sneakiness. Romantically, he regarded the Southern slave system as a kind of natural institution, which brought the slaves a good deal of advantages. This attitude towards blacks must be kept in mind, because Poe must have considered General Smith's dependence on his dwarf-like negro servant Pompey as funny and humiliating at the same time. Stephen MCKEOWN's illustration of the General's "dressing" (fig. 119) shows the diminutive Pompey on a stepladder, furnishing Smith with a set of teeth. This scene recalls the procedure on slave markets, where the buyers tested the physical condition of slaves as if they were horses, checking muscles, eyesight and teeth, but here the positions are reversed. Moreover, MCKEOWN managed to visualize the process of transformation, witnessed by the narrator. At first sight, Smith looks like a stately figure, dressed in a well fitting uniform, but on closer inspection his unnatural stiffness and physical deficiencies become apparent. Robert A. Beuka who, like Terence Whalen, questioned the established conviction that Poe was a racist and a proponent of slavery, understood this reversal of roles between master and slave as a symbol for the superficiality of a national strength that rested on racial dominance. According to Beuka, "The Man that Was Used up" embodies a sociopolitical commentary: Poe not only disclosed the emptiness of the Jacksonian ideal of masculinity, he also exposed that President Jackson's strive for national unity was built on racism and genocide (35, 39).

Ramón CALSINA's mannerism to depict human beings like puppets made him a suitable illustrator for the tale. Contrary to the text one of his pictures (1971) shows the General as a composite automaton, and not as a human being furnished with artificial limbs (fig. 120). Smith looks like a tailor's dummy that is about to

Fig. 119 "The Man that Was Used up": Stephen McKeown (1973).
Collection of Burton Pollin.



be put together by a stylishly dressed up man. Thus CALSINA's picture is suggestive of a reading which interprets the story, as Ronald Curran did in 1978, as a ridicule of the fashionable American society in the 1830s (cf. Mead 283). Donald Weeks pushed this point further, stating that "Poe portrays 'the man' who today is the result of man-made products to enhance his 'beauty'/or 'manliness' with products [...] which are advertised in the mass media of the present environment" (86). AL DAVIDSON's illustrations (1969) turn the reader's attention in a similar direction, in that the General is depicted as a fashion paper doll (fig. 121). Just like his name, A. B. C. Smith's appearance in DAVIDSON's pictures does suggest the compositeness and the interchangeability of his parts. The illustration also visualizes the flatness of salon conversation, the hollowness of reputation and the superficial human relationships cultivated at social parties. Additionally, the image alludes to the prominence of fashion issues in the magazines of Poe's times.

CALSINA's second illustration is an attempt to visualize a comic situation. In the Rantipole theatre, the narrator is about to get the wanted information from the Misses Cognoscenti, but in the last moment Arabella is interrupted by Climax, the actor of Iago, who, being disturbed by the talk in the box, drowns her statement with blank verses from *Othello* (see M 2: 383f). However, CALSINA did not illustrate the interruption, but the narrator's following reaction, namely his cuffing of Climax behind the scenes. Unable to transform the verbal humor of the story graphically, CALSINA turned to slapstick to create a visual comical effect.

In his classification of Poe's humorous tales, Daniel Royot wrote that in the satires "Poe was attentive to graphic effects as a cartoonist" (63). Nevertheless, "The Man that Was Used up" confronts illustrators with similar problems as does "Lionizing": despite the presentation of caricatural figures Poe's humor is predominantly verbal. It is only at the very end of the text that the used-up man is presented as a grotesque figure. In "The Man that Was Used up" the situation comedy arises from the constantly frustrated expectations of the narrator to learn

Fig. 120 "El Hombre que se Gastó": Ramón Calsina (1971).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 121 "The Man that Was Used up": Al Davidson (1969).

Collection of the author.

about Smith's mystery. Just like the protagonists of some of Poe's Gothic tales, the narrator is on the very brink of being introduced to an important secret. His efforts to end his quest prove to be futile, because the mere mentioning of the word "man" is constantly picked up as a keyword by people overhearing his conversation, and as a result, the talk is deflected into some other direction before the sought-after information is communicated. The word "man" highlights the culmination of the comical situation, but the comical situations have no visual properties. The story's humor arises from the disruption of the phrase "He is the man ..." and its subsequent decontextualized completion. The illustrations for "The Man that Was Used up" give evidence of the artists' problems to transform Poe's verbal humor graphically. Moreover, the General hardly appears as a laughable figure in the illustrations of the dressing room scene. In Poe's text the situation comedy of the narrator's quest is offset by the grotesque ending, which gives the story a weird turn. And finally, the grotesque spectacle of the mutilated general is partially relieved by Smith's recommendations of several suppliers of prostheses, so that the story ends in an absurd account of insider information.

As an effect, the reader is disoriented, since he does not know whether to react primarily towards the amusing or the appalling elements of the story. The "humorous" pattern of the story consist of three unconnected segments – situation comedy, grotesque spectacle, absurd monologue –, which the reader has to adjust to each other. Stephen MCKEOWN's illustration (fig. 119) shows the narrator at his wit's end, seemingly unable to comprehend what is going on right before his eyes. The reader of Poe's "The Man that Was Used up" is likely to find himself in a very similar situation.

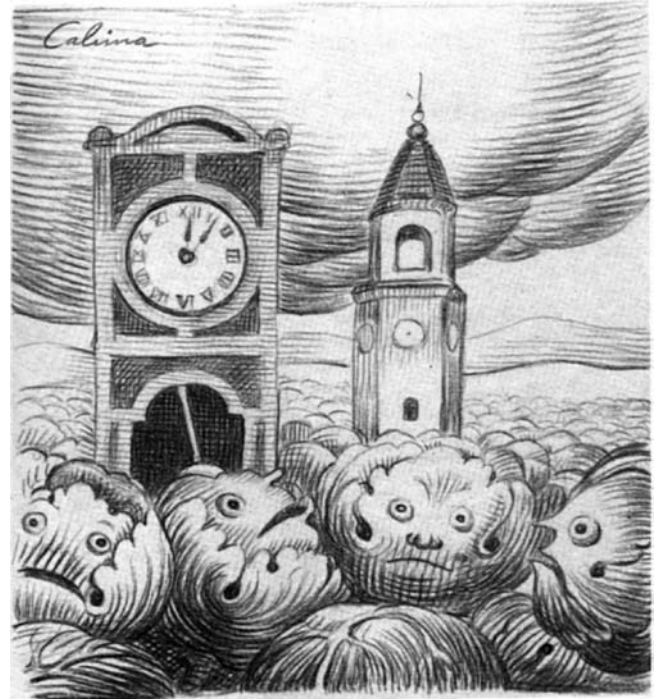
4.3.3 The Devil in the Belfry

"The Devil in the Belfry" is one of the few stories mentioned that have been illustrated more frequently than the *gros* of Poe's other comic tales. It is one of four, in which the devil appears,¹³⁰ and among these it is the most light-hearted. William Whipple read the story as a satire on Martin van Buren, Democratic President of the U.S. from 1837 to 1841. Whipple revealed many corresponding details between the devil and the politician, and the outcome of his analysis is that Poe was longing for the restoration of an order which the devil or van Buren's political machinery, the so-called "Regency", respectively, had destroyed (88ff). However, most scholars agree that Poe's satire is mainly directed towards the order and conformity of the borough Vondervotteimittis. While Katharina Bachinger regarded the tale as Poe's ironic commentary on contemporary debates about technological progress and demographic development, some of which were characterized by a sentimental nostalgia for the American pastoral past, David Ketterer identified the devil with Poe, who, "in his creative and critical writing [was] campaigning against insular systems of reason that make the contours of life fixed and distinct" (*Rationale* 4). Ina Conzen-Meairs interpreted the tale, and James ENSOR's etching, entitled *Le diable dans le beffroi* (c. 1888), as a commentary on the problematic relationship

between the artist (the devil/Poe/Ensor) and a narrow-minded, bourgeois society represented by Vondervotteimittis (86f).¹³¹ While Conzen-Mears is able to specify the correspondence between Vondervotteimittis and Brussels/Ostende, she does not mention whether Poe ridicules Richmond, Philadelphia or New York, or to all of them and the American society in general.

Mabbott remarked that the setting is provided by “a sleepy town of phlegmatic Pennsylvania Dutchmen” and that the “local inhabitants are clearly Pennsylvanians of German ancestry”. He also referred to Carl Schreiber, who was convinced that Poe was ridiculing the Philadelphian’s obsession with punctuality (2: 363f). Philip H. Nicklin’s *A Pleasant Peregrination through the Prettiest Parts of Pennsylvania* is likely to have been another source of inspiration for Poe. At the beginning of his review of the book in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of June 1836 (P 5: 206–11) Poe copied the author’s description of Philadelphia, in which many details of Poe’s story are prefigured. Christopher Forbes thought the story to be a literary satire on Washington Irving’s descriptions in *A History of New York*.¹³² Besides Forbes’ arguments, there is another reason to assume that New York may have been the model of Vondervotteimittis.

In 1837, Poe had moved from Richmond to New York in order to establish himself in the literary metropolis of the country. Poe did not last longer than fifteen months, a time for which only scarce information is available today (cf. A. H. Quinn 263ff *passim*; Silverman 129–33; Thomas and Jackson 242–45). How the author was able to maintain a household for his family for little more than a year has remained in obscurity so far, since only one lengthy review and very few creative works are known to have been published while Poe lived in New York. On March 30, 1837, a few weeks after his arrival, Poe introduced himself into the literary society of New York with a flattering toast, on the occasion of a Bookseller’s Dinner at the City Hotel. There he met Washington Irving, Fitz-Greene Halleck, William Cullen Bryant, Lewis Gaylord Clark and many other minor literary celebrities of the day, among them a victim of one of his harshest reviews, William Leete Stone (see Thomas and Jackson 243f). But Poe did not manage to establish himself in New York, neither as an artist nor as a critic. If it was not the general depression of the 1830s that made living in New York too expensive, one reason for his failure might have been Poe’s former attacks on some literary figures of the city.¹³³ Considering the author’s failure in New York, the description of the circular uniformity and conservative and well-concerted conformity of Vondervotteimittis can be interpreted as a parody of the established literary metropolis and its prime organ, Clarke’s *Knickerbocker*, which owed its title to Irving’s *History of New York*. If Poe identified himself with the devil, as Ketterer suggested, he saw himself as the outsider stirring up the literary circles of New York from their complacent lethargy, and the mentioned clouds of pipe smoke are a visual allusion to the local puffery system. It must be remembered that Poe came to New York, partly by invitation of Francis L. Hawks, editor of *The New York Review*, who encouraged him “to fall in with your *broad-axe* amidst the miserable literary trash which surrounds us” (qtd. in Silverman 130).



Just like “Lionizing” and “The Man that Was Used up”, the satirical elements in “The Devil in the Belfry” are likely to be aimed at various targets. The latter tale, however, differs from the earlier satires, in that it contains a kind of humor which is based on visual spectacles. The story begins with a minute description of Vondervotteimittis and its inhabitants, continues with a detailed portrayal of the devil and ends with the colorful account of a knockabout chaos. These visual properties are reflected in the variety of illustrations produced for the story.

The existent illustrations can be grouped according to the three divisions of the story as outlined above. Jacques WÉLY (1910), for example, devoted all of his three pictures to portraits of the inhabitants of Vondervotteimittis, carefully following the author’s text. Poe’s minute descriptions are responsible for the similarity of the burgher’s portraits, of which Fritz EICHENBERG’s wood engraving (1944) is another typical example (fig. 122). Among the illustrations of the burghers, Ramón CALSINA’s picture (1970) is noticeable because the Spanish artist did not confine himself to a graphic transformation of Poe’s descriptions (fig. 123). His depiction of the burghers alludes to the word “cabbage-head”: his illustration visually equals the villagers with their favorite sort of vegetable, thus commenting on their mental capabilities. Some pictures which show Vondervotteimittis from a bird’s eye view could likewise be accepted as illustrations for the opening scene of “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall”, as, for instance, Fernand SIMÉON’s

Fig. 122 “The Devil in the Belfry”: Fritz Eichenberg (1944).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 123 “El Diablo en el Campanario”: Ramón Calsina (1970).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

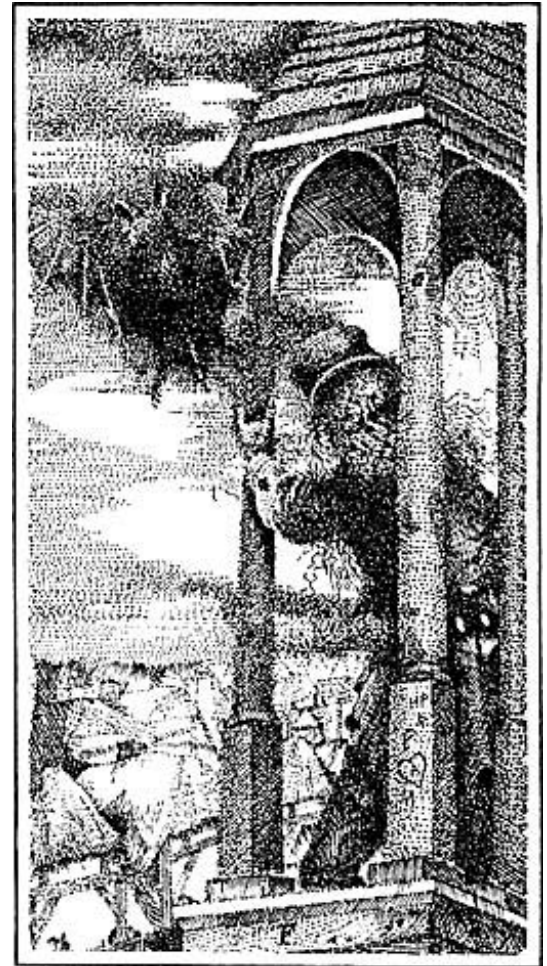


head-piece woodcut, which resembles Frederick Simpson COBURN's illustration of the market-place of Rotterdam. However, there are only two depictions of Vondervotteimittis, in which the village's obvious resemblance with the face of a clock is visualized.¹³⁴ In Suzanne CLEE's symmetrical composition (1983) the bell tower suggests a clock's hand and the houses convey the impression of the hour-figures on a dial-plate (fig. 124). The idea of a clock is further stressed by the semicircular frame around the illustration, and by the story's motto – "What o'clock is it? – Old Saying" – which is reprinted directly below the head-piece.

Most illustrations were devoted to the depiction of the devil, sometimes combined with the slapstick scenes in the bell tower or the chaos on the market place when the clock strikes thirteen. Quite contrary to the portraits of the burghers, and despite Poe's elaborate account of the strange figure's outward appearance, the representations of the devil vary widely. In the illustrations of William SHARP and Rick SCHREITER the devil is depicted as a good-humoured joker on his way into the village. The windmills in the background indicate that SHARP's setting is definitely Dutch, and thus the picture excludes any satirical reference to the American scene. SCHREITER's illustration (1967) gives no decisive clue about the setting, save attire and hair-style of the devil, both of which suggest an 18th century background (fig. 125). These illustrations, which try to convey humor by presenting merry facial expressions, are not devoid of sombre elements. The shadow of the stranger in SCHREITER's picture suggests an over-sized devil's head (in SHARP's devil's horns or claws), and a flying bird's silhouette in the background is an ominous foreboding of things to come. Despite the merry countenance of

Fig. 124 "The Devil in the Belfry": Suzanne Clee (1983).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 125 "The Devil in the Belfry": Rick Schreiter (1967).
Collection of the author.



the stranger, his shade, the black mass of the violin and the dense hatching create an atmosphere of ominous twilight, which puts the comical presentation of the stranger into a somber frame.

There is hardly one unmistakably humorous depiction of the stranger. In Martin VAN MAËLE's set of illustrations (1912) the devil is either presented as a kind of clownesque character or a mischievous goblin. A survey of other illustrations for the story reveals that neither Knut HALLSTRÖM (1957), Fuyuji YAMANAKA (1964) nor Giovanni GIANNINI (1978) depicted the stranger as the vaudeville figure he appears to be in the story, and thus Gus BOFA's depiction of the devil (1941; fig. 126) is probably the funniest of them all.

A good deal of the story's humor derives from the exaggerated proportions of the strange little fellow and his accessories. His violin, for example, is five times bigger than himself. Poe employs a technique that he himself described as "the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque": while his account of Vondervotteimittis and its inhabitants arouses mirth because it ridicules an existing and recognizable locality by means of funny distortion, the absurd disproportions in the description of the devil amount to something fantastic. The devil has qualities of the unknown, and thus, despite the humorous knockabout scenes in which he is involved, even becomes frightening. The reader does not learn about his motivation to upset Vondervotteimittis, so that it becomes a tyrannical act. As a result, it is not surpris-

Fig. 126 "Le Diable dans le Beffroi": Gus Bofa (1941).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 127 "Der Teufel im Glockenstuhl": Carl Hoffmann (1977).
Collection of the author.



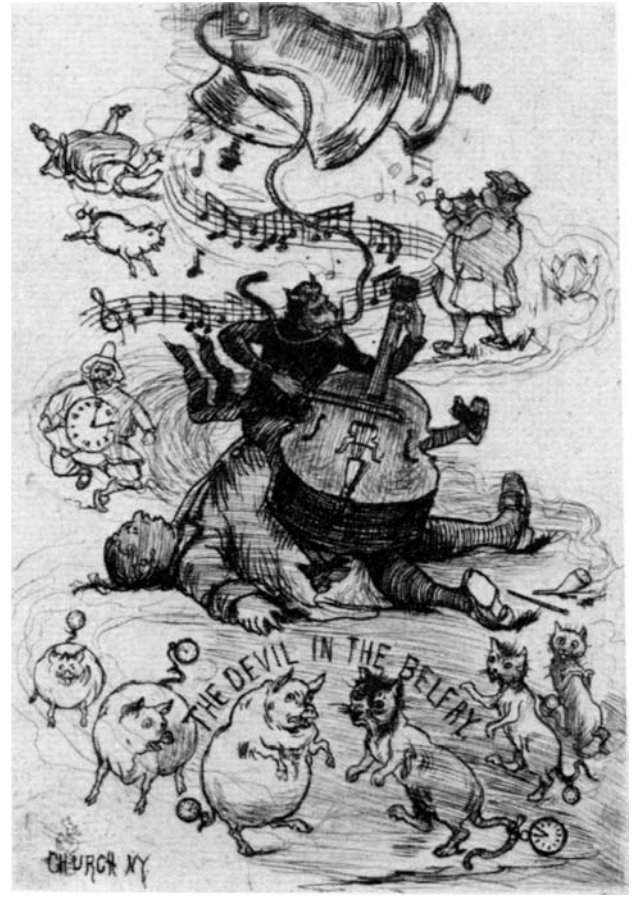
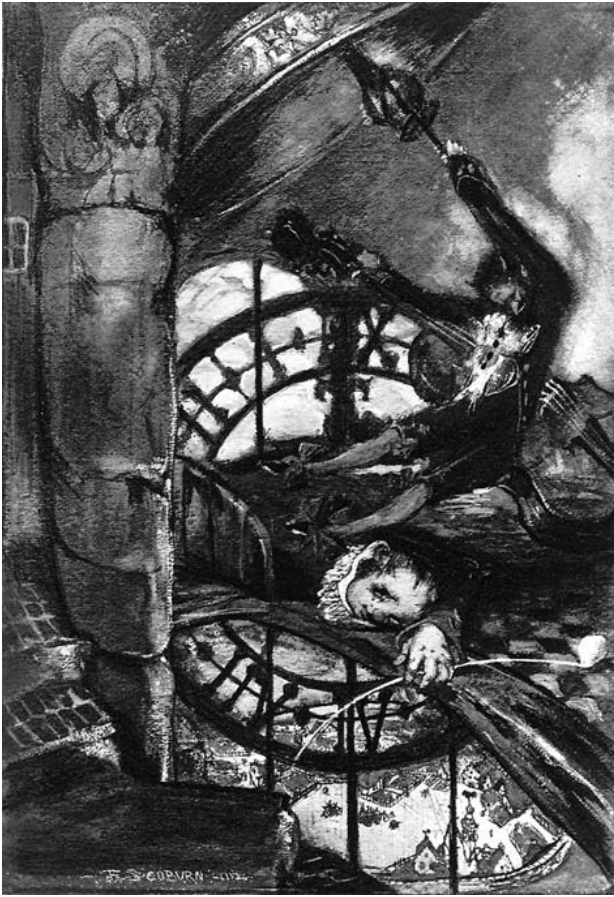
ing that the devil appears as an ominous rather than a funny figure in some illustrations. In Carl HOFFMANN's illustration, the devil, accompanied by a bat and staring down onto the city of Vondervotteimittis, can only be seen from the back (fig. 127). He is clad in a dark overcoat and has a creased hat on top of his head. HOFFMANN's dotty style makes it difficult to discern any details, which makes the devil become even more mysterious and dreadful, because the onlooker cannot figure the stranger out although he is right before his eyes. The devil is also a terrible figure in the pictures of Alberto MARTINI and Carlo FARNETI, although one has to acknowledge that both artists are probably at their most comical here. FARNETI depicted the devil as an evil figure, who, like a conductor or a dancing master, makes the dismayed burghers cavort to his wild tune. In MARTINI's illustration (fig. 128), the maliciously grinning devil literally holds the idyllic village in his hands: Vondervotteimittis is exposed to his chaotic reign and left to his mercy. The village is uprooted from its surroundings. Its neat internal order is threatened by the huge nothingness which is inhabited by the almighty devil and where all values are insignificant. In comparison to HOFFMANN's and MARTINI's devil who seems to be a menace of local dimensions, MARTINI's figure represents the universal danger of chaos. The absence of any mirth in these pictures turns the overall humorous tone of the story upside down. The reader's hermeneutic activity is challenged, because text and illustration are juxtaposed as unconnected segments, the one stressing humorous, the other dismal aspects. The discrepancy must be resolved by the reader, who has to adjust text and pictures to each other

Fig. 128 "Il Violinista-Campanaro/Il Diavolo sul Campanile": Alberto Martini (date unknown).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 129 "Le Diable dans le Beffroi": Wögel (1884).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.



in order to generate a consistent meaning. Although the illustrations in question do not reflect the presupposed satire on van Buren, they are likely to promote Whipple's interpretation in a rather general way. The pictures of FARNETI and MARTINI visualize the devil as a malevolent intruder bringing chaos into the intact world of Vondervotteimittiss.

One of the first illustrations ever made for the story, produced by Hermann WÖGEL in 1884, has become the model for many later depictions of the slapstick scene in the bell tower (fig. 129). WÖGEL is probably also responsible for the graphic tradition, which is characterized by the ambiguous depiction of the devil. In WÖGEL's image, the devil is not as frightening as those mentioned above, but his overall somber appearance evokes uncanny feelings, which are only partially counterbalanced by the comic situation. The picture's slapstick comedy is emphasized by the central perspective, which presents the scene as if it were taking place on a stage. In Frederick Simpson COBURN's picture (1902), the bird's-eye view, the overlapping orbicular forms and intersecting circular lines make the viewer's eye spin around the clock elliptically (fig. 130). The picture does not offer a central point, where the gaze might come to a rest, and so it conveys an impression of the dizzy height of the bell tower. The eccentric composition also transforms the overall turmoil in Vondervotteimittiss graphically. The chaos, for the burghers as well as for the viewer, originates from the removal of fixed guidelines. COBURN's picture makes the onlooker feel confused and disoriented, feelings similar to those of the inhabitants of Vondervotteimittiss.

Fig. 130 "The Devil in the Belfry": Frederick Simpson Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

Fig. 131 "The Devil in the Belfry": Frederick Edwin Church (1884).

Collection of the author.

In 1884, Frederic Edwin CHURCH produced an illustration, where several aspects of the story are grouped around the fiddling devil sitting on top of the enormously fat belfry-man (fig. 131). Besides this funny view, some burghers, pigs and cats with clocks attached to their tails are depicted in amusing attitudes and thus contribute to the overall slapstick of the illustration. The comedy is achieved by the reversal of normal conditions: one *frau* lying on her back looks like a turtle turned topsy-turvy, while a fat burgher's profile resembles a pig. The dehumanization of the inhabitants of Vonderveittimittis is most notable in the depiction of a man, whose torso consists of a clock. On the other hand, the animals are walking erect and their faces express human feelings. CHURCH's picture is a grotesque in the original sense, because the depicted figures are mixtures of human bodies, animals and inorganic objects. The once orderly world of Vondervotteimittis is a chaos where nothing is like it was before. All beings and things have been mixed up, so that there is not even a basic kind of natural or artificial order. Another source of mirth in CHURCH's picture is the artist's ironic use of graphic conventions which were usually employed for greeting cards sent on the occasion of Christian holidays. The symmetrical composition, the bells at the top of the illustration (here ironically knelled by the devil and not by angels), the serpentine staves and the musical notations all suggest stock components of Christmas or Easter artwork. Apart from this, the picture suggests an ironic allusion to Poe's poem "The Bells", a favorite with Victorian readers and artists. In comparison to CLARKE Stanton's illustration for "The Bells", in which several scenes of the poem are arranged around a central motif and below dangling bells, CHURCH's picture is a caricature of Victorian sanctimoniousness and religious sentimentality,¹³⁵ one of the foundations the British Empire was built upon.

4.3.4 The Duc de l'Omelette, Bon-Bon, Mystification

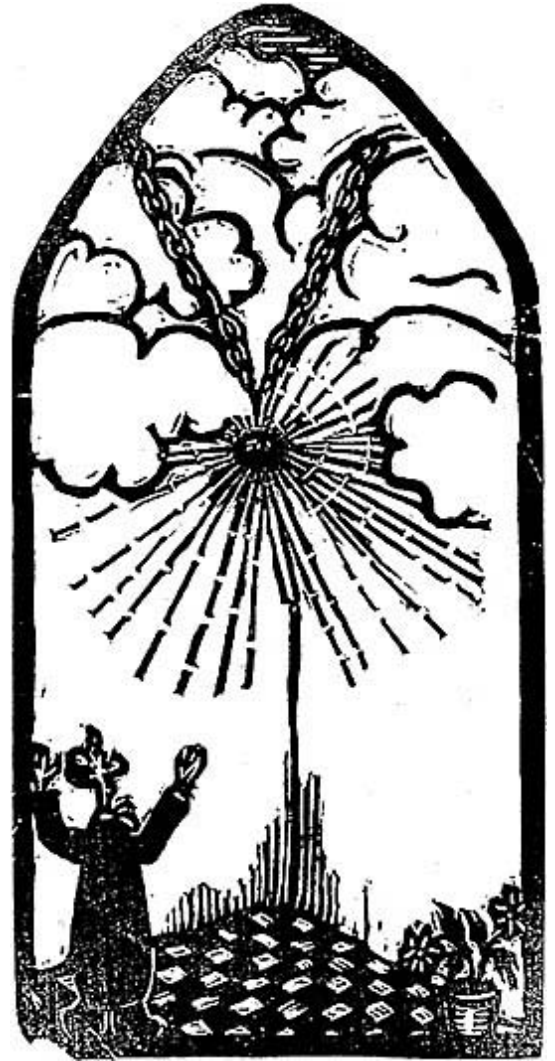
The other satires on social and literary life in the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* have been less popular than the three so far mentioned, and they belong to the least illustrated of Poe's texts, consequently.

In "The Duc de l'Omelette" and "Bon-Bon" the devil makes his appearance, but Poe presented him quite differently than in the later "The Devil in the Belfry". In the two early tales the devil is a learned fellow involved in a "sophisticated" argument with the protagonists. The Duc is able to outwit the devil, cleverly cheating him in a game of cards. As a result he is released from hell and is allowed to return to life. Here, Poe combines a folkloristic tradition about people pulling the devil's leg with some stereotypical Gothic elements in the description of the devil's residence, which partly prefigure the fantastically decorated chambers in "The Assigantion" and "Ligeia". According to Kenneth Daugherty many details of the story reveal that in the figure of the Duc the coxcombrie of N. P. Willis was satirized (58f). Ruth L. Hudson regarded Disraeli's *The Young Duke* as the object of satire (408f), and Thompson thought Poe ridiculed Disraeli and Willis, since the latter had only imitated the style of the British author (*Fiction* 45). Apart from its

satiric intentions, the tale embodies some absurd comic, such as the Duc's "death", caused by an inadequately presented dish, or the blushing devil, who, supposedly, is surprised in a very private moment. The mannered conversation, interlarded with French expressions, is another source of mirth independent from any satirical intention, since the pretentious talk is definitely inappropriate in sight of the eternal damnation threatening the Duc. Daniel Royot stated that Poe did not only ridicule the *décadence* of French nobles but also "the American initiators of a transatlantic culture fascinated with the lustre of exotic romance and snobbishly striving to be proficient in high-flown French" (63f).

Suzanne CLEE depicted the Duc's death. Though there is a poultry dish on the table near his couch, the picture does not visualize the connection between the Duc's exitus and the *hors d'oeuvre*. Thus the picture is devoid of the absurd humor which characterizes this scene in the story, and so the illustration might as well illustrate the suicide finale of Poe's later tale "The Assignment". Likewise, Frederick Simpson COBURN's illustration does not convey much fun (fig. 132). It shows the Duc presenting the trump card to the devil. The Duc, however, pale-faced and clad in shrouds, is an even more fear-inspiring figure than the horned devil, since he looks like Death himself. COBURN's washy style, which renders many details unclear, does not allow to discern the expression of the Duc's countenance, and the card in his hands may be mistaken for a sand-glass. The devil's position at the bottom of the right corner and the worm's-eye view visualize that the devil has been overtrumped by the Duc. One can read the story's humor into the illustration, but the picture does not convey it on its own. On the contrary, the two frightening figures, the fantastic interior of the hall and the predominant gloom are likely to emphasize the Gothic elements of the story, thus graphically overshadowing the text's verbal humor. Luigi SERVOLINI renounced the depiction of Lucifer, but just like COBURN he depicted the Duc in the devil's residence (fig. 133). While COBURN, faithfully transforming some textual details such as the statues in the niches, stressed the vast height and the cave-like appearance of the devil's residence, SERVOLINI took more freedom in the presentation of the interior. The Italian illustrator stuck to the text in that he depicted the ceiling of clouds and the radiating ruby lamp, but he ignored the statues, the rounded corners and the height of the devil's abode. Some details of Poe's depiction of the devil's residence, the eclectic and bizarre interior decoration, the spaciousness and the lighting conditions were to reappear later in his Gothic tales, such as "Ligeia", "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death". As it is, the setting of the story is definitely frightening, and SERVOLINI paid due attention to this circumstance by inserting the awe-struck Duc into a Gothic frame. Two details of the pictures, however, show that the artist turned the interior into ridicule. A pot of flowers in the lower right corner and the floor, which looks as if it was covered with chequered tiles, suggest an interior much like the kitchens in *Vondervotteimittis*. After all, the inhabitant of this room, the devil, seems to be a rather cozy homebody.

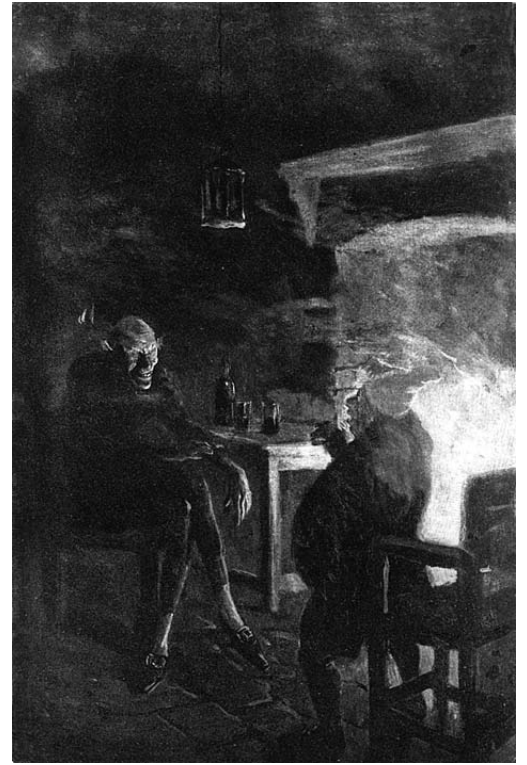
Bon-Bon, in the story of the same name, is less lucky than the Duc de l'Omelette in escaping the devil. Lucifer pays the would-be-philosopher a visit and involves him in an argument about the nature of the soul. While Bon-Bon sticks to meta-



physical explanations the devil speaks of the soul as a very material thing, a thing that can be prepared for a meal in many different ways. After the devil has left, Bon-Bon is killed by a falling candelabrum. In sight of the fact, that, in Poe's early works, lights often symbolize transcendental knowledge or a visual contact with the ethereal sphere, the circumstances of Bon-Bon's death must be regarded as ironic in a double sense, but they may also connote what Poe considered to be the trapfalls of enlightenment philosophy. "Bon-Bon" is intended to be satirical, but it is a satire without a funny edge. Bon-Bon and the devil are having a sophisticated argument, and it seems as if Poe mainly used the opportunity to show off with erudition and philosophical learning. Some fun derives from the fact that, while Bon-Bon is talking about philosophy and aesthetics, the devil is communicating his opinion about the flavour of the philosophers' souls, and thus some parts of the discussion playfully allude to the 18th century aesthetic term "Taste". Hammond considered the story a satire of the Faust legend, narrated by the devil himself (cf. Wilson, "Devil"; Bittner 290). For Christie, Poe satirized those contemporary stories which figured the devil as a distinguished gentleman in search for human souls (45), and Thompson thought Poe was hitting at German metaphysics and the display of learning in contemporary literature (*Fiction* 47). As in almost any other humorous

Fig. 132 "The Duc de l'Omelette": Frederick Simpson Coburn (1902).
Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

Fig. 133 "Il Duca de l'Omelette": Luigi Servolini (1929).
Collection of the author.



tale of Poe, the fun is based on innuendos. The visual humor of the story, provided by the ridiculous appearance of Bon-Bon, is counterbalanced by the presentation of the devil as a fear-inspiring and repulsive figure without eyes. In Suzanne CLEE's illustration the devil is absent, so that the picture not only concentrates on the droll appearance of Bon-Bon, but also insinuates that the devil is a mere chimera, caused by the protagonist's state of inebriation. Bon-Bon's drunkenness is also visualized in the illustration of Bertil BULL-HEDLUND (fig. 134). The Swedish illustrator shows the tipsy protagonist, surrounded by several bottles and books, giving a toast to Lucifer. The devil, offering Bon-Bon some sort of contract in the form of a scroll, is presented as a stern 17th century Puritan theocrat, but with a double tail and a cloven foot. In the foreground, the ominous figure of a crouching black cat spies on the intoxicated man as if he was the victim of her chase. The picture implies that the devil is playing cat and mouse with Bon-Bon, in order to make his flesh more tender like real cats that "play" with mice. While BULL-HEDLUND, just like Ramón CALSINA, graphically levels the presentation of both figures, reducing especially the comical features of Bon-Bon, Frederick Simpson COBURN indulged in the contrast between the two like no other illustrator (fig. 135). Bon-Bon is, faithful to Poe's description, depicted as a ridiculous, corpulent imp and the devil is a spidery figure with a fiendish grin. The picture is symptomatic of one particular facet of Poe's humor. It attempts to achieve a comical effect by means of contrast and incongruity. Moreover, the comedy is situated in gloomy surroundings, here provided by the dark chamber, the flickering light from the fireside. The malicious grin of the devil is paradigmatic for Poe's double-bottomed humor that it is connected with horror or death.

Fig. 134 "Bon-Bon": Bertil Bull-Hedlund (1946).

Courtesy of The New York Public Library.

Fig. 135 "The Bargain Lost": Frederick Simpson Coburn (1902).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.



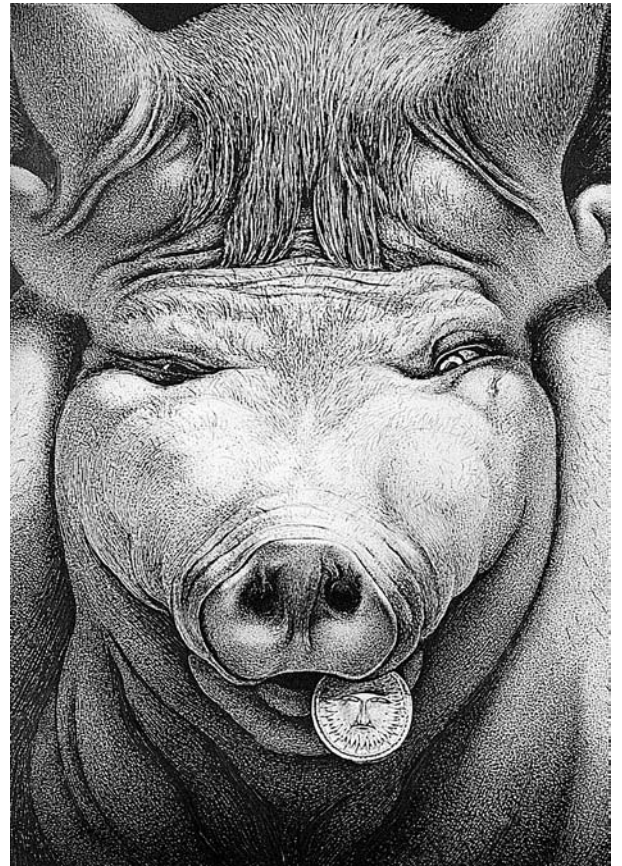
Figg. 136+137 "Mistificazione": Luigi Servolini (1929).
Collection of the author.

"Mystification" was written half a decade later than "The Duc de l'Omelette" and "Bon-Bon". It is Poe's only known short story published during the author's first attempt to establish himself in New York. T. O. Mabbott pointed to the first appearances of important themes which Poe elaborated in later stories, namely the motif of the double and the use of cryptography. While Mabbott interpreted the tale as a ridiculous anecdote about duels in general (M 2: 291), Edward Davidson regarded the lengthy description of Hermann, which is part of the two earliest publications of the tale, as a self-portrait of the author, coming to the somewhat inconclusive result that Poe was making fun of himself (144). David Ketterer agreed with Davidson's assumption about an autobiographical relevance, but he pushed the point further, convinced that the description of Hermann also matches the appearance of the baron, thus emphasizing the story's motif of the *doppelgänger* (Rationale 76). If one accepts the descriptions of von Jung and Roderick Usher as Poe's self-portraits, the representation of Hermann can at best be a distorted and unfavorable image of the author, a circumstance that remains unexplained in Ketterer's study. In fact, the description rather seems to be the grotesque fusion of man and ape, an assumption which is strengthened by von Jung's modification of a text which describes a combat between baboons.

Luigi SERVOLINI's illustrations definitely support the thesis that von Jung and Hermann are each other's double (figg. 136+137). Both woodcuts are indexed with captions and directly positioned next to the relevant text passages, so that the pictures' anchorage in the text is out of question. SERVOLINI's first illustration is a full-size caricature of a man, subtitled "Il barone Ritzner Von Jung" (fig. 136). The man is clad in uniform, wearing a sable and military boots. The gigantic head and the tiny body are out of proportion, so that the picture rather recalls the description of Hermann: "His proportions were singularly mal-apropos. His legs were brief, bowed, and very slender. [...] His head was of colossal dimensions" (M 2: 297). Other points of similarity between SERVOLINI's caricature and Hermann are the aquiline nose, the black moustache and the peculiar form of a lock, all details which are not mentioned in the description of the baron. The second picture shows the very same man, who can be easily identified by his whiskers and the speckled nose, reading a book about duels. Here the caption links the picture to the scene in which Hermann gives the narrator a private lecture about duelling (fig. 137). SERVOLINI's pictures link the baron with Hermann visually, so that both are equally made the objects of laughter. In Poe's story, however, the narrator treats the baron with reverence and admiration, and only Hermann is ridiculed. But what would be the outcome, if the inference was legitimate? Ketterer wrote:

This suggestion of a doppelgänger relation between the baron and Hermann [and Poe] opens up unsuspected ironies. It provides an additional reason for the baron's decision to act against a reflection in a mirror and casts doubt upon the statement regarding his ability always to avoid any rebound on himself of "the sense of the grotesque". (*Rationale* 76f)

The first explanation for the mirror scene in this quotation was described by Ketterer "as a matter of injured images" (*ibid.*). Despite the critic's identification of von Jung and Poe and Hermann his interpretation stops short at a biographical reading of the story. If the story has a double bottom, as Ketterer suggests, the tale must be read as a comment on Poe's literary feud with the literary clique of New York. Burton Pollin ("Source") demonstrated that "Von Jung, the Mystific" is a satire on Theodor Fay's novel *Norman Leslie*. In 1835, Fay was an associate editor of the *New York Mirror*, which had published his "A German Student's Story" as a sample of the novel and had praised the book extravagantly. Enraged by the complacent puffery, Poe gave the book a long critique, one of the most slashing reviews he ever wrote. In the *Southern Literary Messenger* of December 1835, Poe condemned the book as "bepuffed, beplastered and be-Mirrored" (P 5: 60), a phrase that originally alluded to the weekly journal, but which has also some relevance for the mirror scene in the story. Von Jung (Poe, the critic) does not only damage to the image of his antagonist (Fay), but he ruins his own reputation as well. The destruction of the enemy's effigy visualizes Poe's charge against Fay and the narcissism of the New Yorker literary clique. Through Poe's critique, Fay's image and reputation took damage. Poe aimed at smashing his book and the *Mirror's* review policy to pieces, minutely dissecting and ridiculing both in his provocative review. Little is known about Poe's first time in New York (see above), but by June 1837 he probably had to acknowledge that the New York clique had not forgotten his earlier reviews.¹³⁶



The mirror scene has been illustrated by Ramón CALSINA and Suzanne CLEE, but none of the pictures reflects the alleged resemblance between von Jung, Hermann and Poe. In the Spanish illustration Hermann looks like some well-dressed handsome gentleman whose moustache is the only point of a faint correspondence with the text. Likewise, neither Roger CARLE nor Josef VACHAL made Poe's effigy part of their pictures. In his second illustration, Ramón CALSINA foregrounds the general ridicule of duels, showing two apes with clubs about to come to blows. However, the apes wear human clothes and the fight takes place amidst books and sheets of paper, so that the picture not only visually suggests the modified passage in Hermann's favorite manual, but also the literary battle which is outlined above.

Fig. 138 "Eine Geschichte aus Jerusalem": Alfred Kubin (1920).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 139 "Il Maiale-Mercante/Un Racconto di Gerusalem": Alberto Martini (date unknown).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

4.3.5 A Tale of Jerusalem, Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling

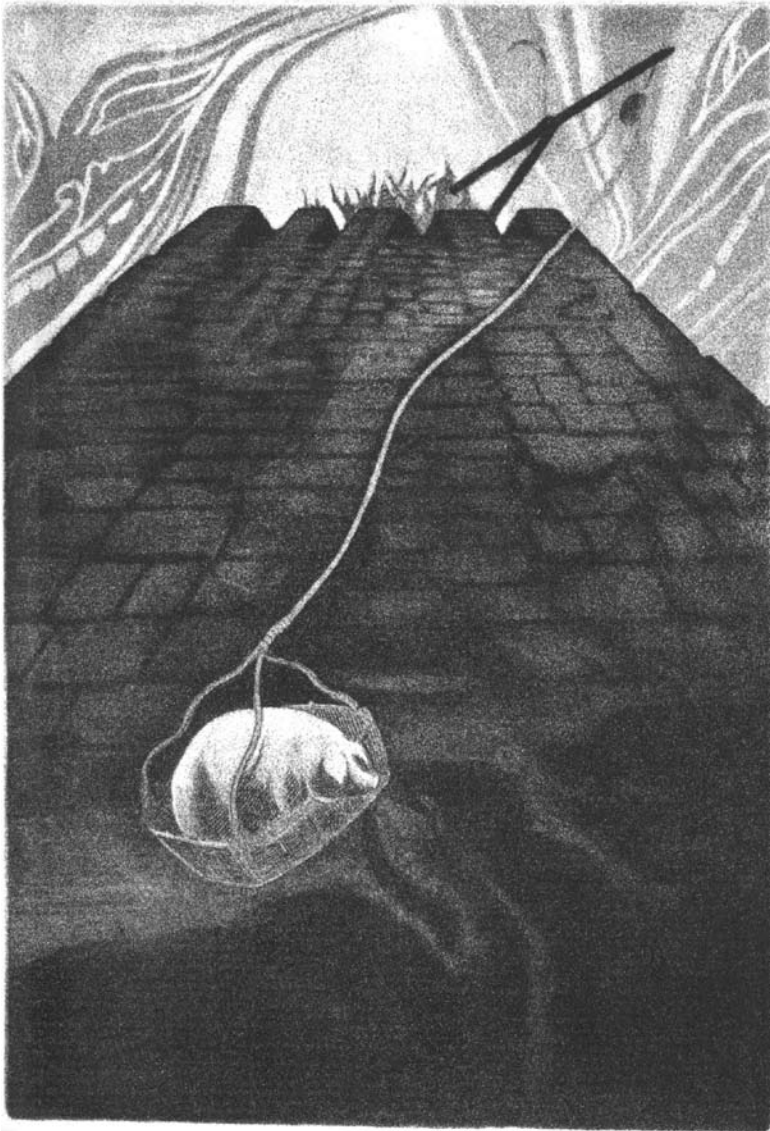
These two tales resemble each other in that they are constructed to end with a *pointe*. In both tales, the funny climax is an unpleasant surprise. The source of "humor" is the unexpected frustration of anticipation, because of a wide discrepancy between the imagined fulfilment of desire and the actual visual experience which shatters all illusions. Both tales have challenged almost no critical response at all.

"A Tale of Jerusalem" is an anecdote, based on a passage in Horace Smith's *Zillah, a Tale of the Holy City* (cf. Wilson, "Devil" 219; cf. M 2: 41). Because of a translator's error, the Jews receive an "unclean" hog from the Romans instead of the expected

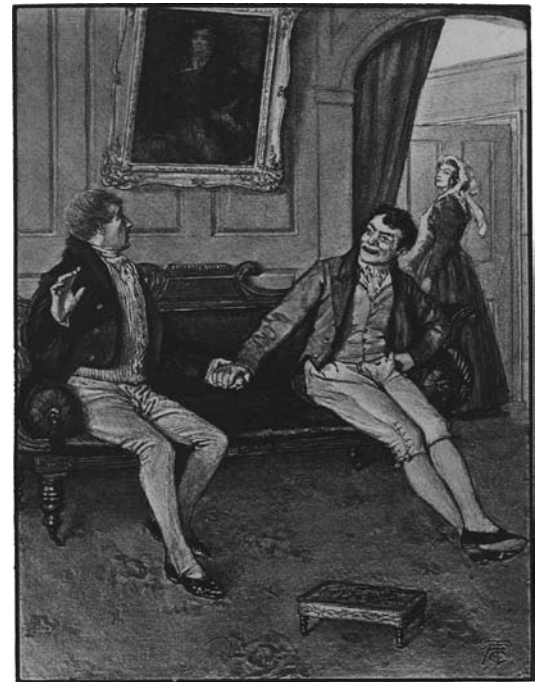
sacrificial lamb. Poe peppered the buffoonery with some anti-Semitic allusions, which he probably thought to be funny, but neither the farce nor Poe's *innuendos* help to make this story a major humorous achievement. Likewise, the few illustrations of the story are not very amusing either. Just as in most illustrations previously mentioned, the humor can be read into the pictures, but only rarely does humor express itself. While Frederick Simpson COBURN's picture shows the Jews staring down the city wall in anticipation, Alfred KUBIN depicted the other side, namely the rubbernecking Roman soldiers sending the swine upward in the basket (fig. 138). In COBURN's illustration there is no comic effect, although he captures the Jews' nervous expectation well. In KUBIN's picture, at best, the artist's mannerism to depict human beings as slightly contorted figures can be regarded as a minor source of merriment. Fernand SIMÉON and Daniel-Charles FOUQUERAY both depicted the moment of surprise, when the Jews discover that they have been fooled by the Romans. Just like the text the two pictures do not induce more than a mild smile. As so often, Alberto MARTINI provided a portrait as an illustration, and for "A Tale of Jerusalem" the Italian limited himself to depict a mean looking swine's face in a close-up (fig. 139). Carlo FARNETI also focussed on the animal, depicting the swine in the basket, which is just about to be dragged upward (fig. 140). The picture's fun mainly derives from the mischievous appearance in the sky, which gives the onlooker a wink as if he/she were an accomplice in a funny game. The onlooker is guided into the perspective of the Romans, whose eyes follow the animal's journey upward. Thus, the viewer becomes involved as if he/she were actively participating in the trick. As it is, a flat joke becomes better if one is not its victim but its originator. The laughing figure in the sky stimulates the viewer to assume that something funny is going on. Just like Poe's story, the illustration conveys a sense of malicious delight, but in order to reveal the nature of the joke, the picture must be semanticized by Poe's text.

"Why the little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling" has not called forth more than a few passing references by a handful of critics (M 2: 462f; cf. Ketterer, *Rationale* 7; Taylor 335). This story is probably the most light-hearted of all of Poe's humorous writings, because it is devoid of direct satirical allusions and sophisticated *innuendos*. The story is about an Irishman and a Frenchman, who are both courting a landlady sitting between them on a sofa. The story is written from the viewpoint of the Irishman, who is quite confident that the landlady is responding to his advances. He thinks that she touches his hand tenderly behind her back, so that the Frenchman does not become aware of it. At the end, however, the two men, both of whom were convinced of having captured the landlady's heart, discover that they are holding each other by the hand. In a fit of enragement and disappointment the narrator crushes the hand of his rival, thus closing the account by answering the question which provides the title for the story.

Taylor remarked about the story that "Poe's humor is a matter of character rather of situation or satire" and pointed to the fact that it may have been the first American short story to be written in dialect ever (335). However, the "plot" is characterized by situation comedy and it ends with a slapstick scene. Taylor's judgment is right that the fun of the story mainly derives from the narrator's bois-



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terous behaviour, his Irish accent and from his imitation of the Frenchman's conversation. This linguistic humor is based on sound and not so much on innuendos as the verbal humor in Poe's other comic writings, but, of course, illustrators had no means to transform it into images.

In 1895, F. C. TILNEY was the first illustrator of the story (fig. 141). In the foreground, the picture shows the two men holding each other by the hand, and in the background the landlady with an indignant and reproachful look. One can only infer from the text that the man at the left is the narrator, because none of the courtiers is small, so that he can be identified as the Frenchman. The attitude of the man at the left expresses surprise. It recalls the narrator's amazement who wonders how it is possible that the landlady is standing at the door while he is still clasping her hand. The illustration catches the very moment before the narrator becomes aware of his misinterpretation of the situation. The posture and the countenance of the other man are ambiguous. If one understands his attitude as mild surprise and his smile as good-willing, he seems to enjoy the predicament. But his grin can likewise be interpreted as mischievous and his pose as expressing self-

Fig. 140 "Un Événement à Jérusalem": Carlo Farneti (1928).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 141 "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling": F. C. Tilney (1895).

Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Bochum.

Fig. 142 "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling": Suzanne Clee (1983).

Collection of the author.

satisfaction about the trick he has played on the Irishman. There is no direct clue in Poe's text about such a turn of events, though this conjecture is tenable. But since the narrator is a presumptuous fellow all too convinced of his charm, he would not have perceived it anyway. If the illustration stimulates the reader to turn to this reading, the diminutive size of the Frenchman in the narrator's report is also explained as a deliberate ridicule of the Irishman's rival unfounded in facts and belied by the illustration. Consequently, TILNEY's illustration does not only evoke laughter by the depiction of a funny scene, but also because the narrator, who wants to ridicule the Frenchman, becomes the object of laughter himself.

In the chronological order of events in the story, Suzanne CLEE's illustration is set before the final scene depicted by TILNEY (fig. 142). CLEE's picture presents the three persons from behind, sitting on a couch without a back. The illustration shows the positions of the three persons in faithful adherence to the text, thus explaining how the predicament was to come about. The viewer is here located in a position which affords him a superior point of view, just like an omniscient narrator. CLEE's illustrations were designed as head-pieces for the stories, all being placed between the title and the first paragraph. This initial position, which can be compared to the function of a frontispiece, has its advantages as well as it has its disadvantages. A forward-referential illustration can stimulate the reader's imagination and arouse his curiosity about the things to come, but in this peculiar case the head-piece spoils the fun in that it anticipates the *pointe* and the final scene. This is, of course, a dilemma of all illustrations preceding the corresponding text passage, but it is particularly troublesome for texts, which lead towards a punctual climax. CLEE's illustration does not reflect the humorous tone of the story, since all persons are drawn without any traces of caricature. However, the natural depiction of the characters in a jocular situation, about the nature of which they are not aware, ironizes past conventions of courtship in general.

4.3.6 Epimanes

"Epimanes" is a story about a bizarre incident in the antique city of Antioch, namely a procession of human beings and animals lead by King Epimanes himself, who was known as the Madman.¹³⁷ Originally intended as a festivity in honor of Epimanes, the procession develops into a hunt when some wild animals start chasing the King, who is disguised as a giraffe. The King wins the race rescuing himself into the Hippodrome where his head is crowned with a wreath of victory.

The story has elicited only little more critical response than "Why the Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling". Between his copious quotations from the text, Ketterer stated that the King's disguise is "a just representation of the grotesque nature of man", but without further explanation of this statement. He imagined one of the two narrators of the story as the reader, who is drawn into the turbulent incidents beyond the confines of space and time. Ketterer concluded that the "'reader' is characterizing the contradictory, deceptive, and heterogenous nature of the human state – a grotesque state" (*Rationale* 97), a general remark that contributes little to

the understanding of this enigmatic text. Julian Symons thought the story had been neglected for too long and that it had to be included in any collection of Poe's works. According to him, the story is "a satirical fantasy" about "the decency of beasts and the ignorant cruelty of men" (205). For Donald Weeks, who considered the tale a "little gem" because of its austerity, "Epimanes" shows Poe's achievement in the field of black comedy (80f). Whipple interpreted the story as a political satire. Not quite convinced of his own reading, he pointed out to some similarities of Epimanes' procession with the festivities accompanying Andrew Jackson's victory in the presidential elections of 1831 (Whipple 83f; cf. Marchand 30, note 11). T. O. Mabbott referred to several ancient and 19th century sources to explain for the origination of the story, such as caricatures ridiculing the fondness of the French for a giraffe, given as a present to King Charles X by the Egyptian Pasha Mohammed Ali, but he agreed with Whipple that one edge of the satire is directed against the mob in general (2: 118). Another, yet unnoticed element of ridicule, is that Poe probably mildly satirized the genre of the landscape sketch, in particular accounts of the picturesque. These travel reports often conveyed an impression of the landscape through the eyes of two or more persons, who were engaged in a discussion about the aesthetic value of the spectacle before them, just like the two narrators of Poe's tale. Moreover, the dialogic presentation is not only reminiscent of the colloquys in Platon's works, but, for a modern reader used to the habits of television entertainment, the two reporters must also recall the combined insider commentary on the occasion of special social or sporting events.

The story was treated only little better by visual artists. The small number of illustrations produced for "Epimanes" is surprising, because the story offers one big spectacle. As in many other texts, Poe began with a general survey of the scene, before he directs the attention of the reader to details. Poe's descriptive passages often show this movement from a large panorama to minute aspects, which are singled out from the whole, so that his technique to lead the reader's eye can be compared to the cinematic device of a camera zoom. In "Epimanes", the narrator and his companion, become aware of Antioch from the ridge of a hill, thus perceiving the roofs of the city from a bird's-eye view, before they enter the city's alleys. "Epimanes" is a much more appropriate text for illustration than many other of Poe's humorous pieces, because it embodies a comic of a visual kind. The king's procession is bizarre, and the emperor, fantastically dressed up as a "homo-cameleopard", is the most weird figure of all. The magnificent march turns into a turbulent race, when Epimanes has to rescue himself from his following of wild beasts, which are offended by his costume. The pageant foreshadows the row of the revellers in "The Masque of the Red Death", which Wolfgang Kayser described as "the most telling specification, with which the term grotesque ever has been supplied by an author" (84).

For the reader, orientation within the story is not easy. The confusion is brought about by the wandering, split viewpoint of the two commentators who move from the outside into the center of the related events. The narration not only resembles a camera-like movement through space, but it also suggests a travel in time, since the two persons witnessing the procession are continually alluding to the age from

which they come, namely the mid-19th century. From an outside position in time and space the narrators turn up amidst the tumultuous events in the ancient city. Everything is in motion in Poe's story, the narrative perspective as well as the objects and events described. Likewise the confines of time are warped. The text intermingles (pseudo-)historical, (pseudo-)biblical and (pseudo-)mythological data of different ages and sources indiscriminately, and there is a continual switch between retrospections, the narrative present and previews of the things to come. Moreover, the temporal perspective, from which the story is told, shifts to and fro between the year 175 B.C. and the present of the two commentators. The continually changing repertoire does not allow the reader to adjust his own point of view, because there is no overall frame of reference according to which the events can be explained coherently. As for the story's visual properties, the reader has to assemble the details of the king's procession, which are dispersed throughout the middle part of the story. There is no central description of the king's appearance, so that from various shattered pieces every reader has to build up the image of the homocameleopard on his/her own. Some details are mentioned explicitly, but others are merely suggested, such as the gigantic height of the king. If the reader adjusts his reading to a mythological frame of reference, the king can be accepted as a giant, but in this case the many and mostly accurate historical data will become irrelevant. If the reader accepts the account as a historical fact or as a rationally explicable event, he/she must suppose that the king is walking on stilts, on which, however, he would be unable to outrun the wild animals at his heels. As it is, the story consists of many unconnected segments, which are hardly compatible with each other. As a result, "Epimanes" is characterized by multifariousness on various levels, since the text does not supply any clue with which either the objects presented in the text or the aesthetic object of the story as a whole can be concretized in definite terms.

Ramón CALSINA illustrated the procession scene, showing the disguised king crawling on all four through a lane formed by his subjects (fig. 143). But while this scene, and the following chase, are the most visually grotesque elements of the text, CALSINA reduced it to a quite normal spectacle. CALSINA ignored the superhuman size of the king, as well as such suggestive details as the two concubines carrying his tail. In CALSINA's picture the king rather looks like a fool who is flogged through the streets, and there is not the least sign of his bizarre magnificence. All the text's grotesque elements are not only levelled here, but also juxtaposed with a graphic transformation in which the fantastic is eliminated. CALSINA's illustration promotes the reading that the narrated events are factual, and that the fantastic components, which cannot be explained within a natural frame, are due to the exaggerated report of the two commentators. Likewise, Carlo FARNETI depicted the chase towards the hippodrome without any sign of visual comic (fig. 144). The illustration lacks the dynamics of the text and it is devoid of those fanciful figures which usually abound in FARNETI's works. The grand architecture in the background and the cheering people, which appear as tiny puppets between the gigantic columns, convey a faint notion of Antioch's fantastic magnificence, but the dimensions are within the range of probability. Just as in CALSINA's picture



the man is easily recognized in his anything but grotesque disguise, but while the Spanish artist's illustration foregrounds the comic of the scene, FARNETI creates an atmosphere of menace. The king is glancing over his shoulder, and he becomes aware of some black beasts with glowing eyes approaching him from the back. While in Poe's tale the king is able to flee the animals, the picture visualizes a hopeless situation. FARNETI turned Poe's slapstick scene into a sombre vision of the human fate. In almost all of his illustrations human beings are haunted by malevolent beings or agonizing chimeras whom man cannot escape. In his picture for "Epimanes", this hopeless situation is visualized by the shadows which surround the king and by the mask of the wild animal which seems to swallow his head.

Louis JAMES depicted the king in the moment he is turning around towards a single feline animal behind him (fig. 145). In contrast to FARNETI's picture, the beast does not look very threatening. The whole scene is devoid of the menace that characterizes the earlier picture. But there is not much fun either, since Louis JAMES's sketchy pen and ink style does not allow to discern any details, such as the expression of the king's face or the exact nature of his disguise. However, the picture's background provides a clue. It shows some running men, who are presented in the manner of spurting cartoon figures. The unnatural backward inclination of the torso of the running figure is a graphic convention of the cartoons to convey speedy movements. The crooked nose, the scary glance backward, the stiffly fluttering cape, and the rigid beard (a detail to be found in all illustrations for the story) all convey a sense of graphic humor, which does not so much result from what is shown but from how it is presented. While the depiction of the king and

Fig. 143 "Cuatro Bestias en Una": Ramón Calsina (1970).

Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 144 "Quatre Bêtes en Une": Carlo Farneti (1928).

Collection of Burton Pollin.



the animal is ambiguous because of their indefinite visual representation, the sprinting figures show caricatural and cartoon-like elements. Thus the indeterminacy of the foreground is resolved by the background.

Alberto MARTINI's picture also shows the king in the very moment he becomes aware of the turmoil behind him (fig. 146). Rising to his legs, he throws a disturbed glance backwards; the race towards the hippodrome is just about to begin. The origin of the turmoil in the emperor's back is not depicted, but in the picture's lower right corner a hairy monster baring its fangs represents the nature of the danger that threatens the king. At the left, a peacock holds a panel with the story's motto "Chacun a ses vertus", thus ironically commenting the grotesque appearance of the king. The two figures in the background can be interpreted in a variety of ways. As allegorical representations the peacock stands for royal splendour, and the hairy monster for the king's savageness. The two figures are also likely to marshal the reader's interpretation of the text towards a general political meaning. The peacock's feathers are trimmed, and the hairy monster rises from behind a low wall behind which it was hidden before. Thus the background of the picture visualizes a change of the political and social situation, showing the uprising of the "mob" against an old but desolate establishment. Additionally, the two juxtaposed figures can be understood as the artist's commentary on the ambivalence of the text. Poe's homocameleopard, a creation of his own whose name is based on the Greek word giraffe (*homokamelopard*), is a visual chiffre for the polysemy and the eclecticism of

Fig. 145 "Quatre Bêtes en Une": Louis James (1959).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 146 "Il 'Principe dei Poeti'": Alberto Martini (date unknown).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

his text, comparable to the arabesque patterns in the turret-chamber in “Ligeia”.¹³⁸ Like “Ligeia”, “Epimanes” can be evaluated from various angles, and, as has been mentioned, the story itself offers different points of view. The outcome of the interpretation depends on the position into which the reader has arranged himself.

More than the illustrators mentioned so far, Alberto MARTINI focussed on the grotesque elements of the story, but he approached Poe’s text freely. While in the story the king is most probably merely disguised, Antiochus is a fabulous figure in MARTINI’s picture. The four beasts to which the later title of the story refers are man, camel, lion and panther, but in MARTINI’s picture the king has the head of a human being with triangular ears, forelegs with cloven hooves, hindlegs with bear’s paws, a long tail and a trunk which combines the features of man, pig and dog. The king is naked like an animal, though his extremities are bedecked with jewellery and he wears a crown. In regard to the graphic details there is little congruity between text and illustration, and as a result, MARTINI’s illustration rivals the text. The two only correspond, in that they both display a bizarre spectacle convey a general mixture of fun and horror. Moreover, MARTINI’s depiction can be projected into the descriptive blank, which gapes between the unconnected segments in the presentation of the king’s appearance. However, if the reader is not willing to accept the discrepancies, MARTINI’s picture is either discarded as inappropriate, or it is subsumed under the overall grotesquerie of the text.

Fernand SIMÉON managed to convey the impression, as if the viewer was part of the crowd (fig. 147). However, the visual centre of the picture is occupied by an amphibia of superhuman size, being a fusion between frog and fish, which is revered by the crowd like an idol. The illustration may be understood as a general visualization of idolatry, but as such it is only marginally in touch with the text. Text and picture can hardly be brought into harmony, so that the faint coherence brought about by a cheering crowd in an ancient setting, is overruled by the central incompatibility between the amphibia in the illustration and the king’s disguise as a homocameleopard in Poe’s text. SIMÉON’s woodcut lacks the basic congruity, which characterizes the relationship between MARTINI’s illustration and the text. It neither elucidates or challenges the story nor can it be semanticized by the text, and thus the resulting incompatibility makes the illustration contribute to the disorienting tendencies of the text. One may argue, that two persons in the lower right corner of the picture represent the two commentators, especially because one of them seems to speak and to address the onlooker. However, the story’s narrative frame is not thematized, because hairstyle and garment of the bearded man rather makes him part of the pictorial fiction than an outsider commenting on the scene. In other illustrations for the story, the viewer is usually forced into the spatial perspective of the two narrators, who remain out of focus themselves. As a result, the illustrations try to convey the comic of the story in that they visualize the grotesque procession in the streets of Antiochia, but they are not able to transform the fun that the reader derives from the way in which the two narrators comment on the spectacle.

Mabbott designated the story a fable, but it is a fable without a definite lesson. Its prime objective is to unfold the grotesque spectacle for its own sake. The reader,



who is stimulated to weigh the text against the illustrations of CALSINA and FARNETI, will probably reduce the text to a level which ignores the visual grotesquerie. With regard to the works of SIMÉON and MARTINI, the result of this hermeneutic activity are that the pictures are either discarded as inadequate or that the disorienting tendencies of the story are enhanced, because the comparison of text and illustration does not lead to any clarifying conclusion.

Fig. 147 "Quatre Bêtes en Une": Fernand Siméon (1924).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 148 "Le Roi Peste": James Ensor (1898).

Courtesy of the Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University.

4.3.7 King Pest

"King Pest" first appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* of September 1835, in the same issue that contained the second publication of "Loss of Breath". "King Pest" was favorably received during Poe's lifetime (see Thomas and Jackson 180f), but in the 20th century it is usually counted among Poe's weaker and least popular efforts (M 2: 474 n6; see P. Quinn, *French* 114). Robert Louis Stevenson missed the (alleged) satire in "King Pest" completely and thought the story to be frightful. Moreover, he severely condemned Poe for producing the text: "He who could write 'King Pest' is no longer human" (qtd. in Richard, "Vocation" 198; cf. M 2: 238). According to Mabbott, who thought "King Pest" to be "one of the least valuable of Poe's stories", the tale is debased by its very gruesome kind of humor and because it indulges in "repulsive subject matter" (2: 238). Arthur Hobson Quinn placed "King Pest" "on the border line between the grotesque and the arabesque, there being a certain power in the description of the pestilence" (214), and Donald Weeks characterized the story as "a comedy of morbidity" (80). Although the story is grouped with Poe's humorous writings, the humor in "King Pest" is not always discernible, and the same must be said of the "funny" exaggerations and absurdities of the story. Louis A. Renza, author of the most recent critical article of the story, started his analysis stating that "the tale seems too stylistically raucous to permit aesthetic distance, too comic to invite moral readings, with its topic too dead serious to curry witty responses" (3).

In fact, it cannot be overlooked that a general sense of horror pervades the text. “King Pest” is not only related to Poe’s tales of horror by the use of a sinister setting, here provided by the pest as in “Shadow” and in “The Masque of the Red Death”. With these two it also has the party of grotesque figures in common. Another connection is the motif of the underground journey, which Poe uses in “MS. Found in a Bottle”, “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym”, and “The Fall of the House of Usher”, to name only a few. The story has been much more popular among illustrators than among literary critics, who were primarily interested in Poe’s sources (Hudson; Goldhurst, “Multiple”). Lucas was eager to demonstrate Poe’s close relation to contemporary American culture and attested him an expert knowledge in Elisabethan theatre and the drama of his times (25, 33f). She saw the story as “an amalgam of dramatic genres, [...] in which all the elements blithely co-exist to achieve an effect of comic drama, especially in the context of the extraordinary mixture and variety that was nineteenth century theatre” (34). Whereas Mabbott offered an apolitical allegorical interpretation of the grotesque figures (2: 255), William Whipple (84ff) read the story as a political satire on Andrew Jackson’s two presidential campaigns and his second term administration, especially the so-called “Kitchen Cabinet”. According to Richard, Poe ironically epitomized the hackneyed work of Disraeli (cf. Hudson 403ff) and contemporary British novelists in general (“Vocation” 191).

“King Pest” can be roughly divided into three parts. The first introduces the setting and the protagonists, the sailors Hugh Tarpaulin and Legs, who dodge the bill in a tavern in medieval London. Their description as well as their flight before the furious landlady of the “Jolly Tar” strikes a humorous tone which definitely becomes more sinister in the shorter second part, which deals with the two sailor’s passage through the pest-quarter of the city. In the third and main part, set in an undertaker’s cellar, the two drunk protagonists encounter a strange party of grotesque figures, who introduce themselves as the court of King Pest. Because of their inappropriate behaviour before the royal party Legs and Hugh are sentenced to death by drowning in a beer barrel. Hugh, who believes to recognize in King Pest a disguised actor, is hurled into the butt, but Legs is able to rescue him, but not without felling several court members. The sailors take to their heels, carrying away the two females of the party.

While most of his other stories deny the reader a basic orientation in terms of time and place, “King Pest” belongs to a minority of texts in which Poe specified the setting. Despite this actual background, however, the description of the grotesque sailors signals unequivocally that neither realism nor historical accuracy is at stake here. By this negation of factuality the reader is prepared to be confronted with something that must be explained from within the text, and the only guideline which the story offers the reader is provided by its comic mode. But the reader’s reference to this mode fails to come to terms with the second part of the story, which dwells in heinous details very similar to those Poe employs in the culmination of the shipwrecked sailors’ horrors in *Pym*. The removal of the indeterminacy that results from the sudden change in tone is decisive for the reception of the scene in the undertaker’s cellar. The reader can either abandon his expectations to read a

funny story about two grotesque drunkards or he subjects the descriptions of the pest quarter under the comical impressions in the story's exposition. Retrospectively, the second part can be explained as an overdone gothic intermezzo which heightens the effect of the grotesque humor in part one and three by means of contrast. As it is, the reader has to become active in the concretization of the text in the one way or the other. If the humorous impression from the first part prevails, the reader will be inclined to believe with Hugh that the weird assembly is a macabre meeting of disguised people. Within the comical frame of reference the disfigurements can also be accepted as grotesque exaggerations of natural deformities. If, however, the eerie atmosphere predominates, there can only be a supernatural explanation for court members as, for example, personifications of the plague. Otherwise the macabre masquerade would be a misplaced joke incongruous with a menacing story of which only the beginning was humorous. Although there are good reasons for and against both lines of interpretation, there is an overweight of arguments to rank the story as a tale of humor. This humor, however, is soaked with horror.

Additionally, it must be taken into account, that the story is told from a first person perspective. The narrator, however, stays almost imperceptibly in the background, since he makes himself known to the reader only three times (M 2: 240, 245, 246). Without these rare revelations of his presence the point of view could well be that of an omniscient narrator, at least as far as the first two parts of the story are concerned. The narrator is, mostly, an acute observer. He is well-informed about the city of London, and he has a remarkable insight into the motivations and feelings of Legs and Hugh. Simultaneously, the narrator is uninvolved in the events of the tale and none of the characters is aware of his presence. One may argue that the first person perspective reflects the auctorial I, but this assumption would only challenge the question, why this superior introspective point of view is abandoned in the third part of the text. While the narrator is exclusively telling in the first two parts, telling and showing are blended in a fusion of auctorial and personal perspective in the third part. As if suddenly aware of the limitations of his point of view, the narrator carefully introduces his description of the six grotesque figures in the cellar as an "endeavor" (245). This changeover marks the threshold between the second and the third part. Moreover, it signals a switch of perspective, since the reader is reminded of the restriction of the narrator's point of view. Although the narrator introduces himself in the third paragraph of the story, he gives himself all the semblance of an omniscient narrator up to the point where Legs and Hugh are confronted with the company in the cellar. In the following it is the reader's choice not only to decide about the nature of the six grotesque figures, that is to judge the following descriptions and the related events, but also to evaluate what the narrator has communicated so far.

The places in Poe's story are "smoke-blackened" (M 2: 240), "misty" (243) and "gloom[y]" (*ibid.*). The streets, "dark, narrow and filthy lanes and alleys" (242), are illuminated "by the aid of that ghastly light which, even at midnight, never fails to emanate from a vapory and pestilential atmosphere" (244). The undertaker's cellar is illuminated by "ignited charcoal, which threw a fitful but vivid light over the

entire scene” (248). Throughout the story the scenes are either dipped in obscurity or the lighting conditions are fickle. These circumstances must be kept in mind, since they also impair the accuracy of the narrator’s visual perception. The gothic decor is not only employed to expose the grotesque elements in the story before an appropriate background, it also challenges the reader to discriminate between the narrator’s standpoint and his own perspective. Because the blanks in the narrator’s presentation of the figures can be explained by his personal point of view, which is additionally limited by the poor lightning conditions, the reader is stimulated to adjust a focus of his own. On the one hand, the latitude in which the reader can situate his point of view is only partially circumscribed by the narrator’s selective and questionable descriptions, which deliver only fragmentary views of the figures, so that they demand completion. On the other hand the reader’s removal of the indeterminacies depends on the elimination of the blanks between the schematized aspects of the story on its structural level. The way in which the reader has arranged the disparate modes of representation and his adjustment to the narrator’s shifting point of view prefigures the concretization of all objects in question.

In fact, the various illustrations for “King Pest” show a wide scope of approaches, which not only certify the polysemy of the story but also the artists’ inventiveness to negotiate its different types of indeterminacy.

In 1895 the first illustrators of the story, the Belgian artist James ENSOR and the American Albert Edward STERNER, both depicted the assembly of grotesque figures presided by King Pest. Poe invests about a fourth of the text into the elaborate description of “this extraordinary assembly, and of their still more extraordinary paraphernalia” (M 2: 248). Therefore it is not surprising that the illustration of this scene was to become the standard, since many visual details are prefigured in the text. In 1880 ENSOR had already made a charcoal sketch of the scene, which very closely resembles the composition of the later etching. Ina Conzen-Meairs points out to the graphic expressionism in both versions and to ENSOR’s faithful pictorial transformation of Poe’s textual descriptions (83f). In comparison to the illustrations of later artists ENSOR’s etching rather concentrates on the eerie atmosphere of the scene than on an accurate depiction of the details mentioned in the text (fig. 148). Stylistically, the sketchiness of the earlier and the rough cross-hatching of the later version are inept to convey the degree of detailism of Poe’s descriptions. Another reason why Conzen-Meairs is erroneous in attributing a minute faithfulness to ENSOR’s pictures is the fact that he arranged the grotesque figures in a different order. Most illustrators indulged in depicting the strange physiognomies of the figures in rather close adherence to the text, but only a very few artists, among them Harry CLARKE (1919) and Vladimir KIRIN (1955), cared about Poe’s seating arrangements. Louis LEGRAND (1897), Martin VAN MAËLE (1912), Carlo FARNETI (1928) and Ramón CALSINA (1970) also paid attention to the site of the scene, an undertaker’s cellar, which was totally neglected by the *gros* of the story’s illustrators.

In regard to the narrative perspective, James ENSOR succeeds in translating the protagonists as the mediators of the weird scene. Hugh Tarpaulin can be seen in the lower left corner of his etching, thus directing the view of the onlooker into the



scene in the cellar. Illustrators of Poe's texts often helped themselves with this compositional knack, especially when embellishing stories told by first person narrators. Albert Edward STERNER's composition (1894) not only reproduces the perspective of the protagonists as given in the text (see M 2: 246), he also places them as figures in the background, and by this means a double point of view is created (fig. 149). In the upper left corner Legs and Hugh Tarpaulin can be seen observing the scene from the doorway, their stare directing the onlooker's view back into the centre of the picture towards King Pest. The onlooker's gaze is led in a zigzag line from the lower left to the upper left corner. The seating arrangement in STERNER's picture does not match Poe's description, but the compositional line follows the order in which the figures are presented in the text. In the pictures of ENSOR and STERNER the spatial standpoint can be equated with the narrator's first person point of view or as an alternative position, but in neither case any of the story's blanks is distinctly filled. Quite the contrary, both pictures contribute to the story's ambiguity.

Poe's technique to describe all seven figures of the party successively is like moving a spotlight from one to the other, a focus which concentrates on his objects' most striking features only.

[...] and the same peculiarity, or rather want of peculiarity, attached itself to her countenance, which I before mentioned in the case of the president – that is to say, only one feature of her face was sufficiently distinguished to need a separate characterization: indeed the acute Tarpaulin immediately observed that the same remark might have applied to each individual

Fig. 149 "King Pest":
Albert E. Sterner (1894).
Courtesy of Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen.

Fig. 150 "König Pest":
Alfred Kubin (1911).
Collection of the author.

person of the party; every one of whom seemed to possess a monopoly of some particular portion of physiognomy. (M 2: 246)

Accordingly, STERNER confined himself to the disfigurements listed in the text, although he reduced the degree of the deformities slightly. Queen Pest's torso, the big pot on the table, the gloomy lighting condition, the arrangement of the figures, and the picture's edges hide everything else. The illustrator renounced to elaborate the grotesque figures, a temptation many other artists could not resist. Although various schematized aspects of the story are merged in this single graphic concretization, STERNER managed to maintain the general indeterminacy, but this might also be the result of his irresolution to come to terms with the hybrid character of the story. STERNER's depiction of the figures holds the balance between a comical and a "realistic" presentation, since the deformities lie within the range of anatomic probability. Because there is no hint in this illustration that the six figures are masqueraders, it stimulates another interpretation of the story, namely that the six persons are pitiable figures deformed by nature.

Most illustrators chose to incorporate the protagonists into their pictures of the cellar scene, since Legs and Hugh Tarpaulin are themselves grotesque figures which challenge illustration. Where the two are absent, the compositions often reflect the point of view of Legs and Hugh or of the first person narrator, respectively. In these illustrations the onlooker is directly addressed by the strange figures, some of which even turn their heads, and thus the onlooker's gaze into the picture is sent back by the party's members. Such illustrations tend to be much more intense in conveying the story's sense of horror. This is especially noteworthy in the pictures of Alfred KUBIN (1911), Carlo FARNETI and Povl CHRISTENSEN (1953), where the absence of the protagonists results in an immediate confrontation of the reader with the deformed figures. In these pictures the withdrawal of the caricatural sailors creates an effect as if the story would have been told without the comic introduction of the two bill dodgers and their wild escape from the furious landlady of the "Jolly Tar".

There seems to have been no humor in the story for the Austrian artist Alfred KUBIN (1911; fig. 150). Similar to STERNER's illustration, the figures in KUBIN's picture arouse compassion rather than laughter or disgust, since here, too, the bodily deformations are on the brink of probability. The company is surrounded by Death, symbolized by the skeleton lamp, which hovers forebodingly over the table in a semicircle. Characteristically, the first scene of the story illustrated by KUBIN shows the two sailors climbing the fence, just as if the story's comic exposition would not exist. Moreover, KUBIN totally ignores the humorous effect which results from the contrasting bodily features of the seamen, one being large and thin, the other small and stout. Far from evoking any comic effect, KUBIN depicts the sailors as two ominous figures stealthily intruding into the pest quarter. In KUBIN's third picture, which shows the kidnapping of Queen Pest and Ana-Pest, the female bodies look like corpses carried off by two horrible figures, of which one has a cruel visage and the other does not have a face in his deformed head. KUBIN not only ignored the comical appearance of the two sailors, he also turned the humor upside down by making the assembly look like pitiable figures, and by

depicting the two sailors as monstrously looking body-snatchers. While the story's indeterminacies are not resolved in the pictures of ENSOR and STERNER, KUBIN's illustrations unambiguously present it as a tale of horror. But besides being reflections of KUBIN's personal perspective on the text, these illustrations must be supposed to affect the act of reading, too. The visual predominance of the horrible and the utter neglect of the humorous is likely to influence the reader's choice in removing the several indeterminacies which characterize the story. KUBIN overpowered the ambiguity of the text by intensifying the horrible aspects of the story.

Likewise, there is a clear overweight of horror in the etchings of Carlo FARNETI. Like KUBIN, he depicted the sailors scrambling over the barrier into the pest district, but FARNETI presented the scene from the other side of the fence. Hugh is shown as a small human being on the brink of a gigantic wall staring frightfully down into the prohibited area, where he becomes aware of the distorted corpses of the pest victims and the dark shadow of a body snatcher. This point of view gave FARNETI one more opportunity to effectively employ ghastly spectral figures and amorphous clouds to visualize the demonic forces that haunt almost all of his 140 Poe illustrations. Besides illustrating the already mentioned lighting conditions and the "[p]est-spirits, plague-goblins, and fever-demons" (M 2: 243), the picture stimulates an interpretation which transcends the story, but which echoes a topic prominent in other works of Poe. In this picture man is shown as a puny being, who, from the threshold between this world and another beyond, descries the horrors lurking on the other side. FARNETI read "King Pest" as a tale of horror too, as his etching for the last scene demonstrates. If one understands the text as a humorous tale, the ending of the story, in which Hugh and Legs kidnap Queen Pest and Ana-Pest, is a comical showdown. FARNETI, however, interpreted the finale as an ironic turn of events (fig. 151). In case the assembly does not consist of disguised actors, as Hugh Tarpaulin thinks to have detected, the six figures are possibly personifications of the Plague (243). In this line of interpretation the two sailors help to spread the epidemic beyond the pest-quarter, into the city of London and probably bring it into other cities on board of their ship. This macabre ending has been depicted by Carlo FARNETI, who shows the sailors on the quay besides a sailing vessel and Queen Pest and Ana-Pest as two triumphantly grinning spectral figures of a ship mast's height. The omnipresence of the pest is visualized by the distorted reflection of death-head in the waters of the harbour.

Whereas KUBIN and FARNETI clearly emphasized the appalling part and undertones of the story, quite an opposite effect is produced by J. Hamman's *Roi Peste*, a French *livre d'artiste*, published in 1925. It is written in the calligraphic hand of the artist and many pictures of different sizes are scattered over the pages. There are illustrations of about half-page size as well as mini-pictures and vignettes of a line's height which are interjected into the running text. All pictures are brightly colored, and the figures behave in a funny way. All in all the pages create an effect of colorful chaos, which corresponds with the rumpus in Poe's story.

Another humorous interpretation was delivered by Louis LEGRAND in 1897. LEGRAND depicted the table scene in which the onlooker is involved in that he watches King Pest, Duke Pest-Iferous and the two women through the eyes of some-



one sitting at the same table (fig. 152). The identity of this last visible participant is unclear, but the picture may either reproduce the perspective of either the inconspicuous first person narrator or the point of view of one of the two sailors. The fact, that not more than the pants and the boots of the spectator can be discerned, is probably a pictorial allusion to Legs, but the limbs on the table do not match the description of the overall thinness of the tall sailor. The Duke Pest-Ilential is confined to his coffin, so that he cannot put his feet on the table, and one of the legs of the Duke Tem-Pest is bandaged. The king and his courtier are all merriment, both smiling jokingly and the latter giving a toast across the table. The picture, its composition, perspective, execution and lighting conditions, is reminiscent of the drawings of LEGRAND's influential contemporary Henri TOULOUSE-LAUTREC. Moreover, the fine champagne glasses, too delicate to belong to the 14th century, King Pest's plume headgear, and the facetious atmosphere all convey a sense of late-nineteenth-century French *vaudeville*. This general impression of a theatrical milieu is strengthened by the fact that the visages rather look like masques than physiognomical deformities. The large ears of Duke Pest-Iferous seem to be attached to his head artificially. Although LEGRAND was not faithful to the text, since he obviously changed some details and transferred the setting from medieval London into the *bohème* of the *fin-de-siecle*, he manages to catch the humorous spirit of the scene better than anyone else. His picture clearly brings about the interpretation that King Pest is indeed the stage actor Tim Hurlygurly in disguise, and his assembly nothing but a macabre carousal. But the picture also embodies a serious

Fig. 151 "Roi Peste":
Carlo Farneti (1928).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 152 "Roi Peste":
Louis Legrand (1897).
Collection of Ichigoro Uchida.

notion. Some coffins in the background suggest the sinister scenery of the party, thus subtly introducing a *memento mori*, which is not to be found in the text.

Poe mentioned the “fumes of intoxication” (M 2: 245), and throughout the story there are other passages stressing the extensive consumption of alcohol. The duke proposing a toast, his flushing cheeks, his whimsical and slightly cross-eyed gaze as well as the numerous champagne glasses and bottles on the table all visualize the prominent role of booze in the story. In LEGRAND’s picture, this foregrounding of alcohol and the original point of view suggest another reading of the story, namely that it is a drunkard’s fantasy, stimulated by the environment of the undertaker’s cellar. A head-piece illustration by Michael BARTLETT emphasizes the same point (fig. 153). It shows two sailors in a cellar room, which is merely furnished with a table, a barrel and a coffin. The depicted skeleton is either dangling from the ceiling or it is lifted by one of the sailors. The other man is sitting besides a coffin, weary and with a face telling of his intoxicated state. The most striking feature of the picture is the absence of the grotesque party. BARTLETT’s illustration draws the reader’s attention to the idea, that the party never existed save in the imagination of the inebriated men, or the first person narrator respectively. Even the background of pest-ridden 14th century London seems to have been evoked by their intoxicated state and by their surroundings, since both men are dressed in 20th century outfits. The perspective involves the viewer in the scene, and moves him into a position which is equal to that of the narrator, who must be supposed to be drunk as well, so that his intoxication would explain for the unconnectedness of the story’s three parts and the inconsistencies between text and picture. The most recent illustration of the story, produced by Nikolaus HEIDELBACH (1994), shows a skull whose upper half consists of some bottles which make the appearance of a crown. HEIDELBACH’s cover illustration combines several connotations: the “royal” party, the lethal plague, and alcoholic delirium. The picture also recalls a reading of the story that was popular in Poe’s times, in that it foregrounds “the evils and maladies attendant upon intemperance” (see Thomas and Jackson 181).

Just like KUBIN and FARNETI Arthur RACKHAM also chose the last scene of the story for illustration, the kidnapping of Queen Pest and Ana-Pest (fig. 154). RACKHAM emphasized the physical contrast between the sailors and their victims, but the deformities of the two women are almost reduced to a realistic level. The nose of Ana-Pest is sharp and pointed, but not at all comparable to the model in Poe’s text. The huge oral cavity of the squint-eyed Queen Pest is transformed into a lipless mouth of normal size, but with hamster’s teeth. What remains from their models in the story is the emaciated frame of Ana-Pest and the corpulence of Queen Pest. RACKHAM ignored the vital parts in Poe’s description and felt free to add some details to further a humorous effect of his own design. The comic of his illustration mainly derives from the contrast between the distorted and intertwined bodies of the bony Legs and the fleshy Queen Pest. Legs is the most disproportionate figure of all. While the grotesque peculiarities of Ana-Pest and Queen Pest are either ignored or transformed, the “high cheek-bones, a large hawk-nose, retreating chin, fallen under-jaw, and huge protruding white eyes” (M 2: 241) of Legs are



minutely transcribed into the picture and some of these features are even more accentuated than in the story. But whereas Poe's description of the two sailors arouses a comical effect, the hideously grinning and staring Legs is rather a horrible than a funny figure in RACKHAM's illustration. The artist applied Poe's concept of exaggerating the "ludicrous [...] into the grotesque", but not as done by the writer in his story, that is by presenting the assembly as overwrought versions of the sailors and by introducing even more exaggerated physiognomical features, but by intensifying Poe's description of Legs. It must be questioned whether this farrago of humor and horror does justice to the ambiguity in Poe's text. At the end the effect on the onlooker might be the same than that the reader of Poe's story, a certain confusion in deciding whether the figures and incidents are funny or horrible, but the strategies of arousing this effect are different. RACKHAM's succeeded in holding the balance between the humorous and the horrible, but his graphic mannerism does not correspond with the ambiguity of the story.¹³⁹ Each object in his picture is sharply outlined and all physiognomical details are elaborated with great care. Whereas Poe's story is characterized by numerous blanks, not only by the occurrence of gaps between its single aspects but also in regard to the exposition of the single objects, RACKHAM's picture is concrete and complete.

A similar approach can be found in the picture of Giovanni GIANNINI, the illustrator of the limited "new" Quantin edition issued by the Parisian publisher Michel L'Ormeriaie in 1978. GIANNINI designed a crowded picture slavishly reproducing most of the deformities as listed by Poe. In his picture every detail is elaborated with the same care by means of minute cross-hatchings. But notwithstanding his faithfulness his illustration does not transport the stimulating ambiguity

Fig. 153 "King Pest":
Michael Bartlett (c. 1951).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 154 "King Pest":
Arthur Rackham (1935).
Collection of the author.

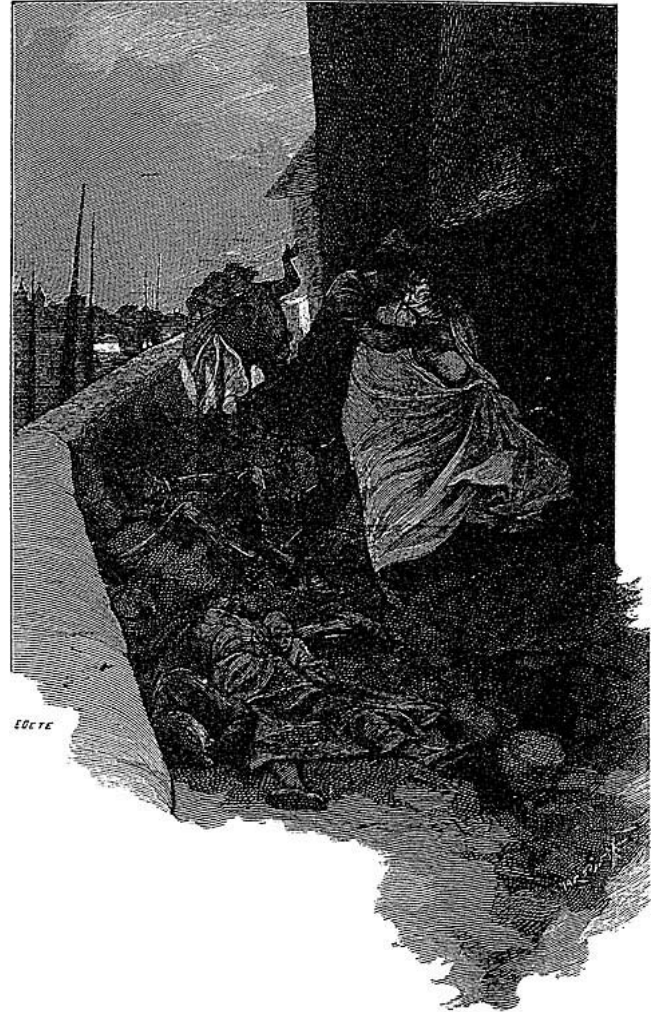
of the text, and the effect is neither convincingly humorous nor horrible. The only hint that the story's ambivalence was transferred into the illustration are the reactions of the sailors, who are depicted in the upper right of the picture. While Legs seems more frightened than amused, Hugh's countenance is distorted into a broad laugh, but his eyes are staring wide, as if he could not believe what he sees. Besides GIANNINI's picture there are other illustrations which demonstrate that a close transformation of Poe's grotesque descriptions does not automatically bring about the same effect as the text. The illustrations of Alberto MARTINI (ca. 1905), who was adding just one more ugly face to his panopticum of adversities, Arild ROSENKRANTZ (1908), Povl CHRISTENSEN and Arnoldo GINNA (1921) are portraits of Ana-Pest, King Pest and Queen Pest, respectively, without any attempt at interpretation or graphic comment.

In his full-page plates Martin VAN MAËLE was especially successful in transforming Poe's ambiguities from one medium into the other (fig. 155). In his illustration of the cellar scene one problematic detail, Ana-Pest's long nose, is hidden behind her right arm, while another, the huge ears of Duke Pest-Iferous, are indiscernible, because they are cut off by the edges of the picture. The grotesque malformations of the other figures are either swallowed by the darkness or they are excluded from the field of vision by the spatial point of view from which the scene is depicted. Like STERNER, but unlike MARTINI, ROSENKRANTZ, RACKHAM and MARTINI, VAN MAËLE managed to withstand the temptation to overdo the portraits. But while the clear distinguishableness of the deformities in the American illustrator's work confirms the accuracy of the narrator's descriptions, VAN MAËLE's illustration neither contradicts nor supports this presentation. It cannot be decided whether the figures in VAN MAËLE's illustration are abnormally deformed, whether their malformations are within the range of anatomic probability or whether the company indulges in a macabre masquerade. Just like Poe VAN MAËLE exploited the fickle lighting conditions not only to emphasize the gloomy atmosphere but also to provide an explanation for the visual deceptiveness of the scene. In correspondence with the story, the illustration does not give any clue whether the figures' existence is to be explained by reference to natural or supernatural causes, or how far the limited point of view and the circumstances of narration distort the account.

VAN MAËLE's approach to "King Pest" (1912) is a graphic exemplification of Poe's ideas about proper presentation. In the *Southern Literary Messenger* of October 1836 Poe wrote about N. W. Wraxall, author of the *Memoirs of My Own Time*:

His style is occasionally very minute and prosy – but not when he has a subject to his fancy. He is then a brilliant and vivid writer, as he is at all times a sagacious one. He has a happy manner, when warmed with an important idea, of presenting only its characteristic features to the view – leaving in a proper shadow points of minor effect. (H 9: 177; P 5: 297)

In this critical statement the shadows are to be understood metaphorically, of course, because it refers to the artistic selection of the materials to be presented. In "King Pest", however, as well as in other of Poe's prose works, shadows, the twilight, misty atmospheres and fickle lighting conditions also function as "narrative" devices. While the narrator of "King Pest" carefully describes his account



Figg. 155+156 "Roi Peste":
Martin van Maële (1912).
Collection of the New York Public Library.

as an attempt, thereby conceding that he is not as reliable as he pretended to be in the first two parts of the story, the graphic artist must necessarily concretize the figures. The degree of concretization is, however, related to the degree of graphic abstraction in the presentation of the fictional world. The expressionistic style of ENSOR, for example, allows an indefinite presentation. VAN MAËLE's illustration, however, demonstrates that an abstract visualization is not indispensable for the transformation of the text's indeterminacy into the graphic medium. It is evident, that his basically naturalistic approach is also capable of maintaining the polysemy of the story. Yet, the illustrator had to create new blanks to circumnavigate the problematic presentation of the most grotesque features, such as Ana-Pest's nose or the Duke's protruding ears. The reader can either choose to fill these gaps with the help of the text's descriptions or he can become active on his own.

While VAN MAËLE's small pictures evince the influence of one of Poe's favorite artists, the humorist GRANDVILLE, the full-page plates are often very sinister and sometimes even downright dreadful. In his second full-page illustration for "King Pest", the kidnapping scene, VAN MAËLE is able to preserve the ambiguity between a humorous and a ghastly interpretation of the finale (fig. 156). As in his illustration of the company in the cellar, VAN MAËLE made extensive use of shadows and lighting effects to maintain the text's indeterminacies. In a moonlit harbour alley the two couples are going for a pleasant night-time walk, creating the impression

of being lovers. While Hugh's gesture suggests that he is talking gallantly to Ana-Pest, Leg is busied with Queen Pest's bare bosom. While the two men's actions are observable despite their dark clothes and the dim lighting conditions, the two women mostly remain in obscurity. Ana-Pest is depicted as a silhouette. Her semi-transparent dress flutters around her legs, giving her the semblance of a ghost. The only visible part of Queen Pest is her left breast, stripped naked by Legs. Everything else is covered by a shroud-like spread in which she has wrapped herself. Arms and legs are invisible, either covered by her streaming dress or absorbed by the general darkness. This conveys the impression as if she were rather floating than walking, just as if she were a ghost like Ana-Pest. The superficial romanticism of the scene is further disturbed by the almost indiscernible half-rotten plague victims lying between the rubbish, among them a mother with her little child. The spectral appearance of the two women and the inadequate environment render it difficult to view the scene as an idyllic *tête-à-tête*. Moreover, Queen Pest's contented smile and her fiercely glowing eye support the interpretation that she is one of the mentioned demons that spread the plague. While Legs and Hugh are looking forward to having a love-adventure, it seems as if they were going to have a rendezvous with Death. More than forty years later the Swedish illustrator Bertil BULLHEDLUND depicted the scene in a very similar way. Like VAN MAËLE he did not illustrate the violent abduction of the two women, but a prospective scene which is not reported in the story. His picture shows the two sailors courtly leading the women through a filthy and dilapidated London street, but despite many matching details the Swedish illustration does not catch the obscure ambience and ambiguity of the scene as effectively as his French forerunner.

Hans FRONIUS' illustrations often move on the borderline between the serious and the ridiculous, and "King Pest" is unquestioningly one of those Poe stories, to which his peculiar approach suits particularly well. This ambiguity is mainly due to his sketchy ink wash technique, which covers the paper with a wild tangle of thin lines and broad brush strokes. The exact features of the figures are often indiscernible, since they merge with their backgrounds or remain unspecified by the artist's fast ductus. There is not the slightest attempt at realism, but still FRONIUS' drawings cannot be considered as purely caricatural or fantastic. His last illustration for "King Pest" presents the two sailors with the two kidnapped women on their backs (fig. 157). The fat Queen Pest's countenance, showing a broad grin and wild eyes, can either be interpreted as funny, imbecilic, hysterical, triumphant or as a rigid mask. Thus FRONIUS achieves the kind of ambiguity characteristic of Poe's text, that is blending the horrible and the humorous. In comparison to the expressionism in ENSOR's etching FRONIUS' picture is characterized by a higher degree of abstraction, but it also embodies more details than the work of the Belgian artist. The scarcity of details in ENSOR's picture offers the reader one big projection screen, which, on the one hand, does not impose any limitation on the reader's imagination, but, on the other hand, it does not bring about the degree of stimulating ambiguity that distinguishes FRONIUS' picture. FRONIUS' first illustration, which was used as the story's frontispiece, introduces the thirsty Legs and Hugh in front of a tavern (fig. 158). This picture strikes a



humorous tone, but the graphic means, with which this impression is brought about, are the same as in FRONIUS' most appalling illustrations. Thus FRONIUS achieved to transform the text's ambiguity into a graphic formula, which allowed to him to depict the comical and the horrible as well as amalgamations of both.

Figg. 157+158 "König Pest": Hans Fronius (1963).
Collection of the author.

4.3.8 How to Write a Blackwood Article, Loss of Breath

These two stories are Poe's most overt satires on the tales of sensation as they appeared in the *Edinburgh Blackwood Magazine*. While in "Loss of Breath" Poe ridiculed the hardly credible narrations of these tales by means of absurd over-exaggerations, "How to Write a Blackwood Article" (1836) also made fun of publishers and authors and their methods of production. Both tales were favorably received during Poe's lifetime, but subsequent generations of critics have definitely preferred the later story.

In "How to Write a Blackwood Article" Poe's satirical intention to ridicule the methods and the style of the sensational stories in the famous *Edinburgh magazine* is conveyed in a twofold way. The work consists of two stories. When the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* were published in 1840, the two stories appeared separately, although they were printed immediately following each other. The first, which has always been known under the title above mentioned, ridicules the way in which the sensational stories are put together. The second, alternately entitled

“A Predicament” or “The Scythe of Time”, is an exemplification of the aforementioned techniques of creation. Blackwood, the publisher, gives his authoress *in spe*, the Signora Psyche Zenobia, advice on how to produce an effectful story that cannot fail to arouse the interest of a wide readership. Ingredients of the tried and tested recipe are a metaphysical tone, the display of obscure learning, unintelligibility, quotations from foreign languages, exoticisms, and, of course, the invention of precarious situations, which give the protagonist the opportunity to unfold in detail their intense sensations brought about by the most distressing circumstances. This list recalls Poe’s own creative technique and literary habits, in particular his pretension of a profound erudition, his emphasis on indefinitiveness, his use of citations in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, and Italian – almost all languages of which he had no more than a very superficial knowledge –, bizarre locations, and his effort to work a spell on the reader by means of novelty and unexpectedness. “How to Write a Blackwood Article” is not just a satire, it is also a self-parody. Michael Allen suggested, that the self-parody is a “defensively self-critical” (*italics original*) instrument, which Poe employed in order to take the wind out of his critics’ sails. Poe’s self-awareness for his own artistic failures rendered any other criticism redundant. Moreover, according to Allen, the story reflects Poe’s doubts about the quality of his own works in the Blackwood style (126f). But was Poe aware of his shortcomings at all, and if so, how thorough was his self-criticism? In the second (part of the) story, in which the Signora makes use of Blackwood’s instructions as best as she can, Poe pointed out to the trapfalls of the adopted method. Obviously, the Signora did not comprehend what Blackwood told her, because her carrying out of his formula is downright preposterous. This is most notable in her unwillingly funny employment of quotations, which are not only misplaced but also full of errors. In Poe’s works there are such blunders galore too, although they are not that apparent as those of the Signora, but the author was certainly not aware of them either (cf. Hansen and Pollin 37ff).

The very few illustrations for “How to Write a Blackwood Article” are exclusively devoted to the second part entitled “A Predicament”. Léonor FINI (1966) produced a watercolor showing the Psyche Zenobia and her cohort, the negro servant Pompey and the poodle Diana (fig. 159). In her picture, the artist reduced the grotesquely exaggerated appearance of the Signora and her followers to an almost normal degree. The Signora describes her servant as being three feet in height, with short bowed legs, a big mouth, and as “having ankles (as usual with his race) in the middle of the upper portion of the feet” (348f). Because of his diminutive size, he has to lift his cloak all the time, lest it is not soiled with dirt. None of these descriptive elements appears in FINI’s watercolor, so that one important source of the story’s wit is ignored, namely the grotesque humor brought about by gross exaggerations. The Signora’s self-description, to which she returns three times, as well as her last name Zenobia suggest that she is a mock imitation of Poe’s ideal of female beauty based on a classical model. But the Signora is neither graceful, nor does she represent the spiritual and intellectual fascination that characterizes Helen and Ligeia. However, were it not for her crooked nose her portrait might also have appeared in a fashion magazine. The Signora’s frequent reference to her



Fig. 159 "Comment Écrire un Article à la Blackwood": Léonor Fini (1966).
Collection of the author.

crimson satin, sky-blue Arabian mantelet dress etc. pp. (336, 339, 349) and her hardly reasonable complacency in regard to her outward appearance and her literary propensities are probably revealing Poe's actual opinion about female writers. Although Poe could be a slashing critic at times, he used to speak of female writers and their works in the highest tones. Poe often adopted the attitude of a southern gentleman, and when he felt the need to censure, he chose to convert his critique into gentle patronizing recommendations. Poe's intercourse with "authoresses", be it personal or professional, was characterized by polite respect, an attitude which was much appreciated and which brought him many female admirers. However, Susan Rigby Morgan, Amanda M. Edmond, Cornelia Wells Walters and Margaret Fuller had to feel the edge of Poe's critical tomahawk, but such attacks against female writers remained exceptions. In "How to Write a Blackwood Article" Poe probably used the opportunity to express his contempt for "the superabundance of the Rosa-Matilda effusions – gilt-edged paper all couleur de rose: a full allowance of cut-and-thrust blue-blazing melodramaticisms", as he put in 1842 (see H 11: 102), without attacking any living female writer in person.¹⁴⁰

Poe's description of the Signora was certainly influenced by the image of women as projected by the contemporary magazines, in particular by *Godey's*. The immensely successful *Godey's Lady's Book* offered his predominantly female readership a mixture of melodramatic tales, sentimental poetry – written by female writers and partly illustrated –, tips for housewives and mothers as well as some art and literary

criticism. However, the magazine's main attraction were the fashion plates and embossed patterns for embroidery. In sight of these facts, Poe's story is more than a satire on *Blackwood's* with self-parodic elements: it is also Poe's caricature of contemporary authoresses and the magazine industry that prospered because of the existence of a huge female clientele.

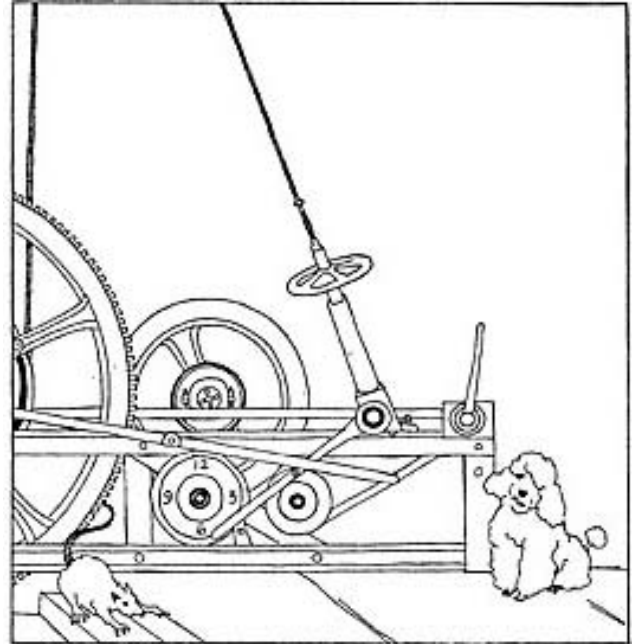
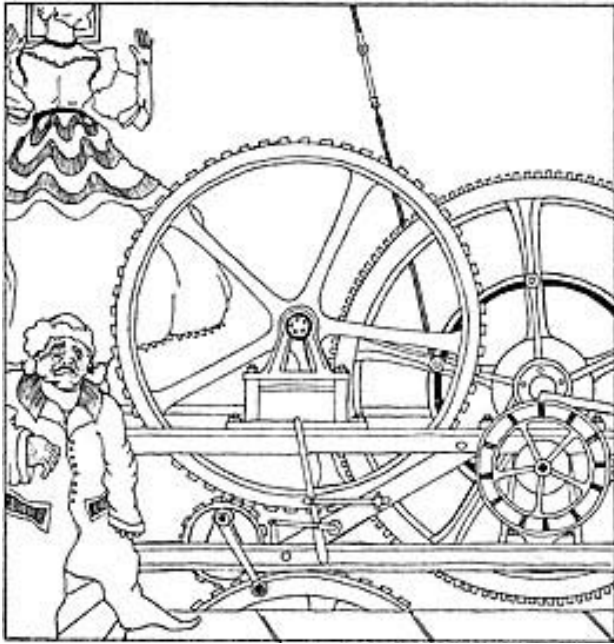
Poe's attacks against Edmond, Walters and Fuller, can be explained because all of them were Northerners, and Poe counted them either among the abolitionist movement or as belonging to the Bostonian "Frogpondians", as he preferred to call the New England Transcendentalists. Poe ranked Edmond's poems as "mere doggerel": "They are by no means impressive. The subjects, generally, are such as find favor in boarding-schools. Many of the pieces are on abolition topics" (P 3: 277). Poe's attitude towards slavery and abolitionism are well known. In the *Southern Literary Messenger* of March 1849 he severely censured James Russell Lowell's *Fable for Critics*. Poe charged Lowell with "the colonial sin of imitation", "namby-pambyism" and a lack of originality, but his main objections were not turned against the work, but against the person and his position in the slavery question:

Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author. His fanaticism about slavery is a mere local outbreak of the same innate wrong-headedness which if he owned slaves, would manifest itself in atrocious ill-treatment of them, with murder of any abolitionist who should endeavor to set them free. [...] His prejudices on the topic of slavery break out everywhere in his present book. (H 13: 171f)¹⁴¹

Thus "How to Write a Blackwood Article" can be more specifically understood as a satire on Northern (female) writers, who treated abolitionist and transcendentalist subjects in their writings. Stephen MCKEOWN's illustration is the only one which suggests these circumstances (fig. 160). In his picture we see the Signora from the back, standing on the shoulders of her servant. On the one hand, she is depending on her negro slave in order to reach the exalted heights of the belfry¹⁴² and to her plans to become an authoress of high distinction. On the other hand, she exploits Pompey, misusing him as a ladder in a humiliating way, so that he is unable or even unwilling to free her from her predicament.

One step! One little, little step! Upon such a little step in the great staircase of human life how vast a sum of human happiness or misery often depends! [...] I thought of Pompey! – alas, I thought of love! I thought of the many false steps which have been taken, and may be taken again. I resolved to be more cautious, more reserved. I abandoned the arm of Pompey [...] (350)

What is the Signora talking about here? It seems, as if she were reflecting about her relationship with Pompey, and about his position as a slave, and a reliable companion. Being in an exalted mood, because of her successful ascent, she thinks about Pompey in terms of love, but the next moment she discards her feelings. Although Pompey has supported her all the long way up towards the summit, she now dismisses him, leaves him behind and takes the last step into the lofty heights all alone. But as soon as she cannot proceed without his help, she turns to him again, and steps on his shoulders in order to reach the final altitude. This is what



Poe, with his polarized view of the split between the South and the North, considered an attitude of “bigotry” in the slavery question. In 1838, though slavery was officially abolished for about four decades, racism in the North persisted. Slaves had been turned into underpaid and little respected workers and house servants, but at the same time, voices raised in the North which condemned the Southern slavery and plantation system as inhumane.

As it is, the last step in the ascend of the Signora is a fatal one. Poe’s image of the Signora standing on the shoulders of the negro servant starts a chain of associations. On the one hand it shows the dependence of the North and the South on the exploitation of the black man, on the other hand it visualizes a growing anxiety of the slaves’ subversion. In his *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Poe had unambiguously shown his suspicion against black people. In *Pym*, Poe presented the black cook on board the *Grampus*, as well as the inhabitants of Tsalal as cunning people, who cannot be trusted and on whom no white man can rely.

McKEOWN’s picture foregrounds the white man’s dependence on the black slave, which Poe seems to have regarded as fatal, although he was always an advocate of the slavery system. The apprehension of a “unnatural” turn of events, nourished by the Nat Turner revolt, is introduced into the story by the death of the poodle Diana. The dog, a watchful animal and by instinct a hunter, as the name is to emphasize, is devoured by a rat. The right part of McKEOWN’s picture, shows the rat approaching the poodle. The dog ignores it or is unaware of the danger, although, according to the text, it has smelled the rat before. The dog’s destiny parallels that of the Signora, who loses her head, because she has once more relied on her slave, although she was latently aware of some sort of risk. But if there is an allegory, it can also be interpreted in quite different terms: the poodle, a “blue-stocking” like the Signora – note the blue ribbon around Diana’s neck – is about to be charged by the subversive rat, that is Poe, the under-dog critic from the South, attacking the literary establishment of the North. Poe’s reply to Lowell’s *A Fable for*

Fig. 160 “How to Write a Blackwood Article”: Stephen McKeown (1973). Collection of Burton Pollin.

Critics demonstrates how closely the question of slavery was connected for him with Southern cultural identity. Immediately after his reference to the slavery question, Poe is full of indignation because “[i]t is a fashion among Mr. Lowell’s set [of abolitionists] to affect a belief that there is no such thing as Southern Literature” (171).

MCKEOWN’s picture is dominated by the depiction of the huge clockwork. Two small clocks in the apparatus signify that time is running short, an omen which can be referred to the existence of the Signora, to the end of her literary ambitions, or, more generally, to a change of times.¹⁴³ The machinery might also be understood as signifying the technological development of the industrial North. The interpretations resulting from this assumption are diverging, since the generation of meaning is conditioned by the reader’s arrangement of the propositions he/she has made so far. If the reader/viewer sees the Signora as a representative of the literary establishment of the North, her decapitation by the machine implies that art has to suffer and finally to perish in a social milieu dominated by technological, that is here mechanical progress.¹⁴⁴ If the Signora is regarded, less convincingly, as a mock image of the Southern belle, that is as a perverted personification of the beautiful South or as a symbol for a society based on a crumbling foundation, the Signora’s beheading becomes a foreboding for the decline of the rural Southern states, which are overpowered by the industrial North. In the context of the literary satire – to return to the “upper-current” of the story – the predicament of the Signora comes about, because she does not master the machinery, the control of which is necessary for the production of an accomplished literary work. Her lack of insight into the working principles of her profession causes her to fail. Her reference to the clockwork as “a vast quantity of wheels, pinions, and other cabalistic-looking machinery” foreshadows Poe’s later reference to those unnamed writers who try to mystify the process of literary creation as an act of inspiration by genius. Poe wrote in his “Philosophy of Composition”:

[P]oets [...] prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy – an ecstatic intuition – and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, [...] at the wheels and pinions – the tackle for scene-shifting – the step-ladders, and demon-traps – [...] which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio. (H 14:194f)

The meanings so far proposed are all of a speculative nature, and traditional critics would certainly object that my assumptions, for one thing, lack proper textual evidence, and logical coherence among each other for another thing. However, I consider Poe’s works as puzzles, which are incomplete, because some pieces are missing. Moreover, those pieces offered by Poe can be put into different places. You can even turn the pieces around and arrange them so that the final puzzle does only have little resemblance with the way in which the pieces were arrayed before. This process resembles the reader’s activity to adjust the unconnected segments of the text to each other so as to build up a consistent and meaningful pattern. In the case of “How to Write a Blackwood Article” the literary satire, double-edged as it is, provides the “upper-current of meaning”. However, the other interpretations,

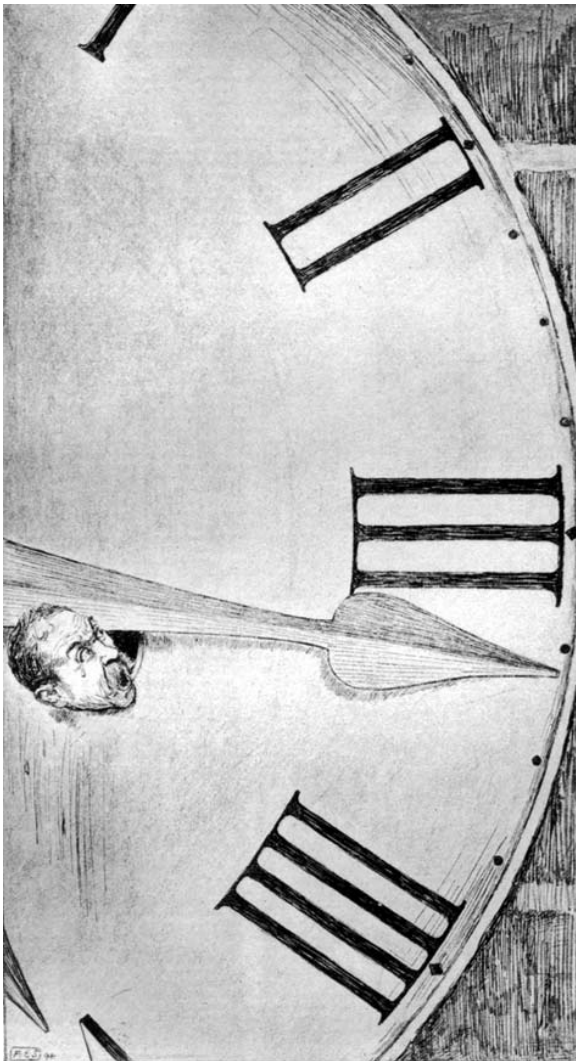
which are more based on implications, contextual references to other texts or to Poe's times, are legitimate, because they represent the text's "under-currents". It is wrong to say that these under-currents are subordinated to the upper-current, since they are alternative readings, which, to maintain Poe's metaphor, can flow into opposite directions. The images in Poe's texts, such as the Signora standing on the shoulders of Pompey right beside the clockwork, can be imagined as eye-catching eddies at the surface of the text, around which several currents of meaning rotate in different directions.

MCKEOWN's illustration emphasizes the importance of the mentioned image, but simultaneously the reader/viewer is challenged to explain why the picture centers on the clockwork, the rat and the dog and why it marginalizes Pompey and especially the Signora. Literally, MCKEOWN's picture affords the viewer a "peep behind the scenes [...] of the literary histrio" where he/she becomes aware of the author's machinery and his stage properties. Thus the puzzle becomes more intricate, because new gaps occur and more pieces must be arranged with each other in order to complete it. The completed puzzle(s) are combinations of verbal and pictorial elements assembled by the reader/viewer. So, what Poe designates as "scene-shifting" can also be applied to the activity required from the reader, who has to adjust and re-adjust his perspective within the text by means of a "wandering view-point" (see above).

Around the turn of the 19th into the 20th century, two American artists devoted illustrations to the same scene as MCKEOWN, but they chose a different perspective. In 1894, Albert Edward STERNER, and in 1902, Fredrick Simpson COBURN, both depicted a head looking out of the hole in the belfry's clock face, thus presenting the scene from the other side. STERNER's illustration deviates from the text, in that it shows a male face (fig. 161). But more than that, the picture is devoid of humor of any kind, in that it presents the man in a distressing situation. Without the knowledge of the text, the illustration becomes the depiction of a seriously horrible scene. In the introduction of his study about Poe, Daniel Hoffman referred to his first confrontation with this very scene, when he was a schoolboy, and from these days on the image haunted his imagination for a considerable time of his life. He tried to find the passage in Poe's works to read over it again, in order to face and to ban the horror, but he could not find it.

Where could I have read so terrifying a tale, so horrifying a predicament, so inescapable a servitude to the inexorable movements of time but in the works of Edgar Allan Poe? For years my waking hours were troubled by the search, as were my sleeping hours by the memory, as I combed the pages of the tales of Poe. (8)

It took Hoffman years to discover that the scene was part of one of Poe's "humorous" stories, in which he had not expected to find it. Hoffman's experience is revealing about the nature of Poe's humor. Not the scene as such is funny, but only the way in which it is presented. STERNER's picture presents the same scene without the Signora's commentary, which creates an absurd humor because it is so inappropriate in sight of her predicament. This inconsistency between the seriousness of the situation and the ridiculous absurdity is the source of the story's grotesque humor. Moreover, the reader knows the Signora is not going to take any



harm, because someone who is still alive despite the loss of his head cannot die, but this internal “logic” of absurdity is not conveyed by STERNER’s illustration. The head shows no caricatural trait like the description of the Signora in the text. Quite the contrary, the naturalistic style of the illustration defies the explanation of the situation within a funny context. But it would be wrong to dismiss STERNER’s picture as an inadequate illustration. In regard to the story’s narrative surface, the illustration certainly does the story little justice. However, it foregrounds an important aspect of Poe’s works, in that it shows the protagonist in immediate sight of his fate. In Poe’s works, inevitable fate is often represented by time. In “How to Write a Blackwood Article” the symbolism of the scene is interwoven with the presentation of the actual predicament. Not even the image of the swinging scythe in “Pit and the Pendulum” visualizes the lethal power of time as intensely as Poe’s humoresque. “The Scythe of Time”, as the second part of the story was entitled when it was published in the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, shows that man is unable to escape his final annihilation, from which he/she is only divided by a short span of time. Moreover, the image of the clock, driven by a machine, also symbolizes the mechanical age, the progress of which cannot be stopped and which sweeps human beings aside relentlessly. Note that the man, like the human figures

Fig. 161 “How to Write a Blackwood Article”: Albert E. Sterner (1894).
Courtesy of Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen.

Fig. 162 “How to Write a Blackwood Article”: Frederick S. Coburn (1902).
Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.

in MCKEOWN's illustration, is depicted at the extreme left of STERNER's picture. The mechanical progress has already driven him to the very edge, and soon he will completely drop off the scene without any sign of his former existence. STERNER's picture emphasizes these propositions stronger than Poe's tale, so that here we have one more illustration which brings the serious under-currents of Poe's tales to the surface, and these might have gone unnoticed otherwise.¹⁴⁵

STERNER's picture is notable for one more reason, in that it visualizes a fundamental aspect of Poe's "humor", namely that it is almost always connected with humiliation, injury or death. People get killed, noses and ears shot or bitten off, limbs broken, bodies mutilated, feelings hurt, and racism and anti-semitism and extreme human pain are exploited for the sake of humor, so that more often than not the reader's laughter gets stuck in his/her throat (cf. Kiely 37). The list shows that Poe's humorous stories make use of the same material as his serious tales. The circumstance that we find horror embedded in humor should make us aware, that we may encounter Poe's humor where we do not expect it to turn up, namely in Poe's Gothic stories.

COBURN's illustration for "How to Write a Blackwood Article" exemplifies the humor-in-horror and the horror-in-humor tendencies of Poe's works (fig. 162). Like STERNER's picture the depiction is naturalistic in style. COBURN's illustration is devoid of abstractions, and the lighting conditions and the elaboration of details create a high degree of realism. And yet, the Signora appears as a caricature, an effect brought about by the large eyes with the eyeballs turned upward, the long nose and the mop-like hairstyle. But the distorted visage can also be interpreted as the expression of an extremely suffering human being, because the naturalistic mode of representation makes it look "real". The viewer is here confronted with a scene which mixes humor and horror, and which simultaneously provokes his laughter and his compassion.

As it is, the literary satire of "How to Write a Blackwood Article" has largely remained undepicted. The same counts for other themes of the story, such as Poe's perversion of the classical ideal of Beauty, the poetics of space, the dualisms of inside/outside and ascend/descend, the symbolism of the eye and the connected topic of the reflection of the self have not been visualized.

The two latter elements of the story evince that the self-parody of "How to Write a Blackwood Article" is not limited to Poe's methods of composition, which resemble the hackneyed formula à la Blackwood's. For one thing, the division of her head from her body, is a grotesquely perverted speculation about the *locus in quo* man's identity or soul is to be found, whether it is part of the body or the head (see Pollin, "Tale" 95). For another thing, the separate loss of eyes, which keep communicating with each other, and which reunite in the drain, is an allusion to Aristophanes' account of the hermaphrodite sex at the beginning of Platon's *Symposion*. It is no coincidence, that "[b]oth [eyeballs] rolled out of the gutter together"; recalling the movement of the ball-like beings mentioned by Aristophanes as well as the continual strive for the divided halves for reunion. In Poe's works "eye" often implies "I", that is the self (see previous chapter). Thus the loss of eyes signifies the disintegration of the self, and the theme of self-reflection, both topics

which Poe treated in a more serious manner, for example, in "William Wilson".¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the disintegration of the Signora's eyesight/I-sight¹⁴⁷ also visualizes the multiple perspectives of Poe's text. If the reader feels empathy with the Signora, an effect which is furthered by the immediacy of the first person narration, he/she will probably merge his/her point of view with hers. But how does the reader adjust the point of view, when the Signora loses her eyes one after the other? Does the reader look with one eye at the other, with both eyes separately at the blind face of the Signora sockets, or does he/she stare out of the empty sockets at the two marble-like eyes in the gutter? The separation and final reunion of the eyes resembles the reader's changing point of view, in that he/she harmonizes the various perspectives into one.

"Loss of Breath" is usually considered a forerunner of "How to Write a Blackwood Article". In February 1836, Poe referred to this story in a letter to John Pendleton Kennedy, writing that it was a satire "of the extravagancies of Blackwood" (O 1: 84). This statement prefigured the essence of the very few studies which dealt with the story (Hammond, "Reconstruction" 29f; Richard, "Vocation" 194). Thompson added that the story not only satirized, but also imitated the *Blackwood* tales of sensation and that a second target of ridicule was Transcendentalist philosophy ("Flawed" 43ff, Fiction 47ff). Kiely counted the story among a group of texts which "dramatize the author's contempt for rationalism or any other philosophical system in the face of the chaotic horrors of human existence" (34). This insight elucidates the story's subtitle, "A Tale Neither in Nor out of 'Blackwood'", which Poe added in 1839. While Taylor wrote that Poe was "heightening its ridiculous effects until the veriest dolt can see their absurdity" (336), he was unaware of the story's subtle discourse of an essential human concern. Certainly, Poe imitated and ridiculed the *Blackwood* tale of sensation (and Transcendentalist philosophy), but he also used the text to fathom the human condition with serious intentions, and that's why the story is "out of Blackwood".

In "Loss of Breath" the protagonist is afflicted with a whole series of predicaments. From the very start of the story, Mr. Lackobreath is hurled from one precarious situation into the next. "Loss of Breath", in its first version entitled "A Decided Loss", is the story of a man who loses his respiration. As the reader might legitimately expect, the man, however, does not die, and he even retains his capability to speak, although he can utter low guttural sounds only. This incredible accident at the beginning of the story is the overture to a series of even more unbelievable events. In the course of the tale, Mr. Lackobreath is thought to have gone mad, squeezed for a whole night below a very fat man in a coach, considered dead, because he cannot express himself, thrown out of a running carriage, the hind wheel of which breaks several of his limbs, as does his trunk hurled after him. The landlord of a wayside tavern locks him away in a tower, where Mr. Lackobreath, enshrouded like a corpse, finds himself in a state of being buried alive. Some cats gnaw off the narrator's nose, before he can free himself from the tomb, jumping out of a window right into the cart which transports a criminal to the place of execution. Mr. Lackobreath is hanged instead of the rogue, because he happens to

resemble the criminal closely. He gives the audience an impressive show of paroxysms, is sold to a surgeon, partly disentrained and “re-animated” by a galvanic battery, but still thought to be dead and therefore deposited in a morgue.¹⁴⁸ But the narrator’s sufferings have not yet come to an end: fully aware of his predicament, but unaware to attract attention to his peculiar situation, he witnesses his enclosure in a coffin, while his shoulder is pierced by a screw. In the first three version of the tale, there is also a long passage in which Mr. Lackobreath communicates his sensations and phantasms which cross his mind while he is hanged and buried alive. Finally, he is interred in a vault, where Lackobreath meets his neighbour, Mr. Windenough, who suffers from having caught the narrator’s breath. The two quarrel, but finally they agree that Mr. Windenough restores the superfluous portion of his respiration to its original owner.

Both the related incidents and the style of narration resemble the *Blackwood* tales of sensation, but while the originals were meant as serious explorations of the human mind under extreme stress, and the sensational reports of the protagonists were still within the limits of probability, Poe exaggerated his narrator’s predicaments beyond all confines of credibility. The story is superabundant of absurdities of all kind. The situation gets worse and worse for the narrator, but since he has survived the loss of his breath, the internal “logic” of the tale presupposes that nothing can bereave Mr. Lackobreath of his life. Within this story, Poe used one formula over and over again, namely that the narrator’s current infliction is outdoing the previous one, although the reader, at the story’s beginning, can hardly expect Lackobreath’s initial crisis to become even more complicated. But the humor of the story does not exclusively result from the absurdly exaggerated situations of distress, but also from the inadequate tone in which the narrator reports them. For example, while the narrator is searching for his breath in the drawers of his wife, he feels obliged to recommend a specific perfume to the reader, just as if there was nothing more important to do.

“Loss of Breath” is connected with “How to Write a Blackwood Article” not only by the common target of the sensational tales, but also because of some parallel under-currents of meaning. Thus the loss of breath, which Marie Bonaparte understood as sexual impotence (cf. Royot 69), symbolizes a loss of identity as well,¹⁴⁹ because Lackobreath is not only incapable of inhaling and exhaling, he is also unable to communicate. He can express himself with a low and guttural sound only, an ominous inner voice, which obstructs rather than furthers communication. Later, in the vault, Lackobreath complains that despite his sharpened senses he can neither move nor express himself. For him, communication has become a one-sided affair, because he can only receive what is going on around him. After all his sufferings, this perspective of eternal passivity is the narrator’s climactic experience of horror.

“This then” – I mentally ejaculated – “this darkness which is palpable, and oppresses with a sense of suffocation – this – this – is indeed death. [...] Thus – thus, too, shall I always remain – always – always remain. Reason is folly, and philosophy a lie. No one will know my sensations, my horror, my despair. Yet will men persist in reasoning, in philosophizing, and making themselves fools. There is, I find, no hereafter but this. This – this – this – is the only eternity! And what, O Baazlebub! – what an eternity! – to lie in the vast – this awful void – a hideous, vague,

and unmeaning anomaly – motionless, yet longing for power – forever, forever, and forever! [...]” (80)

For the narrator, this situation is even more awful than death, because the conscious experience of his own perpetual helplessness is worse than the final annihilation of body and mind, a state which at least offers the “advantage” of not knowing about it. But as it is, the narrator observes himself in these oppressive circumstances. While his mind is active, it is confined within a “paralyzed” body, which itself is incarcerated inside a coffin, and this wooden box is locked away in a subterranean vault. Lackobreath’s mental awareness of his physical powerlessness equals a loss of identity, because his existence, now split into an active and a passive half, is no longer a harmonious entity. This internal dualism foreshadows the disintegrated self of William Wilson, and the constellation of characters in “The Fall of the House of Usher”. Symptomatically, the narrator’s consciousness is buried, not once, but three times, and thus the story must not only be exclusively read as a series of absurd predicaments, which mock the sensational reports in the *Blackwood* style, but also as a continual journey downward, until the final dead end is reached. Note that all movements in “Loss of Breath” are going down, like the journeys of so many other of Poe’s narrators. However, “Loss of Breath” differs from these tales, in that it gives a detailed account of what awaits man at the end of the passage through darkness, namely an “awful void”.

One would not expect such a fundamentally skeptical report in a humoresque, but there it is. “Loss of Breath” has never had a good standing among 20th century critics literary critics. If at all, it was only parenthetically discussed, being considered as a weak forerunner of the later satire “How to Write a Blackwood Article”, but I consider it as one of Poe’s key-texts. However, it is more important to align it to other texts than to the later satire. A contextual analysis should also turn to the “Letter to Mr.—” as well as to those creative works, in which the propositions of Poe’s earliest essay are exemplified. “Loss of Breath” is the first full stop in a development in Poe’s aesthetics, of which “MS. Found in a Bottle” and “The Assignment” are interim stages. Later stations would be “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “William Wilson”. The development can be imagined as a change of perspective in Poe’s works. While in Poe’s poetry the attention of the protagonists is turned upwards towards heavenly beauty, towards the brilliantly gleaming stars, the narrator is forced to undertake a downward journey which temporarily ends in his threefold enclosure. “Loss of Breath” is an underground journey that leads into a direction opposite to the spiritual ramblings of the protagonists of “Evening Star”, “Al Aaraaf” or “To Helen”. The vision of light has become a vision of darkness. The indefinite sensations, promising an undefinable delight by means of an indistinct preview of a happier *post mortem* existence to come, have turned into very palpable physical and emotional pains experienced in the dark depth of death, or semi-death respectively. In such circumstances Lackobreath encounters his complementary counterpart, Mr. Windenough, just as the Wilsons are facing each other in equally distressing situations.

However, the influence of Poe’s early Idealism remains discernible, as the following quotation demonstrates:

Each incident of my past life flitted before me like a shadow. [...] A dreamy delight now took hold upon my spirit[. ...] A storm – a tempest of ideas, vast, novel, and soul-stirring, bore my spirit like a feather afar off. (78)

These are the sensations of a man in the very moment he is hanged. But when he is cut down from the gallows, the “soul-stirring” experience soon changes into the horrors of the tomb above quoted. When he is laid into the coffin, the narrator recovers his vision, which is imperfect at first, but then all his senses return:

During the brief passage to the cemetery my sensations, which for some time had been lethargic and dull, assumed, all at once, a degree of intense and unnatural vivacity for which I can in no manner account. [...] I could see the texture of the shroud as it lay close against my face; and was even conscious of the rapid variations of light and shade which the flapping to and fro of the sable hangings occasioned within the body of the vehicle. (81)

These impressions, which are at the same time “intense” and of a transitory nature, should be compared to the gleaming but insubstantial lights emanating from the stars. The unblemished vision of the stars’ brilliance, experienced by living human beings yearning for the “beauty beyond the grave”, has turned into the perception of light among shadows. Characteristically, the narrator lies under a veil, within a vehicle which is covered with sable hangings. The veils signify that the narrator undergoes a transcendental experience. The new vision is a matter of perspective. Simultaneously, it is a view from within and into a narrow enclosure. It is no longer a gaze directed towards the infinity of space. The fleeting shades perceived by Lackobreath foreshadow the impressions of Egæus’ inside the reclusion of his library and the intangible beings of Berenice and Ligeia.

Let us return to the beginning of the story and see how Mr. Lackobreath’s predicament started: he fulminated against his wife, probably because of a failure of his own. In marrying, Mr. Lackobreath did not find what he expected. As usual in Poe’s works, wedding proves to be the wrong way to get hold of ethereal beauty. The promise of a happy life in harmony turns into horror. Leaving his wife bereaves the narrator of one essential part of his spiritual existence, just as the loss of his breath is a vital deficiency which makes the preservation of his physical life a continual struggle. Both the division from his wife, and the loss of breath, represent the breakdown of psychological equilibrium. Lackobreath’s search for his respiration in the boudoir of his wife is analogous to the quest for beauty, and for the voyages of discovery, undertaken by Poe’s other narrators. The only reason why he returns from his journey through the dark – a happy turn of events that is rarely found in Poe’s works – is the circumstance that he regains his breath. The recovery of his full energy to do whatever he wants: to find a new wife or to reconcile with his consort. The reunion with someone/something split off before, once again recalls Aristophanes’ report in the *Symposium*. Poe also made use of this dualistic pattern of division and reunion in “Morella”, “Ligeia”, “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “William Wilson”, all tales which are counted among Poe’s serious works. The thematic congruity of Poe’s humorous and serious tales is revealing, since it shows that Poe only changed the wrapper but not the contents when he switched from humor to horror.

One may argue it is wrong to wring sense from a tale of absurd nonsense. However, I do not think that “Loss of Breath” cannot be done away with as a tale merely dwelling in absurdities. As in “How to Write a Blackwood Article”, the horror is embedded in humor, and serious reflections are interspersed between grotesque exaggerations. Sometimes, the switch from one mode to the other is so fast, that it recalls the “rapid variations of light and shade”, experienced by the narrator. Poe’s impressive description of Lackobreath’s sensations in the moment he is hanged is asterisked. All of a sudden, the author/editor Poe intrudes into the first person narration and inserts a mocking comment about Lackobreath’s report, and reminds the reader that it is reminiscent of Schelling’s “absurd *metaphysicianism*” (78, italics original). Then the stream of consciousness, interrupted by the editorial annotation, is continued in the same serious manner as before, but when Lackobreath’s remarks, that he alternately felt like a demi-god or a frog, respectively, a funny notion is introduced once again. After a break, emphasized by the beginning of a new paragraph, which is preceded by a blank line, the serious account goes on, only to be temporarily concluded with a hyperbolic encomium about the qualities of Disraeli’s novel *Vivian Grey*. Here another empty line is added between the paragraphs. The serious tone is briefly taken up again, but now it is the narrator who interrupts his chain of associations, slowing down the rush of words with a reference to Schelling of his own. He ironically reflects about his situation, returns back to his sensations in regard to the shock caused by the abrupt stop of his fall, switches back to philosophical speculation about the question of identity, becomes sarcastic and states that “a dim consciousness of my situation oppressed me like a nightmare” (79), before he conveys in detail his feelings about being buried alive.

The two empty lines and the insertion of the note stress the unconnectedness of the several incongruent segments typographically, which are dissimilar in terms of tone and/or narrative perspective. It is up to the reader, whether he/she primarily reacts to the ironical editorial note, to the serious aspects of the subjective stream of consciousness or to its funny, self-ironical elements. The reader has to adjust and re-adjust his position to the text so rapidly, that the effect is one of confusion. Iser’s term “wandering view-point” suggests that the reader can take his time in fine-tuning his attitude towards the text, but the relevant passage from “Loss of Breath” rather makes the operation resemble the observation of a fast ping-pong game. As soon as the reader has adjusted his position, the text takes another turn and embarrasses the reader about the validity of his/her current point of view. Consequently, the text can be read as a satire, as long as one considers the fragmented serious discourse(s) pointed out above as a main object of ridicule. If not, one must rank “Loss of Breath” as two interwoven stories: one an overstated satire about the sensational tales, the other a serious reflection about the question of identity in life and death.

“Loss of Breath” has been frequently anthologized and translated in all major tongues. The episodic character of the story offers a wealth of graphic scenes, so that the scarce number of illustrations produced for the story is surprising. It took more than 70 years after its first publication before the story was illustrated for the



first time, by Frederick Simpson COBURN in 1902 (fig. 163). True to the text, COBURN depicts Lackobreath pulling Windenough's nose in the vault, but the location can scarcely be identified as a tomb. Especially Lackobreath looks like as if clad in a nightshirt, with his head topped by a foolish nightcap, and not in shrouds. The illustration might as well depict a husband surprising the secret lover of his wife in his hiding place, so that it rather emphasizes the undercurrent theme of jealousy and impotency than the specific grotesque situation, which, in the tale, results from the ridiculous dispute in a ghastly setting. COBURN'S illustration foregrounds the humorous aspect of the story at the cost of the serious discourse, which remains, just like the hardly discernible background of the vault, out of focus.

More than four decades later, Roger CARLE illustrated the story. CARLE provided a single picture for the execution scene, which shows the twisting narrator above the staring faces of the crowd. However, the illustration can be neither regarded as funny nor as horrible, but the indeterminacy is not the result of well-balanced mixture of the two elements, but a failure to visualize any of them. The face of the narrator is covered with a black cap, so that the picture does not provide any clue about the fun which Lackobreath derives from his theatrical performance of convulsions. It has been mentioned several times that artists often helped themselves by conveying Poe's double-edged humor in that they visualized the expected response of the reader to the text by depicting the reactions of persons presented

Fig. 163 "Loss of Breath":
Frederick S. Coburn (1902).

*Courtesy of the Fales Collection,
Bobst Library, New York University.*

Fig. 164 "De Adem Kwijt":
Jeanne Bieruma Oosting
(1949).

Collection of the author.

in the illustrations. CARLE's illustration does not offer the onlooker any opportunity of identification or reflection, since his presentation of the faces in the crowd is too sketchy to allow the discernment of the gaper's facial expressions or the recognition of their emotive response.

In 1949, the story appeared as "De Adem Kwijt" in Dutch translation. The slim booklet, solely distributed *hors commerce* and printed in a limited edition on the occasion of the centennial of the author's death, contains five illustrations by Jeanne Bieruma OOSTING.¹⁵⁰ One of the three full-page illustrations is devoted to the execution scene (fig. 164). OOSTING's depiction of the audience's reactions is more specific than CARLE's, in that the picture shows gaping astonishment, unfeeling sensation mongering, dread, indifference and mild amusement. Thus the artist graphically transforms some of the variable reactions which the story is capable of calling forth from the reader. Though it seems as if Lackobreath were staring down on his audience in order to give them a terrific show, OOSTING did not exploit the narrator's faked paroxysms. In Poe's stories, this scene is more than a weird spectacle. In the context of literary satire, it is a visually encoded, self-ironical comment on the over-exaggerated predicaments and the hyperbolic style, with which the author flabbergasts his readers, satisfying them through the presentation of implausible and unrealistic situations while simultaneously amusing himself about their desire for sensational reports. Poe's well-known letter to T. W. White (see O 1: 57ff) makes clear that Poe was well aware about the economics of literature: being successful as an author is simply a question of supply and demand.

OOSTING's other illustrations, showing the narrator maltreated by the cats in the wayside tavern, a scene also depicted by Suzanne CLEE, and his encounter with Windenough in the vault, show a predominance of dark parts, so that the story's sinister elements are aptly visualized. However, just like CARLE, OOSTING does not manage to transform the ambiguity of Poe's text. Despite his slightly caricatural style, his pictures are not at all funny, but they do not convey a sense of dread either. It is noteworthy, that the Dutch translation is based on the later versions of the text, in which the execution and the morgue scene were substantially reduced or expunged, respectively. Poe's 1845 version, revised for publication in the *Broadway Journal*, stresses the satirical and funny elements much stronger than the text that was used for the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. And yet, OOSTING's illustrations rather put emphasis on the story's gloomy elements. This circumstance elucidates the transparency of the literary satire, under the surface of which there is the dark lustre of horror.

In 1966, Léonor FINI made one watercolor for the story (fig. 165). It shows five figures, of which two are foregrounded, while the other three are grouped in the background. It is not clear, which scene is illustrated exactly. The most promising conjecture is that the picture illustrates the dispute of Lackobreath and Windenough in the vaults. This assumption would explain for the two figures in the foreground, but what about the three behind them? All three of them are staring upwards, just like the gapers at the gallows, so that this execution scene also suggests itself. However, it is vain to search for a specific scenic correspondence between image



and story, since such an approach to the picture must result in its disqualification as an illustration unfaithful to the text. The picture responds to the text on a more general level, but it certainly emphasizes the gloomy aspects of the text. The figure on the left is twisted as if suffering great pain, and the three beings in the background, whose faces resemble skulls, support this impression. All figures are helpless, since they all look as if bound, so that they cannot use their arms and hands. The sitting figure, who might as well represent the reaction of the reader, is staring at the distorted body in a state of quandary, but without any trace of droll bafflement. Moreover, the face looks like a death-head, too, so that all figures are presented in a state of dehumanization: forlorn, deformed, tormented and desperate beings, unable to communicate and condemned to exist in an alien environment, which, in the picture, makes the impression of being the “awful void” once mentioned by the narrator. FINI’s picture is the most obvious visualization of the story’s depressing aspects, although, it must be noted, her illustration is inserted in the French translation of the story’s later and less gloomy version of the text.¹⁵¹

There is also no trace of humor in Stephen MCKEOWN’s illustration, which depicts the moment the narrator and his trunk are thrown out of the coach (fig. 166). The lack of a background creates the impression as if Lackobreath is hurled into nothingness, and so his fundamental loss of social contact is visualized. Moreover, the picture shows the indifference of the other passengers, whose interest in his fate, if there is one at all, is limited to impassionate curiosity.

Ramon CALSINA’s illustrations are the only pictures which stimulate a response of amusement. In the first illustration the narrator rummages the drawers of his

Fig. 165 “Perte d’Haleine”: Léonor Fini (1966).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 167 “La Pérdida del Aliento”: Ramón Calsina (1971).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

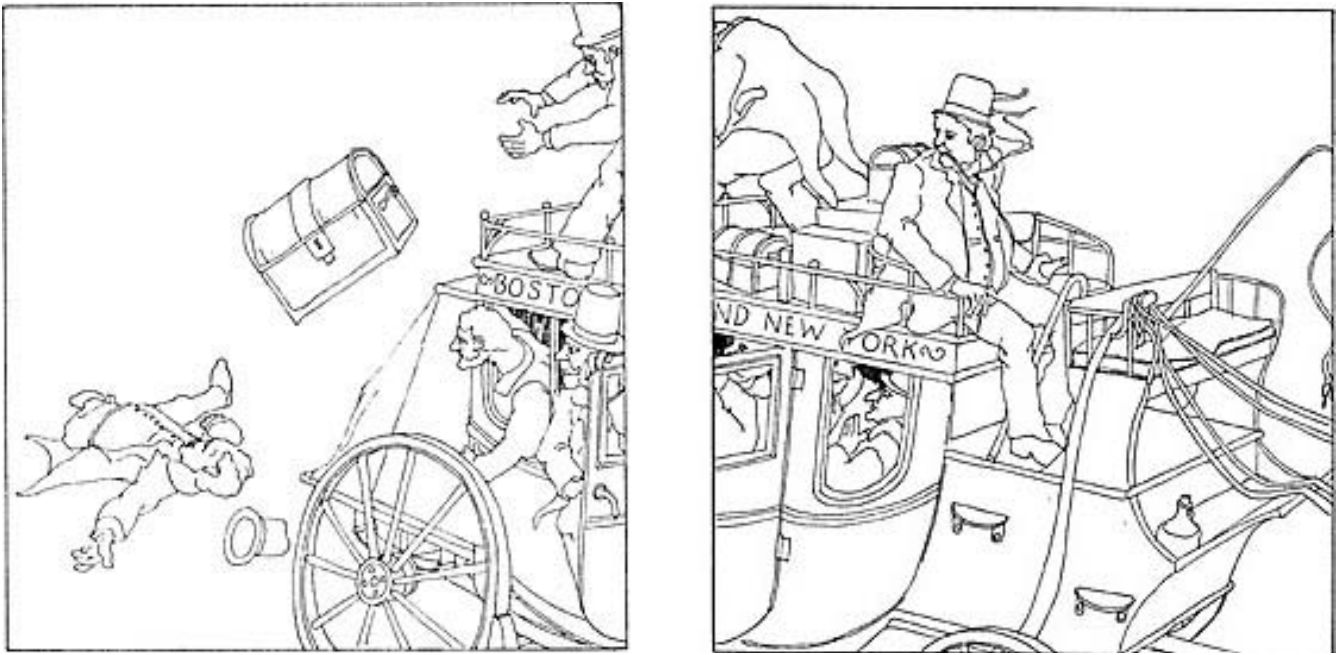


Fig. 166 "Loss of Breath":
Stephen McKeown (1973).
Collection of Burton Pollin.

wife in search of his breath. His fluttering coat-tails and the soaring objects, all flying from the center of the picture towards its edges, conveys a humorous sense of his frenzied examination. CALSINA's second picture is more ambiguous (fig. 167). Once again it focusses on a dynamic scene, but now the movement is towards the center of the picture. The narrator is just about to land in the cart which is to deliver the robber to the gallows. Since the narrator's face is cut by the picture's upper edge, and the two guards and the coachman are napping, there are only two faces discernible. That of the criminal and the strange visage of a mule, or a horse, respectively. Whereas the countenance of the man is similar to the visages in FINI's watercolor, in that it lacks differentiation, the expression of the animal bears human traits. Here we have the natural condition turned topsy-tury. A dehumanized man and an anthropomorphical beast, which is made up like a cabaret dancer. Moreover, the animal is staring the onlooker right into the face, thus openly showing its perverted identity while those of the men remains hidden. For one thing the beast's broad grin recalls Poe's early definition of the grotesque as "downright horse-laughter" (O I: 77), an expression with which Poe meant a knee-slapping kind of humor. For another thing, the grin is provoking. It mocks the viewer, as the gargoyles staring down from medieval walls do. Thus the weird smile represents a grotesque kind of mirth, which inspires a feeling of uneasiness about the nature of the horse's amusement.¹⁵²

Thus the beast's grin is symptomatic for Poe's tales of "humor", which are almost never light-hearted but often disturbing. There is no relief in laughing about Poe's jokes. Poe's tales of humor are difficult to illustrate because his verbal *innuendos* cannot be transposed into the graphic medium properly and because the satirical elements often allude to persons and incidents which are obscure today. However, the main reason why Poe's "humor" can hardly be pictured effectfully is that there is only little visual material which is really funny. When the tales discussed in this chapter are stripped of their funny names, absurd dialogues and

satirical allusions only little humor is left. Moreover, illustrating these tales often results in visualizing aspects which are not funny at all: sinister settings, crippled and humiliated human beings, fear-inspiring figures, shocking experiences, malicious deeds, violence, painful death and other afflictions. Consequently, many illustrations for the tales of humor foreground gruesome rather than funny facets. Moreover, such illustrations demonstrate how closely Poe's Gothic and humorous tales are interrelated in terms of imagery.

5 PANORAMA

5.1 The Fall of the House of Usher

“The Fall of the House of Usher” is one of the most popular of Poe’s works. Although the story has been a favourite with readers ever since, continual critical interest did not start until the early 1940s, a full century after the tale’s first appearance in *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* in September 1839. Approximately, two hundred studies have been published in the course of the last sixty years. Articles entitled “A Key to the House of Usher” (Abel), “A Reinterpretation of ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’” (Spitzer), “What happens in the House of Usher?” (Bailey), “Reconstructing the House of Usher” (Gold), “Undercurrents in Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’” (Roppolo), “Reflections on, and in, ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’” (Kinkead-Weekes) and “Poe’s Re-Vision: The Recovery of the Second Story” (Jordan) etc. pp. signify that generations of critics were eager to detect and unlock the text’s mysteries or to inspect it from a point of view unemployed before. While some critics were looking for the story’s sources in other writers’ works, such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke (Howes; Voller: Thompson, “Indeterminism”), E.T.A. Hoffmann (von der Lippe, “Figure”, “House”; Pitcher “Borrowings”), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Seronsy) or Lord Byron (Bachinger, *Multi-Man*), others examined the story’s influence on later authors, for example, Charles Dickens (Edgecombe), Charlotte Perkins Gilman (von der Fehr), Anaïs Nin (Tytell), Joseph Conrad (Amur), Julien Green (Rose), Enrico Annibale Butti (Norman) or Mihai Eminescu (Sorescu). The story was evaluated in the light of Romanticism (M. Hoffman), Enlightenment (Timmerman), Germanism (Pochmann; Fisher, “Germanism”), Transcendentalism (Thompson, “Paradox”), Rosicrucianism (Sharp), racism (Dougherty, “Foucault”), Gnosticism (St. Armand) and Marxism (Horrard), and there are Freudian and Jungian readings (e.g. Bonaparte; Martindale; Marsh; Wasserman). Critics also focussed on such diverse topics as Usher’s library (Mabbott, “Books”), Usher’s allergy (Morley), medicine (Uba; Sloane, “Nervous”), the twin motif (Stein; May), the double motif (von der Lippe, “Figure”; Richard, “Double”; Tintner), the vault motif (Cronin; Mabbott, “Vaults”; Guilds), the vampire motif (Kendall) or the letter “d” (Ketterer, “Shudder”). The overwhelming number of critical articles, and especially the many divergent interpretations, evince a specific quality of the story, which is, in fact, the most intrinsic quality of Poe’s fictional works and his aesthetics. This is the quality of ambiguity which causes a multiplicity of meanings. The ambivalence of Poe’s texts, and in particular the ambiguity of his images, keep challenging critics and readers alike to generate a consistent meaning out of a seemingly illimitable number combinations of descriptions, allusions, hints and images, most of which are presented in a state of indeterminacy. John H. Timmerman, author of the most recent study, started his article with the telling observation that “‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ is among those few stories that seem to elicit nearly as many critical interpretations as it has readers” (227). A few years earlier, Harriet Hustis

had attributed the continuing interest in Poe's texts to his "trickery, hoaxes, hieroglyphs, and ciphers", and she considered "The Fall of the House of Usher" to be particularly characterized by a "prevalence of such motifs of ambiguity and linguistic, hermeneutic, and ontological uncertainty" (3, cf. 7).

The flood of critical articles broke, when Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren denied the story any true quality in 1943. In his response, Darrel Abel read "The Fall of the House of Usher" as a masterly crafted Gothic tale in which the opposing forces of madness and sanity, of life and death, are at odds symbolically ("Key"). Another dispute occurred at the beginning of the 1980s. Patrick Quinn, who had interpreted the story in 1957 for the first time (French), argued against G. R. Thompson, who thought the story to be characterized by "Romantic Irony" (Fiction 87ff). Quinn and Thompson engaged in an exchange of three articles, all of which mainly focussed on the question of the narrator's reliability and on the validity and significance of the so-called head-house allegory. Quinn, surely the more traditional critic of the two, reinforced his conviction that the narrator is a sober-minded fellow, whom cannot only be trusted but with whom the reader can identify (French 237f, "Misreading", "Trust"; cf. Timmerman 228). In his first analysis of 1973, Thompson had severely doubted the narrator's reliability, because he is prone to an increasing hysteria which he shares with his companion Usher, who is his *alter ego* (92f, "Paradox" 338f). Thompson argued that the story contains an identification between the house, Roderick Usher and the narrator, which is visualized by the mirror motif and the head-house allegory. It should be noted that the dispute of the two critics centered around the story's most prominent image: the view of the house of Usher.

Poe deliberately employed indeterminacies to increase the ambiguity of his works, that is to amplify the effect of indefiniteness on the reader. However, it must be assumed that many critics mentioned so far would resist this thesis, although there is sufficient evidence for such an assumption in Poe's critical writings, too. In my eyes, the main studies about "The Fall of the House of Usher" above mentioned do not show that one critic is right and the other is wrong. They demonstrate that the story, as well as most of Poe's other works, can be legitimately interpreted in many ways. Although, for example, the interpretations of Quinn and Thompson cannot be reconciled, I hold any of the two to be equally right in their own way, and this is not a matter of persuasive rethorics but of convincing arguments. I do not agree with any statement made by the one or the other critic, but I think most approaches to the story to be consistent in themselves. Thompson and Fisher ("Germanism") stated that they do not consider their interpretations to be exclusively right, but that they represent one of several other possible readings.

Thompson, however, somewhat contradicted his earlier notion of the multi-layered and ambiguous quality of Poe's works, when he wrote in 1981:

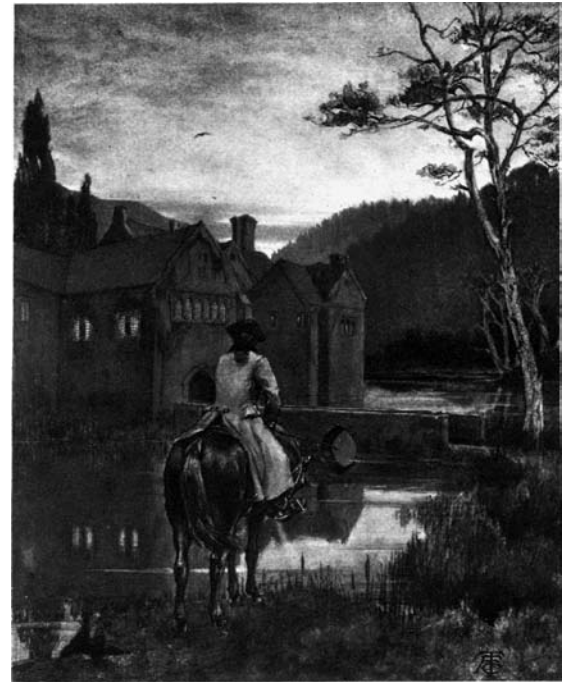
It is, I think, still a workable axiom of analytic criticism that a successful artistic work, whatever its complexity, is ideally to be regarded as a single fabric, tightly woven together, that loose ends are flaws, and that the various strands of the work cannot be separated without altering the texture and design of the whole. ("Paradox" 314)

Thompson was to point out to the importance of the embedded poem “The Haunted Palace”, which had been neglected by Quinn, but his statement also reveals the critic’s adherence to the classical notion of artistic harmony. This approach to Poe’s works goes hand in hand with the belief that, in order to reconstruct the author’s intention(s), meaning has to be generated from within the text exclusively. Thus, “loose ends” are considered as “flaws“ in the “texture and design of the whole”, in Poe’s texts as well as in critical interpretations. Poe’s often stated fondness for indefinitiveness and undercurrents of meanings, and the frequent occurrence of indeterminacies and ambiguities in his writings denounce the idea of a fully reconstructable fabric as an illusion, which ultimately leads to the conflation of the outcome of the critic’s interpretation with the author’s alleged intention.

The generation of meaning is not an arbitrary process, and I do not want to maintain that Poe’s works are devoid of any significance at all, but I resist the idea that they can be reduced to one exclusive denotative meaning. Poe certainly favored specific readings of his stories himself, as some of his letters suggest. However, these “upper-currents” are always accompanied by “under-currents” and it cannot be equivocally decided, where the currents divide and where they intermingle. It is the deliberate ambiguity, the carefully planned polysemy of his works, that testifies to Poe’s essential quality, his conscious art of suggestion. In one text, Poe offers several stories to his readers, who then have to combine the “loose ends” (to use Thompson’s term) within a “pre-established design” (cf. H II: 108), a large and variable frame of reference within which each of his texts can be understood. David Ketterer remarked: “Almost all of them [the tales] can be genuinely interpreted in a variety of ways, whether literal, parodic, psychological, or supernatural” (*Rationale* 181).

The ambiguity in Poe’s works is often the result of the deliberate use of “loose ends”, which can be knotted together in different ways. Poe’s notion of the “pre-established design”, then, does not mean that the “pre-conceived effect” is to be understood as a single unequivocal meaning which becomes obvious for the attentive reader. On the contrary, the effect is an effect of indefinitiveness which is the result of a multiplicity of possible meanings. It is the reader’s choice how to resolve the indeterminacies in Poe’s works, but since many combinations offer themselves, the outcome is not wholly predictable. In Wolfgang Iser’s terms, it is the reader’s choice how to concretize textual indeterminacies and to arrange the unconnected segments into a consistent pattern.

That Poe’s works can be read in many different ways is not only demonstrated by the quantity of critical interpretations, but also by the abundance and diversity of existent illustrations. This diversity is not only a matter of historically or individually determined modes of representation, graphic styles and the development of reproduction and printing technologies, but also of the different interpretative approaches visual artists have chosen in order to transform Poe’s visually suggestive texts into graphic images. Every illustration is necessarily an interpretation, and,



consequently, the multiplicity of existing graphic transformations is one more proof for the polysemy of Poe's texts.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" belongs to the five most frequently illustrated texts of the author,¹⁵³ and thus a survey over the different approaches of graphic artists visually unfolds the variety of meanings which can be attributed to Poe's text. While it was more than a century after the story's first publication before critics paid continual interest to the text, the illustrators' response started much earlier. In 1852, the first two illustrations appeared in the earliest illustrated Poe edition at all, in the British two-volume set entitled *Tales of Mystery, Imagination and Humour*, by the London publishers Vizetelly, Clarke & Co. The fact that one of the two pictures was chosen as a frontispiece for the second volume, is graphic evidence of the story's popularity and its prominent position in the canon of Poe's works. This two volume set was reprinted four times, at least, in the 1850s, and thus the illustrations became widely distributed in England. Until now these two books are the most profusely British illustrated editions of Poe's stories. Subsequently, the books were published by Ward, Lock & Tyler. The company reduced the number of illustrations from 42 to 27, all to be published within a single volume of 400 pages. This regularly reprinted book was not only distributed in England, but through the company's agencies in New York and Melbourne it was also spread in the United States and Australia. The book was reissued until the first decade of the 20th century in English speaking countries, and in 1913 the book (and the illustrations) appeared in Swedish translation in Stockholm (Pollin, *Images passim*).

When the amount of illustrations was reduced to 27, only one picture for "The Fall of the House of Usher" remained part of the book. This wood-engraving illustrates the very first paragraphs of the story, the narrator's approach to the house of Usher. This scene has been more frequently depicted than any other scene from Poe's oeuvre. Besides this prominent position in the graphic tradition of the

Fig. 168 "The Fall of the House of Usher": anonymous illustrator, probably Julian Portch (1852).

Courtesy of the Alderman Library, Manuscripts Department, Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

Fig. 169 "The Fall of the House of Usher": F. C. Tilney (1895).

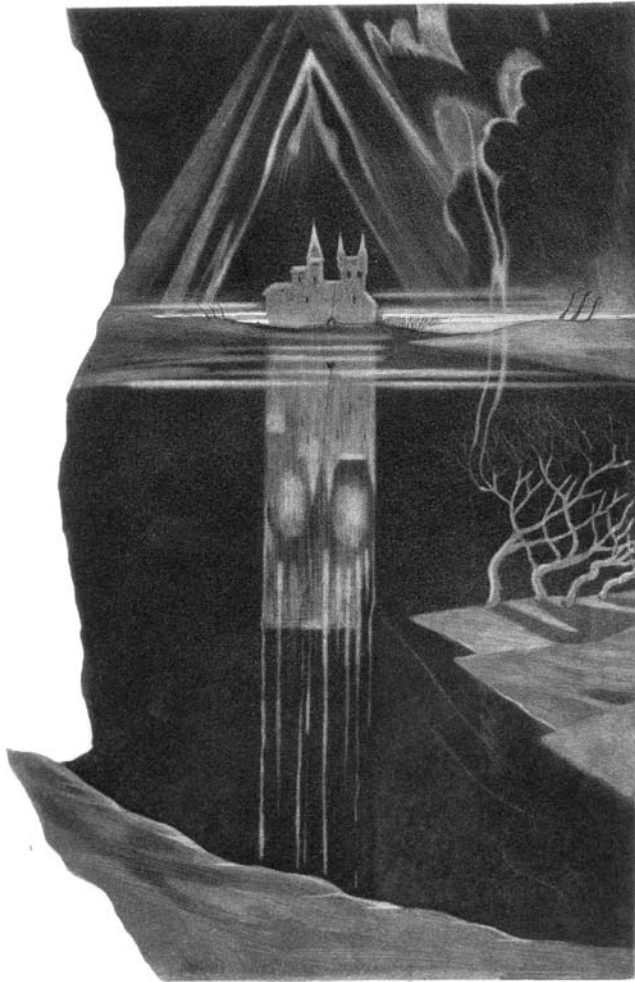
Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Bochum.



author's works, the scene is also of crucial importance for the understanding of the story, because it introduces its central image, namely the extended metaphor of the house as a human head. Poe had emphasized this relation by the insertion of his poem "The Haunted Palace", first published separately in May 1839. The poem is a rather blatant allegory of a human mind going insane. Nevertheless, the double image and its allegorical meaning slipped the attention of the story's first reviewers (see Thomas and Jackson 273ff), and, as has been stated, the validity of this observation has remained disputed until now. Likewise, there is no sign of the head-house-allegory in the first anonymous illustration for "The Fall of the House of Usher", which was probably made by Julian PORTCH in 1852 (fig. 168). The earliest illustration in which the depiction of the house suggests a face was produced by F. C. TILNEY in 1895 (fig. 169). Two windows, placed at the same height and reflected in the tarn before the house, create the impression of eyes, but elsewhere there are no other graphic details which make the building resemble a face. In the illustrations of COMBET-DESCOMBES (1919), the suggestiveness of the scene is increased by the artist's graphic style and the tiny dimensions of the pictures, all of which are drawn with a coarse type of chalk or charcoal (figg. 170–172), so that the identification of details or the exact definition of what is depicted proves to be difficult. The viewer needs some imagination to discern a face in the depiction of the building, but there is one illustration where the similarity becomes apparent (fig. 172). However, this picture is printed in the middle part of the book, so that it is unlikely that it visually introduces the head-house allegory, when the reader begins to read the story. In this picture two windows resemble a pair of glaring eyes, and the entrance of the house looks like an open mouth. However, there is no detail which might represent a nose, as in the text, so that the overall impression is that of a skull. The "face" expresses agitated emotions, faintly recalling the shrieking visage, with hands tightly pressed to the ears, in Edvard MUNCH's famous painting *The Scream* (1893). The resemblance between the building and a head becomes more explicit in Carlo FARNETI's first etching for the story (fig. 173). However, it is not the house, but its reflection in the tarn which resembles a distorted head. Four decades after FARNETI's illustration, his compatriot Alexis THOMAS chose the same trick to visualize Poe's extended metaphor in his picture book adaptation of the story, though here the "reflection" is not turned upside down (fig. 174). In FARNETI's and THOMAS' pictures, the buildings look like crowns upon skulls, thus visually linking the illustration with the monarch in the

Fig. 170–172 "La Chute de la Maison Usher": Combet-Descombes (1919).

Courtesy of the Alderman Library, Manuscripts Department, Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia at Charlottesville.



LA CHUTE
DE LA MAISON USHER
d'après Edgar Allan Poe



histoire dessinée par Alexis Thomas
extraits de textes de Charles Baudelaire choisis par Robert Cottureau

inserted poem “The Haunted Palace”, an idea which is rendered even more explicit in Nikolas HEIDELBACH’s cover illustration for a German edition dating from 1994 (fig. 175). Dieter MÜLLER’s color picture for an edition published in the former German Democratic Republic blends the face of Roderick with a portion of the building. Thus Müller illustrates the head-house allegory as well as what is blatantly stated in the story, namely that there has always been an inseparable connection between the family and the house of Usher. More versions of fusion of the two images presented by Poe can be found in the pictures of Louis JAMES, Irving DOCKTOR, Guido del Carpio RIVERA and Neil WALDMAN. In all these illustrations a face is worked into the skies beside or behind the building. It is remarkable, that the head-house-allegory was visualized by graphic artists decades before literary critics became aware of it.

Patrick Quinn, however, denied that the building looks like a skull, as Thompson had stated. Quinn wrote:

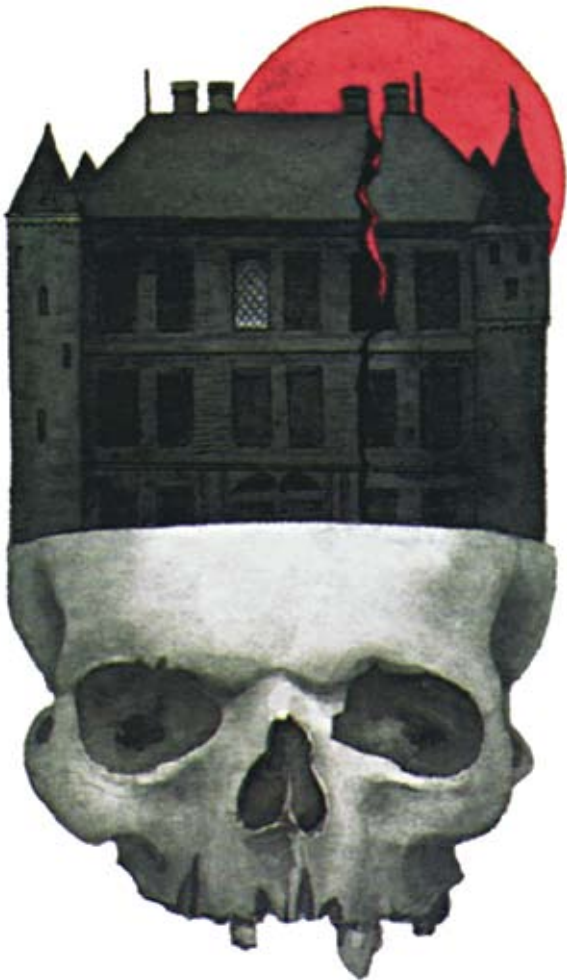
But the question is whether a vast, castellated mansion, seen from the front, where the entrance is, can have a plausible resemblance to a death’s head. I would say no. The proportions of the building, its generally rectilinear structure, its turrets, and above all its dimensions make this resemblance extremely difficult to visualize. And so I, for one, I do not find it curious that the alleged house-skull resemblance has, prior to Thompson, gone unremarked. (“Misreading” 304f)

Fig. 173 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”:

Carlo Farneti (1928).
Courtesy of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 174 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”:

Alexis Thomas (1968).
Collection of the author.



Quinn's argument shows that he had a specific image in his mind, but there is no definite hint in the text, that the house really looks like a castellated medieval mansion. However, Quinn's description of his mental image¹⁵⁴ demonstrates that the text's ambiguity and its incompleteness regarding its descriptive details, challenges the critic/reader to complete the picture merely sketched by Poe. The critic's concretization was conditioned by the circumstance that he interprets the story as the trustworthy report of the narrator, and since his reading is incompatible with the head-house motif, he adjusted the unconnected segments in a different way than Thompson. Thompson arranged the pieces of the puzzle in a way that supported his interpretation of the house as a skull.¹⁵⁵ To use Iser's terms, for Thompson the opening paragraph was theme and horizon at the same time. For him, the central image lingered in the background prominently, so that all indeterminacies of the story could be resolved by reference to the head-house motif in the horizontal position.

Many illustrations for "The Fall of the House of Usher" show no trace of a visual transformation of the "face-facade theory", as Thompson labelled it ("Paradox" 322). This is surprising, because the narrator's words are literally unfolding a picture before the reader's eyes. It seems as if the other elements of this image overruled the hardly realizable graphic fusion of the house and the head. Thus many illustrations do not differ substantially from the first anonymous picture (cf. fig.

Fig. 175 "Der Fall des Hauses Usher": Nikolas Heidelberg (1994).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 176 "De Ondergang van het Huis Usher": Luc de Jaegher (1945).

Collection of the author.



168), as is demonstrated by the pictures of Arthur RACKHAM (1935) and Luc DE JAEGHER (1945; fig. 176). As so often in the history of Poe illustration, the first illustration set a standard, which held its ground for several decades.

The house of Usher has seen many inventive architects. The building was depicted as a picturesque medieval château (COBURN 1902; WÉLY 1910; DUBOUT 1948, fig. 177), a stronghold with high walls (KUBIN 1909; EGGELER 1923; CHRISTENSEN 1953), a grand estate (SATTY 1976; MARSDEN 1988; MOSER 1991), a multi-storey mansion (RISCHMANN 1947; DWIGGINS 1930; ARNDT 1988), a manor house (PLATT 1884, LECHANTRE 1945, THOMAS 1968), a dilapidated church (MALIPIERO C. 1927), a half-timbered, tower-like structure (ROSENKRANTZ 1908, fig. 178), a *palacio* (KIPPER 1993), a modern villa (PRANGENBERG 1978), a whole hamlet (NODEL 1974), etc. pp. Among the curiosities are the pictures of Jon Jac VRIESLANDER (1912, fig. 179), Hiroshi Nakamura (1970) and an anonymous Spanish illustrator (1988), since they obviously contradict the narrator's description of a decayed building in a dead landscape. In VRIESLANDER's illustration, the house of Usher looks like a stately English country-seat, located in a cultivated garden with neatly sheared bushes and a well-trimmed lawn. In the other two pictures the house lies amidst a forest with luxuriant and flourishing vegetation. ALASTAIR (fig. 180; 1928) depicted the house among obviously thriving conifers, probably intended to create a graveyard atmosphere, suggestive of death and decay, a point that is also emphasized by the blooming orchid in the picture's foreground.

Fig. 177 "La Chute de la Maison Usher": Albert Dubout (1948).

Collection of the author.

Fig. 178 "Huset Ushers Fald": Arild Rosenkrantz (1908).

Courtesy of Universitetsbiblioteket Fiolstræde, København.



The graphic transformation of the story's first paragraph, the longest in the whole story, is so important for the reading process, because it concretizes the textual ambiguity visually. The first sentences offer several clues for the understanding of the story, but it is up to the reader which one he/she chooses. But while the verbal description permits voids in the representation of the scene, – ambivalent descriptions, fused or interlaced images and suggestive sounds – the illustrations for the scene must be more specific. Visual artwork is necessarily more concrete, unless it is of an abstract kind. As a result, a graphic concretization turns the reader's attention into a specific direction, thus influencing his/her awareness and reception of the following aspects of the text. The visual emphasis on specific aspects is always at the cost of others. For example, the pictures which show the house of Usher combined with a face are more likely to make the reader aware of the alleged psychological implications of the story. On the contrary, if the extended metaphor between the house and a head is neglected in the illustration, that is if the building is depicted as a fantastically styled or Gothic edifice, it is more likely that the horrible events in the story will be interpreted as supernatural. Thus even the illustrations of VRIESLANDER, NAKAMURA and the anonymous Spanish artist, which, from a traditional point of view must be considered gross visual misinterpretations, cannot be done away as meaningless or inappropriate pictures.

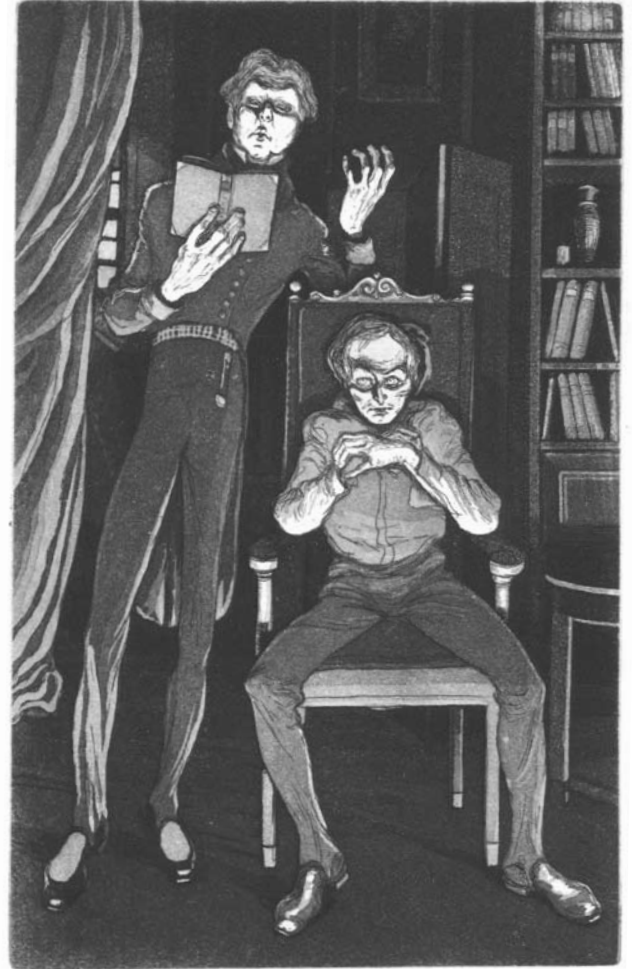
These last mentioned illustrations are capable of influencing the reader's attitude towards the narrator, and, subsequently, the understanding of the whole story. There are generally two ways by which the conflict between these illustrations and

Fig. 179 "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher": Jon Jac Vrieslander (1912).

Courtesy of Bibliothek der Universität des Saarlandes / Bibliothèque de l'Université de la Sarre.

Fig. 180 "The Fall of the House of Usher": Alastair (1928).

Courtesy of the Fales Collection, Bobst Library, New York University.



the text can be resolved. The reader either dismisses the pictures as inadequate or he questions the report of the narrator, since the depiction of the scene cannot be harmonized with the narrator's description. If the reader accepts the picture as presenting the fictional reality, he/she will find more hints in the text about the narrator's untrustworthiness. If, however, the narrator's account is accepted as a rational, matter-of-fact report, the illustration loses its impact on the hermeneutic process. Moreover, subsequent pictures by the same artist for the same story may also be discarded *a priori*, because the "author" of the illustrations has proved to be "careless", that is, unreliable, in transforming the text visually. The same must be supposed when the illustrations are definitely amateurish in execution, such as the pictures of Arnaldo GINNA, all of which leave the impression of a "childish experiment" (cf. M 2: 399).

Shuji TATEISHI's picture brings about a comical effect (fig. 181). His illustration for the opening scene shows the narrator on horseback in front of the house of Usher. The house seems ominous, the atmosphere is somber, and the tarn is as lurid as described in the story. The artist was obviously taking pains to recreate the story's keynote "gloom", but the whole effort is spoilt by the depiction of the narrator on his mount. The horse, if it is one, is much too small and seems to have lost its hind part, so that the viewer expects to see the rider sliding over the animal's back into the mud any moment.

Fig. 181 ["The Fall of the House of Usher"]: Shuji Tateishi (1985).
Collection of Ichigoro Uchida.

Fig. 182 "The Fall of the House of Usher": William Sharp (1941).
Collection of the author.

Another illustration with a comical effect was created by William SHARP (fig. 182). The picture illustrates the scene where the narrator is reading the medieval romance of Ethelred aloud, in order to distract himself and Usher from feelings of apprehension. While Usher sits broodingly in his chair, the narrator is standing at his side, being conceitedly involved in his exclamations, which he emphasizes with an affected gesture of his hand. The mannered attitude of the standing reader, contrasted with the sullen appearance of Usher, and the elongated features of the two contribute to a caricatural effect. But the obvious contradiction between the text and the picture should make the reader/viewer aware that this is not an illustration exclusively referring to the bedchamber scene of the story. The lighting conditions suggest that the two men have placed themselves in front of a burning fire-place. However, the fire would be much too intense for the hypersensitive Usher, so it must be questioned, whether it is really Roderick who is depicted here. The reader/viewer will be further confused as soon as he/she turns to the caption, which is a *verbatim* quotation from the story: "I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar." Here is another apparent inconsistency, since there is, for one thing, no guitar to be seen at all, and, for another thing, this would imply a change of roles: the sitting man would have to be identified as the narrator, while the foppish interpreter would have to be Usher. It is bizarre that a caption, which is, to use a term by Roland Barthes, to "anchor" the illustration in the text, brings about the very opposite of its object, namely the disintegration of text and picture. But as it is, the picture challenges the reader's hermeneutic activity, because he/she is eager to find explanations for the apparent inconsistencies. In this way, the reader possibly becomes aware of the story's inherent elements of self- and genre-parody, as pointed out by Benjamin Franklin Fisher.

Disenchanted with the terror tale that was so much in demand but unwilling to lay down the reins with which he could so ably steer its course, Poe satisfied two audiences in "Usher." For one, he provided the horrors they expected and enjoyed. For the other, he created a work that embodies (among much else) a moral about succumbing to the extravagancies of the Gothic. ("Germanism" 371)

According to Fisher, the narrator and Usher are prone to think and to perceive everything all too "Gothically", a fact which explains for the story's inconsistencies, its absurdities, its overwrought and anachronistic Gothic formulas, and for the narrator's unreliability. The literary taste of the two protagonists becomes evident in the reading matter of "The Mad Trist", which the narrator proposes to "pass away this terrible night together". In SHARP's picture, the two men have ensconced themselves in front of the fireside, in a library, a perfect place to indulge in spooky reading matter. In a wider context, the illustration also recalls Poe's concept for *The Tales of the Folio Club*, where each member was to read out their "burlesques" before the audience. The reading man may also be understood as Poe, who, while he entertains his readers with a tale of horror, written in an extravagant style and crammed with overblown clichés, takes pleasure in ridiculing what his audience (here the man sitting in the chair) believes to be a serious story.

Jeanne Bieruma OOSTING's illustration for the story's finale is another example for a picture that is likely to direct the reader's attention towards subtle humorous



elements of the text (1941; fig. 183). The flat spatiality, resulting from the subdued middle distance and the onedimensional depiction of the house, makes OOSTING's picture look like a decorated stage. Thus, the narrator's uncontrolledly waving limbs strike the viewer as an overly theatrical and ridiculous gesture. This effect is even heightened by a tree in the lower left corner, whose anthropomorphical appearance resembles the narrator's attitude. It is interesting to compare OOSTING's hysterical narrator with Douglas Percy BLISS' illustration, which is almost identically composed (fig. 184). The eyes wide-open, which offer the viewer a point of identification, express fear. The dynamic composition visualizes the narrator's headlong and panic-stricken escape from the collapsing building. Moreover, the reflection of the widening fissure exactly meets the narrator's head, so that the illustration allows for a psychological reading in the vein of Thompson.¹⁵⁶ The comparison of these two illustrations demonstrates that it is not only important what the pictures show, but how they do it. Not only the narrative surface, that is the depiction of events, but also the individual graphic style, the onlooker's point of view, the employed perspective and the composition contribute to the way in which illustrations influence the reader's interpretation of the text.

But let us return from this brief digression to the back door to the front of house of Usher. Illustrations for the first paragraph of "The Fall of the House of Usher" are of vital importance for the interpretation of the text. They adjust the reader to

Fig. 183 "De Ondergang van het Kasteel Usher": Jeanne Bieruma Oosting (1941).

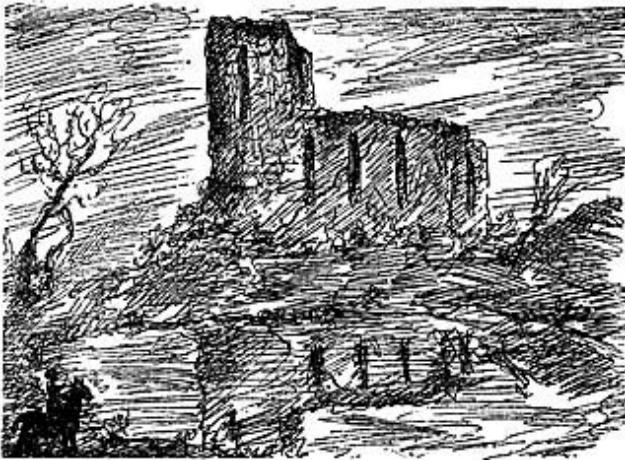
Collection of Burton Pollin.

Fig. 184 "The Fall of the House of Usher": Douglas Percy Bliss (1930).

Collection of the author.

the text's first person-narrative perspective, that is to the most crucial aspect of the text. Thus, it is worth analyzing how the reader's point of view, preconditioned by what is represented by the picture (or by what is not represented, respectively), is adjusted to the first person narrative perspective by the way in which it is shown. A significant difference between the illustrations mentioned so far is the presence of the narrator within the pictures. If the narrator is depicted, his role as a correspondent who conveys his observations to the reader is changed, or is at least revised, into one who is being observed himself. The absence of Poe's narrator in some illustrations indicates that the relevant artists were eager to transform the first person narrative perspective into the point of view of the reader/viewer. Thus, the empathy between reader and narrator, an identification emphasized by Patrick Quinn (*French* 238), is regulated by the illustration of the first scene. However, the depiction of the narrator must not necessarily mean that the identification cannot be realized. In many illustrations, the narrator is functionalized as the mediator of the depicted scene by compositional means. In the pictures of F. C. TILNEY, Luigi MALIPIERO (fig. 185), Hans WINDISCH, Gösta KRILAND, Povl CHRISTENSEN, Jean-Charles BOURCIER, Caspar Walter RAUH, and Greg HILDEBRANDT the narrator is seen from the back, approaching or quietly scrutinizing the house. Caspar David FRIEDRICH often employed this compositional knack to offer points of identification within the overwhelming panoramas and to enhance the impression of spatial infinity by the introduction of a small human yardstick. In the pictures already mentioned, we encounter this very kind of quiet, inactive observer the reader can identify with. Usually, these narrators are depicted without much attention to detail and as tiny figures in the lower parts of the pictures, so that the viewer has the impression of looking over their shoulders. The identification with the narrator's perspective becomes more difficult as soon as the figure distracts the onlooker's attention from the house, as in the pictures of Arthur RACKHAM and Joseph MIRALLES.

In his comic book adaptation, Tom SUTTON was taking pains to hide the identity of the narrator over a stretch of ten pages – depicting him from the back or as a tiny shape in the distance, showing merely his shadow, clipping his figure by means of the frames' borders or obscuring his face in the dark – only to reveal at the very end, that it is Poe himself fleeing from the house of Usher. Such an identification between author and narrator is not unusual in comic book adaptations of Poe's works. Poe also appears as the narrator in one of the two pictures of the first anonymous illustrator of the story, and this example has been followed by Russell HOBAN and, arguably, Jacques WÉLY and Norman NODEL.¹⁵⁷ The identification of Poe with the narrator means a conflation of authorship and the story's narrative perspective, but Patrick Quinn commented: "He [the narrator] is at the same time both the author of the story and, as spectator of its events, the audience as well. We react as he does" (*French* 237). It remains to be added, that the narrator is also an acting figure in the narrative. Therefore it cannot be taken for granted that the reader identifies with him. It is true, however, that the narrator's actions are mostly reactions. Initially, he follows the summons of Usher, but gradually he becomes more active, until finally he takes the initiative in the bed-



chamber scene. Some illustrations pay tribute to the narrator as an acting figure, and in these pictures the identification is impaired. If the reader/viewer observes the narrator as a person actively participating in the events, without having any possibility to adapt his spatial and visual perspective, the narrator's role changes from the observer into the observed.¹⁵⁸

The possibility of an identification between internal storyteller and reader is certainly strongest if the picture imitates the I-perspective through the total omission of the narrator, so that the pictorial representation is indistinguishable from the narrator's gaze. Some illustrations evince the artists' efforts to keep the narrator completely out of focus. In Christopher COPELAND's picture, Usher even has to carry Madeline into her tomb without any help, though the texts says "we two alone bore it [Madeline's body] to its rest" (409).¹⁵⁹

The narrator is also absent in the pictures of Alexandre ALEXEÏEFF (1929) and Axel ARNDT (1988). These works suggest that the pictures show what the narrator sees through his eyes. ALEXEÏEFF's first etching (fig. 186) depicts a tree growing on or out of a mirror-like surface in front of a wall of thick fog, which recalls the clouds hanging "oppressively low in the heavens" (M 2: 397). The picture evokes an atmosphere of strangeness, due to the unnatural surface and the slightly anthropomorphic tree which grows out of it. Even the sky seems to be turned upside down. Except for the tree in the foreground, the picture offers no definite point of orientation, since the spatial relations are unclear. A line in the lower third of the picture may either signify a deep horizon or the end of the reflective surface, although neither of these two assumptions is thoroughly convincing. One may try to imagine a real landscape looking like this, for example, a field of ice, slippery as glass, located on the brink of a precipice. Just like the text, the picture is ambiguous and since it cannot be definitely stated what is represented by it, the effect is one of confusion. The surrealistic picture itself is internally characterized by unconnected segments, and, moreover, its single aspects cannot be definitely linked with corresponding descriptive elements in the text. However, as a whole, the etching is suggestive of several keynotes struck in the narrator's account.¹⁶⁰

Fig. 185 "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher": Luigi Malipiero (c. 1927).
Collection of the author.

Fig. 186 "La Chute de la Maison Usher": Alexandre Alexeïeff (1929).

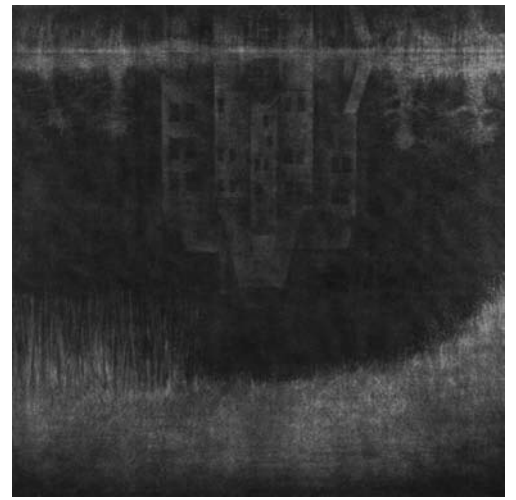
Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.



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Besides depicting a dead landscape, it visualizes a sense of depression and dreariness; it takes account of the mirror-motif and the mirror-like structure of the story, and it is suggestive of the threshold-motif which not only appears in “The Fall of the House of Usher”, but also in so many of his other works. The wall of fog in the background recalls Poe’s frequent use of veils of all sorts to signify the borderline between two different spheres.

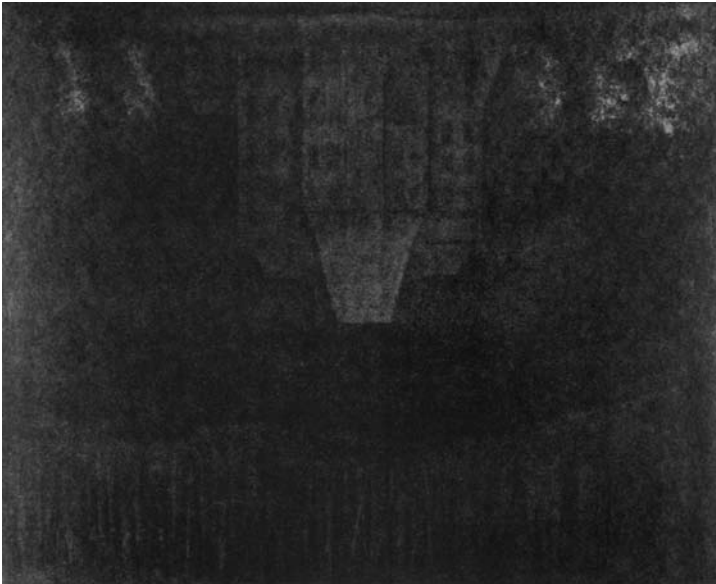
ALEXEÏEFF’S second picture partly penetrates the foggy veil, and the reader/viewer is confronted with the house of Usher (fig. 187). But the building is merely a reflection in the mirror-like surface already depicted in the first illustration. Above the reflecting surface there is nothing but a twisted tree, the form of which becomes the zig-zag fissure in the mirrored facade of the building. Although there is a faint impression of spatial depth, the confines of space cannot be determined unequivocally. In addition to the reflection of the house which lacks a corresponding object, and its topsy-turvy appearance, the lack of spatial fixity adds to the disorienting effect. One is almost enticed to turn the picture around, in order to come to terms with the confusing image, that is to apply the strategy of the narrator, attempting to find relief in the contemplation of the house of Usher, when he turns his gaze towards its reflection. Characteristically, the whole scene is surrounded by fog, illuminated by a pale moon in the far distance, so that the image is dis-

Fig. 187 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”: Alexandre Alexeïeff (1929).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

Figs. 188+189 “Der Untergang des Hauses Usher”: Axel Arndt (1988).

Collection of the author.



played within an inner frame, which suggests a dreamy atmosphere. A general point of correspondence between Poe’s story and ALEXEÏEFF’s etchings is that both convey a sense of depression and unreality. Says the narrator:

[A]bout the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity – an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn – a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued. (399f)

The surrealism of the pictures suggests that the narrator’s impressions of the house are not real. In the picture, there is no house, but merely a reflection, which can be understood as a mental image of a building. Thus, the illustrations stimulate the interpretation of the narrator’s experience as a nightmare, as an opium-engendered hallucination or as the phantasmagoria of a deranged mind which has lost contact to reality. The “out of space” character of the location of the mansion, stressed in the text by adjectives and adverbs such as “peculiar” and “singularly”, is graphically transformed by the negations of the laws of perspective.

The first illustrations of Axel ARNDT create a similar effect, but the pictures of the German artist are more open to divergent interpretations of the story’s opening scene. ARNDT produced four illustrations for the first paragraph (figg. 188–191). The first picture shows a frontal view of the building and its reflection in the tarn, located in some distance from the viewer’s standpoint (fig. 188). The illustration is characterized by a symmetrical composition, which divides the picture in two identical vertical halves. These parts have their counterparts in two corresponding horizontal halves below the horizon, which runs through the arithmetical center of the illustration. Thus the picture’s composition visually transforms the mirror-motif of the story, as well as it pays tribute to the symmetrical structure of the text, which is divided into two parts of equal length by the inserted poem “The Haunted Palace”. The leaden hues of ARNDT’s chalk drawing refer to the textual statements about a “dull, dark, and soundless day”, and they convey a sense of “insufferable gloom” (M 2: 397) felt by the narrator when he looks at the building before him.

Figg. 190+191 “Der Untergang des Hauses Usher”: Axel Arndt (1988).
Collection of the author.

True to the narrator's account, the house is located in a dead landscape. Following the narrative chronology, the second picture focuses on the reflection only (fig. 189). The change of perspective from the first to the second drawing parallels the narrator's eye movement, so that the beholder's point of view is identical with that of the narrator. This strategy of visual empathy is further pursued in the third picture (fig. 190), which also depicts the mirror image. But it seems as if the focus is zooming away from the reflection, suggesting both a backward movement caused by recoil and the narrator's attempt to alleviate the impression by a change of position. The alteration of the standpoint can either be understood as a movement in space or as a mental shift. Emotionally distraught as he is, the narrator steps back in order to reflect more sober-mindedly about the image. With some interpretative latitude the text even allows the reading that the mirror-image does not exist at all, but that the reflection is of a purely mental kind. The narrator does not move to the brink of the precipice before he "*reflected*, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression" (M 2: 398; italics mine).

This statement is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the reader's hermeneutic activity is similar to the narrator's shift of perspective. While inspecting the building once more, he mentions the "inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts" (M 2: 400). Being aware of the incoherence and illogicality of his first reaction, the narrator is eager to detect a consistent pattern behind the seemingly incoherent aspects in order to make sense out of the scene before him. Alongside with him, the reader is forced into an alternate position to reflect about what he has imagined a few moments before, a process that can be compared to Iser's "wandering viewpoint" (see chapter 2; cf. Hustis 13).

Secondly, the narrator's remarks can be understood in analogy to the approach of this study. The narrator seeks to rearrange the given details before his eyes, in order to arrive at a new understanding of the scene as a whole. The comparative analysis of text and illustrations, as employed in this study, does the same, namely rearranging textual and pictorial aspects, which are inconsistent parts within an aesthetic superstructure. In the theoretical part of this study it was pointed out that text and illustration can be imagined as two mutually elucidating planes of projection. Symptomatically, the narrator reflects about "the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up". Just like the house and its mirror-image, the one can be better understood through the analysis of the reflection in the other medium. The transport of meaning is not a one-way affair, in that the picture is semanticized by the story, since the illustration can as well modify the comprehension of the text.

Thirdly, the statement is representative of the pictorial character of Poe's writings. It shows that interpreting Poe's works requires the analysis of the specific visual properties of his texts. Without conflating the narrator with the author, one can assume, that many of Poe's stories can be regarded as pictures, and single scenes and settings as details within larger pictures. Poe's frequent use of words relating to "picturesqueness" (see 3.1) and visual perception in his fictional and in his critical writings, is another evidence for this assumption.¹⁶¹

It is worthwhile to compare the following statement of the narrator with Poe's aesthetic credo about indefinitiveness in his "Letter to Mr.—", quoted earlier in this study:

What was it [...] that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble, nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. (398)

The indefinite sensations created by poetry, yielding an undefinable delight, mentioned in the "Letter to Mr.—", have given way to an unnerving "mystery all insoluble", and to "shadowy fancies" which cause "insufferable gloom". This is the result of a change of perspective that occurred in Poe's works when the author transported the imagery of his poetry into his prose works. The vision of eternal happiness, necessarily indefinite because of its transcendental and unimaginable character, has turned into horror. In his first essay, Poe defined that poetry and prose are distinct because they evoke different types of images: "romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations". Poe thought this very difference to be one of the two reasons why poetry was superior to prose. I have shown that Poe had experienced problems when converting the indefinitiveness of his poetry into his prose works. Finally, Poe succeeded, but while the indefinite character of the images remained, the images themselves had changed. The "indefinite sensations" overwhelming the narrator in sight of the house of Usher are caused by the indefinite appearance of the building. It is neither wholly a house nor a face. In Poe's text, two disparate images are overlaid like transparent foils, so that the perception of one image partly obscures the other without covering it completely.

Just before the final catastrophe, Roderick enters the narrator's bedchamber. Holding a lamp he approaches the window, thus visually recalling Helen in the niche, but then he shades the light source and calls the narrator's attention to the immediate surroundings of the house:

But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion. (412)

The house is enveiled in low clouds and vapors, so that the building and its inhabitants are shut off from the outside world in two ways. Characteristically, there is "no glimpse of the moon or stars" (412), so that even the visual contact with the ethereal lights is disrupted. Instead of a gleaming star and Helen's brilliant lamp, both of which served as guiding lights for Poe's early protagonists, now there is nothing but a shaded lantern and a feeble unnatural glow, which foreshadows, like the "unruffled lustre" of the tarn at the beginning of the story, the catastrophe to come. The view out of the house renders a nebulous optical spectacle of insubstantial oscillating forms. Likewise, the house itself, viewed from the outside, is faintly discernible, only scarcely illuminated by the unnatural lustre glowing from within the animated fog, which covers the house like a semi-transparent shroud. In this image of the house Poe combined several aspects. The house is a dead end with no way out, an obscure place at once isolated from and

beleaguered by its environments. The building can neither be viewed distinctly from the outside, nor do the conditions within allow for orientation inside it.

The house of Usher is vague in all aspects. It is a prime example of Poe's multifarious aesthetic concept of visual indefinitiveness. Poe's images are equivocal because of their vacillating or insubstantial nature like that of animated fog, the gleaming stars, or the unnatural glow emanating from the lustrous tarn. But visual indefinitiveness is also generated by Poe's narrative technique. Even his most lengthy descriptions remain sketchy, because they are selective in that they focus on the most prominent features only, so that indefinitiveness results from a lack of completeness. But besides incompleteness, Poe's images are often characterized by incoherence because, as is the case with the description of the house of Usher, two hardly compatible images are interwoven rhetorically, although a concrete visual fusion of the same elements is difficult to imagine. The portrait of Ligeia is another case in point that Poe's images remain ambiguous despite detailed descriptions. Here, Poe combines several elements from different origins, and the result is a highly eclectic assemblage of facial features, which do not fit together. If the reader takes Poe's descriptions literally, he must conclude that Ligeia is anything but beautiful. Poe's method is like the use of a chemistry box. He compiled several elements, everyone for itself presented meticulously, but the final fusion is left open to the reader's imagination, and thus the outcome of the experiment is not definitely foreseeable.¹⁶²

But the indefinitiveness of Poe's images is not only due to their nature or origin, or to the nature of the single aspects of these images. One more reason for pictorial vagueness is that visual impressions are mostly conveyed by narrators whose senses of vision are impaired. Poe's texts usually offer more than one reason for this fact: mental disturbance, extreme emotional agitation, use of drugs, consumption of alcohol, enfeebled memory, poor lighting conditions, dazzlingly intense lights, obstructed view, and objects enveiled in mist. One of these causes would suffice to explain for the indefinite character of Poe's images, but the reader can also accept them cumulatively. Thus, the first paragraph of Usher contains several hints that intimate why the visual confrontation with the building has such a strong impact on the narrator: He approaches the mansion in the twilight of a gloomy day, he is tired from the journey, he is half-dreaming, he suffers from depression, he is addicted to opium, he is an imaginative and sensitive fellow in a poetic mood, or he is a neurotically brooding man who has to reflect about anything that comes his way.

To define Poe's notion of indefinitiveness exclusively as one of meaning is too limited. The ambivalence of meaning is only the result of multiple effects of indefinitiveness. Moreover, Poe does not only employ this effect in his poetry, as his essays "Letter to Mr.—" and "The Poetic Principle", as well as some reviews of other authors' verses have induced some critics to think. Indefinitiveness cannot be solely evoked by musicalness in poetry, but it is also brought about by the ambiguous images presented in his prose works. As it is, the word "indefinitiveness" is somewhat misleading, since it connotes indecision, indifference, arbitrariness and obscurity of meaning. Expanding the term implies infinitude, openness, sugges-

tiveness and multiplicity of meanings. This polysemy is visually encoded in Poe's works. Indefinite, that is polysemic, images, the communication of vague visual impressions, allusions to eye-sight, and metaphors with visual references are located at key positions in Poe's texts.

Thompson argued that the narrator would have to see his own face reflected in the tarn ("Paradox" 320), but there is no evidence for this assumption in the text. His hypothesis led the Thompson to the conclusion that the narrator did not see his reflection because it was overshadowed by the face-like mirror-image of the house. Thus the house would not only resemble just some anonymous face, but the face of the narrator. Thompson surmised that the narrator's entrance into the house of Usher is a turn inwards, an exploration of the self.¹⁶³ Although Thompson's starting point is dubitable, his theory is supported by the overall mirror imagery of the story.

Axel ARNDT's fourth picture (fig. 191) which concludes the series of illustrations for the story's opening scene, alludes to the story's prominent eye imagery. If one looks at ARNDT's picture with half-closed eyes, as Poe once recommended in his *Marginalia* to penetrate the superficial appearance of things (see P 2: 385), it turns into the image of an eye staring at the beholder. The effect is even heightened when one turns the picture around. The narrator expressly points out to "eye-like windows". Eyes have been counted as windows of the soul since time out of mind. But the windows of the house of Usher are not only designated "eye-like" because they resemble human ocular organs, but also because the homophony of "eye" and "I" suggests that they are windows of one's own self. It has been shown that ARNDT's pictures move the reader into the spatial position of the narrator so that this empathy is supported visually. Consequently, the reader can approach the story, where the narrator/reader is confronted with the dark side of the human psyche, as an exploration of his/her own self. At this point, at latest, it must be recalled that the interpretation of illustrated texts is a constellation consisting of three communication partners: text, picture and reader. An interpretation like the one suggested above helps to explain why Wolfgang Iser elaborated his theory into the field of anthropology: the process of interpretation does not only make the reader learn something about texts (and/or pictures), but also about himself/herself.¹⁶⁴

At this point, we have entered the wide field of unlimited semiosis, but there is some evidence in "The Fall of the House of Usher" and in other Poe texts allowing for such readings. This interpretation is the conclusion to which the analysis of the development of Poe's imagery finally leads. The metamorphosis of the stars into the eyes of a beautiful woman was accomplished in "Ligeia". Ligeia's eyes are metaphorized as planets, the former symbol of transcendental beauty, but they are also said to be "unfathomable" and to be "profound wells". The gaze into deep eyes is taken up in "The Fall of the House of Usher", but here, no bliss is to be expected, and thus Poe's early vision of happiness has turned into the very opposite. The exploration of the "I" is a confrontation with the horror of the soul mentioned in the prologue of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. In Poe's so-called Gothic stories, the quest for indefinite beauty has taken a different course than in his early poems. The gaze of Poe's protagonists is no longer turned towards the gleaming

stars in the heavens or towards splendidly beautiful women, but downward and inward into the darkness, into the depths of unfathomable abysses, lurid tarns, or “vacant and eye-like windows”. The “divine light” shines from within dark recesses, profound wells and unfathomable eyes. Sometimes, it is a mere glow, a light engulfed by darkness. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” it appears as the “unruffled lustre” (M 2: 398) of a black pool, as a “sulphureous lustre” (405), and, in Roderick’s painting, as the shining light enclosed in an inaccessible subterranean vault (cf. 405f). This reorientation is visualized in “The Fall of the House of Usher”. If the reader becomes aware of the extended metaphor between house and face, he observes that the journey not only leads from the outside into the house, but also into a head, into a mind.

There are many paths that lead into the house of Usher, and illustrations for the opening scene can be regarded as signposts, indicating the routes to be taken. Once ushered into the building, by the one or the other way, the reader will evaluate what is going on inside according to the point of view he has adopted outside.

One aspect of the text has been largely neglected by illustrators. The downward journey of the narrator was rarely visualized, so that the story’s theme of the exploration of a mysterious dark depth is only seldom introduced in the illustrations for the opening scene. The narrator says that he gazed down from the brink of a precipice, which implies that he looks at the house of Usher from an elevated point of view. Jacques WÉLY is one of the very few artists who depicted the building from such a perspective, and Albert DUBOUT even chose to present the building, literally, from a bird’s-eye view (fig. 177). But usually, illustrators presented the house of Usher at one level with the viewer’s eyes, and there are also some pictures which show the building from a worm’s-eye view or as completely towering over their surroundings.

From the brink of the abyss, the causeway to the house of Usher leads downward, just as the mysterious ship in “MS. Found in a Bottle” is going down into the whirling chasm at the Pole. This movement is continued as soon as the narrator finds himself inside the building. After his entrance he is ushered, “through many dark and intricate passages” (400), into the landlord’s studio.

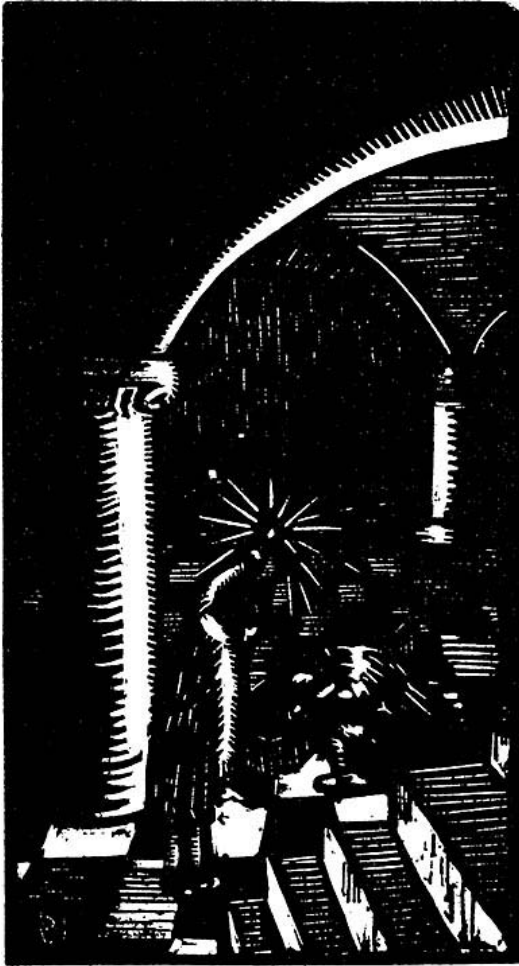
The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. (401)

The narrator enters a world of shadows, where physical orientation and visual perception is heavily impaired. Just like so many other of Poe’s protagonists, the narrator steps into a world which is irreconcilable with everyday life. The windows are like apertures in a prison wall furnished with bars, so that Usher’s studio is metaphorized as a huge cage. But the room is no ordinary barred enclosure, since the outer limits are swallowed by the darkness: Usher’s studio is another place “out of space”, just like Egæus’ library, and the abodes in “Morella” and “Ligeia”. The only point of orientation are the trellised windows in vast height, through which

some feeble rays of reddish light are falling into the room, so that only a few objects are discernible as vague forms. The scene is characterized by “an air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom [which] hung over and pervaded all”. The place is shut off from the outer world, an inner seclusion, from which the only discernible outlets are “altogether inaccessible from within”. The dark draperies recall the wall hangings in “Shadow” and “Ligeia”, and here, too, they are to signify the borderline between two worlds.¹⁶⁵ The narrator has passed through the veil that divides the known world from another beyond. But the narrator’s descending movement has not yet come to an end. It leads still farther downward and inward, into the tomb of Madeline, which is “small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth” (410) below the narrator’s bedchamber. In psychological terms, the narrator ventures forth into his subconscious, into “the dark recesses of his soul” (M 2: 235; P 1: 80).

Like the motif of the underground journey, which can be understood as the exploration of the self, Poe’s combination of his poetics of space and his light imagery has largely remained unillustrated. The motif of light engulfed in darkness pervades many of Poe’s works, from his earliest poems to his last efforts in prose. In “Evening Star” the light of the planet Venus, gleaming brightly in the night, is a visual symbol of ethereal happiness. But already in this early poem the ambiguous symbolism of Poe’s light imagery becomes apparent, when the lyrical I turns away from the light of the cold moon, which does not promise heavenly bliss, although it looks similar to that of the evening star superficially. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” the positive aspects in Poe’s light imagery have completely vanished. The vision of happiness has turned into a vision of darkness. The narrator approaches the house at the end of “a dull, dark, and soundless day [...] as the shades of the evening drew on” (397). The darkness becomes more intense the longer the narrator remains in the house of Usher. That little light from the outside which illuminates the obscurity within is refracted by the trellised panes of the Gothic windows, which are as unreachable as the gleaming stars in Poe’s early poetry. The “out of space” character of the studio, the lack of fixed boundaries, also suggest the infinity of the cosmos. The crimson light falling into the studio visually announces the ghastly red moon which finally rises over the collapsing house of Usher, as well as the bloody Madeline returning from the copper-covered vault.¹⁶⁶

The motif of light engulfed in darkness is also visualized in one of Daniel WAPLER’s woodcuts (1922; fig. 192). WAPLER depicted a man inside a dark crypt, standing at the foot of a stairway, which signifies his downward passage, so that the picture pays tribute to the underground journey of Poe’s narrator. The figure holds a faint light which sparsely illuminates his surroundings: two pillars supporting a groined vault of vast proportions, the flight of steps and something lying or moving before him on a black and white chequered floor. WAPLER’s picture might illustrate the burial of Madeline, but it is impossible to decide what exactly catches the attention of the staring figure. The depiction of the Gothic crypt, the overall obscurity of the picture, and the ambiguity of the graphic presentation, visually transform some crucial aspects of the story as well as Poe’s narrative technique. Just like the text, the picture suggests that something is going on that the



narrator, as well as the reader/viewer, does not fully comprehend. The narrator, and with him the reader/viewer, is once again confronted with a “mystery all insoluble”, “shadowy fancies” and “insufferable gloom”, the very same sensations which struck the rider when he was approaching the building. But though the illustration corresponds with Poe’s story on several levels, it is not semanticized by the text. It creates a mystery of its own and thus challenges the curiosity of the reader/viewer to identify the indiscernible something in the compositional center of the picture. The exploration of the darkness in the picture parallels the reader’s search for meaning in Poe’s text. Since the connection of the picture with the burial or any other specific scene in the story is not satisfactory, the reader’s/viewer’s hermeneutic activity will result in more general conclusions. Thus the illustration achieves to raise the awareness for the motifs above mentioned: Poe’s narrator has descended into an obscure depth, into a world of shadows far away from the gleaming stars promising ethereal bliss. His senses, and especially his vision, are no longer of use. At the end of his quest, which began as a search for brilliant beauty in outer space, he is confronted with an incomprehensible something in the darkness inside. The narrator has followed the wrong track. It has lead him into a dead end. The quest turns into a headlong escape, as the illustration of Gus BOFA (1941) shows.

Fig. 192 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”: Daniel Wapler (1922).

Courtesy of the John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.

Fig. 193 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”: Gus Bofa (1941).

Collection of the author.

BOFA's picture, used as a frontispiece facing the story's title, can be understood as an illustration of the narrator's flight from the building, but like WAPLER's woodcut it also illustrates a general aspect of Poe's works (fig. 193). In his search for the allegedly divine light, the narrator has ventured too far into the darkness, finally recognizing that he has been hunting an *ignis fatuus*. But it is not only the false lights, the futility of their quests, which cause Poe's narrators to end in despair. In BOFA's picture, the end of the long and obscure corridor is faintly illuminated by a dim light, the source of which is an indiscernible something behind the threshold of a door. As soon as the divine mystery is solved, as soon as the nature of the light becomes apparent, a shock of recognition occurs, which makes Poe's figures turn around and run away.

Roderick's painting is another example for the motif:

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour. (405f)

Here we have the strangest of all spaces and lights in Poe's works: the ultimate image of light enclosed in darkness. It is characteristic for the pictorial character of Poe's works, that the idea is delivered by means of *ekphrasis*. Words are used to make the reader imagine a graphic picture, which is embedded as a fictional object in the middle of a literary text. Usher's painting is circumscribed by words just as the light in the painting is enclosed inside the vault.¹⁶⁷ Before the narrator describes the painting, he refers to his reading sessions with Usher and to Roderick's "wild improvisations of his *speaking guitar*" (404, italics mine). Immediately after the description follows Usher's recital of "The Haunted Palace", so that the painting is encompassed by verbal and musical expressions on yet another level. Roderick's painting has been usually understood as foreshadowing Madeline's tomb, but it is also significant on a contextual level, because it highlights a central issue in Poe's aesthetics. About Usher's other canvases the narrator remarks:

An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. [...]. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; – from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. [...] If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher.

The narrator is unable to describe Roderick's paintings by means of written words, although the images are vivid in his memory. The pictures' character of vagueness, that is indefinitiveness, render them inexplicable. As a result, the paintings remain undescribed for the reader as long as he/she is depending on the narrator's report. Here, Poe made use of one of his favourite devices, that is to leave a sharply outlined void in the text where the reader expects a minute description in order to satisfy his curiosity about what is suggested to be so exceptional. But the text does



not deliver any hint except for the remark that the pictures are phantasmagoric, vague and abstract. The protagonist's evaluation of the paintings as visualizations of ideas once more recalls Poe's "Letter to Mr.—" and one of his *Marginalia* (see P 2: 257ff), in that it shows the narrator's/author's awareness for the limits of the power of words. But it is not only the visualization of the idea which eludes concretization, but the idea itself which defies verbal expression.

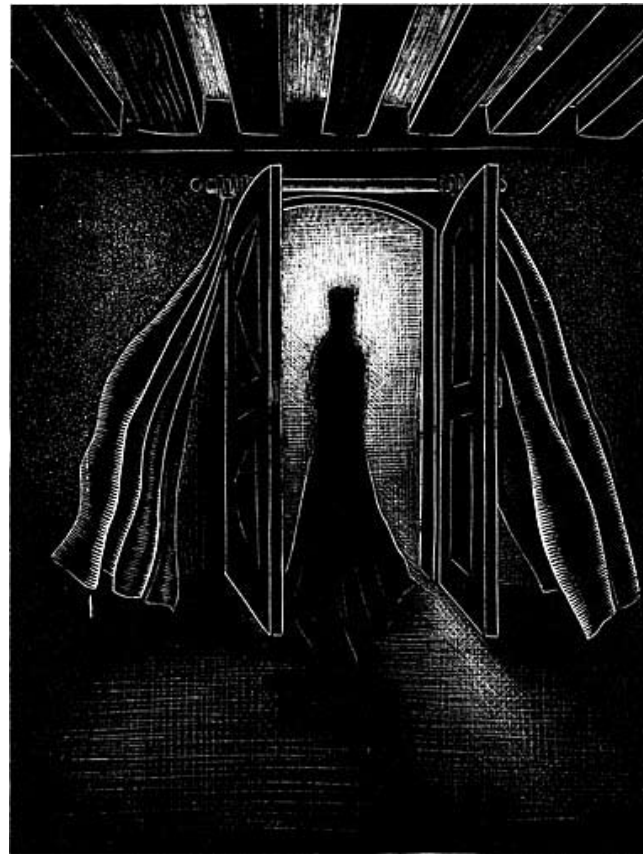
Most artists felt much more inclined to depict the outside than the inside of the house of Usher. Poe's descriptions of the interior of the house of Usher were mostly ignored by illustrators, so that the studio was usually depicted as a chamber in various states of disorder (LECHANTRE 1945, BOFA 1941), or even as a quite normal salon (AZÉNOR). Though the comic book artists Martin SALVADOR (1975), Miguel GÓMEZ ESTEBAN (1970), Tom SUTTON (1977) and Richard CORBEN (1975) paid attention to the interior of the house, their depictions of the chambers are devoid of interpretative insights, being mere background drawings providing the action with an ample, that is, Gothic location. However, among the picture book adaptations the images of Alexis THOMAS (1968) must be considered as exceptions. The seventh page shows the narrator following the servant and his low candelight through a long passage that resembles a pharynx (fig. 194). In one of COMBET-DESCOMBES' rare illustrations (1919) for the interior of the house, there is an illuminated spot right behind the archway of a dark gangway. Some unidentifiable dark spots in the corridor make this part of the picture resemble a skull (cf. fig. 171). The whole illustration can also be interpreted as a very sketchy portrait, since it looks like a blurred vision of his representation of Madeline. COMBET-DESCOMBES' picture blends the author's imagery of light and his poetics of space, and it also pays tribute to the crucial role of female characters in Poe's works. This illustration makes the reader/viewer aware that these aspects are somehow con-

Fig. 194 "La Chute de la Maison Usher": Alexis Thomas (1968).
Collection of the author.

nected with each other. The portrait of a female as a skull, rendered indefinite by the very sketchy execution, recalls Poe's story "The Oval Portrait" (1843) and its prominent theme of life-in-death and death-in-life.¹⁶⁸

COMBET-DESCOMBES frequent depiction of Madeline suggests that the mystery has to do with the Lady Usher and her burial. Madeline differs from Helen, the Marchesa Aphrodite, Berenice, Morella and Ligeia, in that she does not figure as prominently as Poe's other females. Only once does she silently pass through her brother's studio, like a spectre, before she is laid to rest in the tomb. It is here, in the depth of the vault, where the narrator first becomes aware of the striking resemblances between Roderick and his sister. It is not before the finale of the story that Madeline becomes active herself. It is as if the character of Madeline is hidden away and silently disposed of until the very end of the story. One crucial question is whether Roderick buried his cataleptic sister alive deliberately. He might have entombed her unknowingly, but why did he not help his sister when he hears her moving inside the coffin? A mystery surrounds the figure of Madeline, and Roderick is eager to suppress it. D. H. Lawrence and other critics have proposed an incestuous relationship between the twins, and Lyle Kendall and J. O. Bailey suggested that Madeline is a vampire. In the story, there is certainly more and more convincing evidence for the first of these hypotheses, because there are numerous occurrences of the noun "oppression" and derivative forms. The mention of an incubus (411) and the reference to FUSELI's canvases (405) - Poe probably had in mind the artist's most famous painting *The Nightmare* (1781) - can be interpreted as hints of suppressed sexual desire. But why should Roderick sleep with his sister or even rape her? Here, the comparison of Madeline with Poe's other female characters is helpful. The love between Poe's protagonists and their partners always results in disaster: the woman dies, the man, if he survives, becomes insane. The women in Poe's tales are personifications of a breathtaking ethereal beauty, and Poe's male protagonists are eager to get hold of this quality by means of wedlock. But once the partners are joined in marriage (or are about to do so as in "Berenice"), something strange happens: the man is estranged from his wife. Through her erudition Morella has a superior intellectual power, which frightens her husband. He cannot control her, and that is why he wants to get rid of her. Likewise, Roderick possibly disposes of Madeline in the tomb, because his sister frightens him, or because he wants to hide his guilt. The allure of beauty has faded away, the undefinable delight has become all too concrete, and, as is stated in "Morella": "[J]oy suddenly faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous" (M 2: 230). Poe's male protagonists do not find the happiness they have expected. Poe wrote in his "Letter to Mr.—": "[Y]et it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; if so, the end of every separate part of our existence - every thing connected with our existence should be still happiness" (H 7: xxxviii).

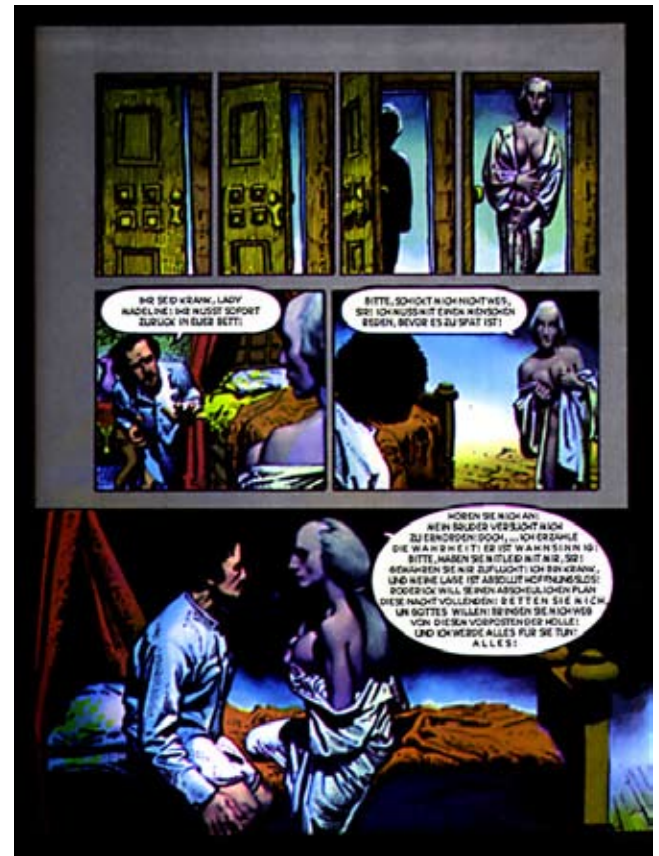
But Poe's women are not so easily disposed of. Because they are, in a way, supernatural beings, they have the power to take revenge from beyond the grave. In "The Fall of the House of Usher", Madeline returns to kill Roderick. When Madeline crosses the threshold of the bedchamber (the choice of location makes the incest theory even more plausible), she has already taken all the long way back from the



vault through the “dark and intricate passages”, which Poe’s protagonists have to pass through in order to reach the end of their quest.¹⁶⁹

Two of Ram RISCHMANN’s wood engravings (1947) visualize the motif of the threshold, which marks the borderline between two opposing worlds in Poe’s works. RISCHMANN’s series of eight pictures for the story is remarkable because he devoted two pictures to Madeline, who has been neglected by most of the text’s illustrators. Because of her large eyes Madeline’s face is reminiscent of the description of Ligeia in the first of these pictures (fig. 195). Madeline is thus visually aligned with Poe’s other females, which is notable, because Roderick’s sister is rarely discussed in comparison to Ligeia, Morella or Berenice in critical studies. As if observing someone, she quietly looks through a half-opened door, which is decorated with a pair of curtains. In the second illustration, which depicts Madeline’s entry into the bedchamber, the two symbols of the borderline reappear. The door and the curtains are now thrust open. Madeline turns up as a silhouette, because she is stepping forward from a gleaming light behind her back into the dark chamber. Her contour is not outlined sharply, so that she appears as an indefinite figure, an effect which is further enhanced by the want of any physiognomical detail (fig. 196). Harry CLARKE (1919) also shows Madeline stepping from an illuminated background into a dark room, but here the depicted space is devoid of any particulars and the figure of Lady is elaborated with much attention to detail. Both these pictures of the final scene recall Poe’s ambiguous light imagery and the motif of the threshold. The light is a symbol for something supernatural, but the figure which protrudes out of it brings madness and death.

Figg. 195+196 “La Chute de la Maison Usher”:
 Ram Rischmann (1947).
 Courtesy of the John Hay Library,
 Brown University, Providence, RI.



Like RISMANN in his last picture, the comic book artist Richard CORBEN focussed on the indefinite appearance of the Lady Madeline, but his frames also visually stress the implied theme of sexual desire. Madeline enters the bedchamber of the narrator, who looks like Poe, and seduces him. The next morning, he learns about her death, but the memory of the naked Madeline keeps haunting his dreams. It must be noted that Madeline’s tomb lies “immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my [the narrator’s] own sleeping apartment” (410), and immediately before Usher enters his bedchamber, he says that “there sat upon my very heart an incubus” (411). CORBEN depicts Madeline as an androgynous figure, paying tribute to Poe’s peculiar notion of ethereal beauty paired with strangeness (figg. 197+198). The use of purple hues for the Lady’s skin and the application of a soft blurring effect in the presentation of her figure makes her resemble a spectre rather than a woman of flesh and blood.¹⁷⁰ In his adaptation CORBEN fuses several interpretations, which evince, just like his frames for “The Oval Portrait”, the artist’s introspection into Poe’s story and his aesthetics. Besides the circumstance that the use of garish colors not only parallels Poe’s overdone style but also his aesthetics of kitsch, his frames are full of visual hints to Poe’s other works, too.

Likewise, Alexandre ALEXEÏEFF’s final picture is suggestive of Poe’s works on several levels. The etching shows a dark human figure lying unnaturally flat in a small pool on a cobble stone pavement (fig.199). Next to the figure is an object which resembles the torn hood of a knight from the times of Sir Launcelot. The right hand clutches the reflection of the moon in the puddle, in which some pointed roofs are mirrored. A zigzag line, suggesting the fissure in the facade of

Figg. 197+198 “The Fall of the House of Usher”: Richard Corben (1975).
Collection of the author.



Fig. 199 "La Chute de la Maison Usher": Alexandre Alexeïeff (1929).

Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.

the building, runs through the pool and below or through the collapsed man. The head, resting on the left hand, which is not as dark as the other parts of the body, seems to be about to dissolve into a small sparkling cloud. Like WAPLER's woodcut, ALEXEÏEFF's etching corresponds with Poe's text on different levels, as well as it directs the reader's/viewer's attention towards a cluster of meanings, which cannot be read out of the story exclusively. The illustration visualizes the connection between Poe's light imagery and the breakdown that marks the end of the house of Usher. The figure's desperate grasp for a mere reflection suggests the futility of the quest for the divine mystery, which is symbolized by the light of the star. Thus, the figure recalls Helen holding the agate lamp. But whereas in the poem the gleaming light represents inspiration and guidance, it must be understood as an *ignis fatuus* in ALEXEÏEFF's illustration. The hunt has gone in the wrong direction, not towards spiritual enlightenment but towards lunacy. At the end of the mad trist there is nothing but nothingness, a mental chimera without substance, and the breakdown of psyche.

Gottfried HELNWEIN's illustration (fig. 200), showing the collapsing building, interprets the fall of the house of Usher in similar terms. Neither does the house resemble a face, nor is one of the protagonists shown in the picture, but on the roof there is a statue of a woman in antique clothing, with one arm raised to hold a lamp. This is Helen falling from the top of the house of Usher. The downfall of Helen, Poe's first personification of ethereal beauty, visually marks the mental breakdown. Psyche sinks into the depths of the lurid tarn, the journey into the



Fig. 200 "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher": Gottfried Helnwein (1979). Collection of the author.

mysterious Holy-Land ends in (self-)destruction and annihilation. Such contextual interpretations demonstrate that many elements in Poe's works are repetitive. Poe recycled his ideas without always refreshing them. Poe's aesthetics, as well as his method of composition, can be imagined as a series of puzzles with interchangeable elements. "The Fall of the House of Usher" is certainly the biggest puzzle in the collection of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. In the story Poe's earlier material is arranged in a new way, but the puzzle has many gaps, and it is the reader's choice how to complete it.

Interpreting texts and illustrations as parts of an overall puzzle does not mean to semantize them from the position of the text. There is a continual exchange of aspectual interpretations which are amalgamated in a reading which is neither wholly brought about by the texts nor by the pictures. The outcome of the interpretation of the pictures is reflected back into the text, and subsequently, the reader becomes aware of subtle textual aspects. The seeming inconsistencies between the narrator's account and accompanying illustrations challenge the reader to reevaluate the text, and to look for passages which might legitimate the graphic approach. But even if the text does not yield explanations for the incongruent aspects in the pictures, the reader's comprehension of the text must be supposed to be modified by the visual storyline supplied by the illustrations. Thus, on the one hand, it is legitimate to say that text illustrations impoverish the reader's comprehension, because they influence his/her awareness in a reductive way. On the other hand, however, illustrations emphasize subtle textual aspects which might have gone unnoticed without the provision of visual hints. Whatever are the advantages or disadvantages caused by the side-by-side of texts and pictures, and whatever the outcome of the reader's hermeneutic activity is, illustrations stimulate an intensified and reflective reading process.

NOTES TO PAGES 1–23

- 1 The first picture that ever accompanied a text written by Poe (the essay “Maelzel’s Chess-Player”) was a small vignette inserted into the columns of *The Southern Literary Messenger* of April 1836 (319, rpt. P 5: 157; cf. Pollin *Images* entry 1117). It is very likely that Poe himself was responsible for the choice of this illustration which he culled from Sir David Brewster’s *Letters on Natural Magic*, one of Poe’s favorite books and the immediate source for his article (cf. P 5: 177–81). The first illustrations ever commissioned for a Poe text were made by F. O. C. DARLEY in 1843. These often reprinted engravings first appeared in the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* of June 21 and 28 (cf. Pollin *Images* entry 1126).
- 2 See Pollin (*Images*) for a descriptive bibliography listing 1600 illustrated editions and articles published all over the world between 1836 and 1988. See also Uchida and the appendix of this study which delivers some additional data.
- 3 For references to Poe illustrations and connections between Poe and visual artists in art-historical and bibliophilistic magazines, monographies and catalogues see Bowe (34–70 *passim*), Conzen-Meairs, Greet, Grieve, Heintzelmann, Hubert, Lorandi, Marchiori (48–81), Pica, Robinson, Roos (61–67), Runden, Strachan and L. Tannenbaum. For studies and reviews from literary critics and Poe scholars containing such references see R. Fisher, Miller, Kopley, Kühnelt, Pollin (“Hoax”, “Art”, “Illustrations”, “Illustrators”, “Writer”, *Images*), Schubert and Symons (q.v. Dameron “Symons”). See also Troubeekoy, Uchida and Müller. By far the greatest attention has been spent on illustrations for “The Raven”, in particular on the works of James CARLING and Stéphane MALLARMÉ.
- 4 Gasson, Haining, Mankowitz and Peithman made use of the great amount of illustrations in their lavishly embellished books. However, pictures were often misattributed and misdated in these editions. Nevertheless, these books disclosed at least a small part of the out-of-sight graphic material.
- 5 Poe’s pictorialism has been even more neglected than the illustrations for his works. Kent Ljungquist (*Grand*, “Picturesque”, “Rambles”) analyzed Poe’s critical catchword “picturesque” several times, but he concentrated on Burke’s aesthetics and landscape gardening, as did Burwick, Furrow, Lueck and Rainwater. For studies referring more or less to Poe’s visual (and verbal) imagery see Basler (*Sex* 177–200), Baym, Bednarowicz, Blanch, Egan, Gottschalk, R. Lawes, Malloy, Ketterer (“Abyss”), Pribek and Reece.
- 6 Critical terms like those quoted in this and the last paragraph are dispersed all over Poe’s reviews and essays. See chapter 3 for more data and exact references.
- 7 The following brief summary is based on Ingarden’s article “Prinzipien einer erkenntniskritischen Betrachtung der ästhetischen Erfahrung”, published in his book *Erlebnis, Kunstwerk und Wert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969): 20–27. The article was first published as early as 1937, but Ingarden maintained these notions until his death in 1970.
- 8 Iser’s notion of the theme-horizon structure is derived from *gestalt* theory, which has largely remained unchallenged by modern neural sciences. According to Eric R. Kandel and Robert H. Wurtz, visual perception is, like the figure-ground model of *gestalt* psychology, a “winner-take-all perceptual strategy”: “[O]nly part of an image can be selected as the focus of attention; the rest becomes, at least momentarily, background.” Despite its development and Iser’s abstract rhetoric, the adoption of this figure-ground dichotomy into a dialectic theme-horizon structure suggests that mental images and visibility are more important in the critic’s model than just being passive, pre-conceptual attending phenomena of the act of ideation (see Kandel, Schwartz, Jessell 494, 505; Iser, *Act* 120ff, 135f). For Iser’s emphasis on images see 186.
- 9 It is, of course, impossible to reconstruct and evaluate historical events objectively and to render something like “factual truths”. Any historical account is not only selective, but also a piece of creative writing subject to interpretation.
- 10 See Kemp (*Text* 62–88) for his own theoretically oriented article about Hogarth’s series of eight etchings, *The Harlot’s Progress*, as well as another fine example of pictorial narrativity in the graphic works of Adolph von MENZEL and Max KLINGER. This latter article was written by Amy Kurlander, Stephan S. Wolohojian and Christopher S. Wood (35–61).
- 11 The wide variety of interpretations, brought about by New Critical, hermeneutical, semiotic, Marxist, feminist and cultural studies demonstrates that there are no such exclusive, universally accepted interpretations of Poe’s texts. In the following chapters, I will turn my attention to the peculiar qualities of Poe’s texts, which defy such reductions. Moreover, in my scepticism about any reductionism I hold it to be impossible to pin down the meaning of a picture as well, of course.
- 12 I quote this often cited passage once again, since it shows the wide historical context in which Poe’s aesthetics as well as Iser’s reader response theory are anchored. As for Iser, see also his reference to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “coherent deformation” (81f).
- 13 To return to Iser’s metaphor of the network, the points are interconnected within the fields and they are also interlaced from field to field. The nature of this hybrid is even more difficult to define when it originates from the interlacement of more than two fields.
- 14 In the case of this study the reader is a male doctorate student in a department of Anglo-American literature, a former student of the Fine Arts with several years of experience as an illustrator, and now a

- freelance designer and a teacher of typography. It will not be surprising, then, that I regard myself as a “visual thinker”. People, who outwit me in conceptual thinking, may regard my choices and my findings as irrelevant and all too fanciful. Furthermore I am male, a fact I cannot escape, and so my arguments are inevitably influenced by my gender. Moreover, it would be naïve to think that I am able to transcend the Western (European) traditions of looking and thinking. It is not an act of eurocentric ignorance that I only casually throw my conditioned gaze on illustrated works from countries outside the Western hemisphere.
- 15 Cf. Peithman 653. Besides the dubious assignation to Poe’s tales, especially to *The Landscape Garden*, the plates are also accredited to the wrong artist. Peter Haining started the tradition of attributing the plates of G.A. PLATT to one C.A. Stoddard, an artist who has remained obscure so far. Anyway, this assignation is wrong, since a separate print of his illustration for “Mellonta Tauta”, which I found in a private collection in Baltimore, clearly shows the name of PLATT directly under the title in the lower right corner of the plate, an area of the picture that was partly cut away in Haining’s book. Peithman, who freely borrowed from other editions, not only duplicated the error, one of the many in his *Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, but also put the name of Stoddard below other illustrations which were produced by PLATT and GIFFORD (dust jacket, 6I, 656). The name of Stoddard probably derives from the name of the editor of the so-called “Amontillado edition”, which was published by Putnam’s in New York in 1884, as a limited edition of 315 copies. Burton Pollin suggested that the set never appeared in its entirety (*Images* item 1186), but I have come across one complete set, though only once in several years of research. The plates of PLATT (often mis-spelt “Plott”), GIFFORD and CHURCH at least partly appeared in editions issued by Armstrong (New York 1884) and as the so-called “Illustrated Sterling edition” by Dana Estes & Co (Boston, undated, but probably of the same year). These latter two sets are not as rare as the Amontillado set, but still hard to find.
 - 16 See Arnheim 46, for a psychological explanation why the righthand part of a picture is visually “heavier” than the left. See also pages 6off and 8off for Arnheim’s notions how frames influence the compositions of pictures.
 - 17 Not all relevant texts are covered by Mabbott and Pollin, so that reference to Harrison’s edition proved to be unavoidable. Due to its numerous reprints Harrison’s edition is still very widespread, especially outside the United States. For this reason I refer, if possible, to the newer editions as primary sources, and to Harrison’s *Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* for texts that were not edited by Mabbott or Pollin. Excerpts from Poe’s letters are taken from Ostrom’s edition of the author’s correspondence. To save space in the running text, the editors are referred to by the first letter of their surname, followed by an arabic number, designating a single volume, and a page number. Accordingly, for example, P 2: 233 refers to page 233 in volume 2 of Burton Pollin’s edition *Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*.
 - 18 See Poe’s first critical contribution to *The Broadway Journal* in March 1845 (P 3: 25f), *Marginalia* Nr. 182 (P 2: 308) and Poe’s letters to Washington Irving, John P. Kennedy, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Fitz-Greene Halleck in June 1841 (O 1: 161–170).
 - 19 Poe’s methods to pretend profound but factually non-existent knowledge of different languages were well documented by Thomas S. Hansen and Burton Pollin in their book *The German Face of Edgar Allan Poe*. See also Pollin (“Greek”), Campbell (“Reading”, “Bible”), Norman, E. Tannenbaum, Barzun and Dameron (“Reading”). For Poe’s use of obscure sources see Burton Pollin’s introductory sections and comments in P 2.
 - 20 This is a superfluous justification. Although Poe was always interested in mechanical innovations and the sciences, he did not crave to be particularly modern in his criticism. Poe relied on a very personal “staff” of much older “authorities” and sources than Blair, Kames and Alison. Among Poe’s favorites are Francis Bacon († 1626), Jacob Friedrich Bielfeld’s *Les premiers traits de l’érudition universelles* (Poe probably used the London edition published in 1770, the author’s year of death) and Dominique Bouhours’ *La manière de bien penser* (first published in Paris, 1687) (see P 2: 6, *passim*). Poe never cared whether their thoughts were modern compared to contemporary standards.
 - 21 Admittedly, these sources must be handled with some care, since both men wrote their reminiscences from a distance of more than fifty years. Private recollections as these, especially when made decades after Poe’s death, tend to combine vaguely remembered facts with myths. They often reveal a retrospective projection of an image of Poe that evolved when he had become a famous writer.
 - 22 The information in this paragraph is culled from Deas 126f and 170, where the pictures are reproduced.
 - 23 In his biography *Israfael: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe* Hervey Allan treats a portrait of Elmira Royster like an authentic pencil sketch. However, an ambiguous note on the picture suggests that the portrait may be nothing but a copy from an original drawing by Poe which is now lost (1: 143ff; the picture is reproduced facing page 144). The title-page of *The Stylus* was once believed to have been drawn by Poe. “Enclosed, you will find a title-page designed by myself about a year ago,” Poe wrote to H. N. Patterson of Oquawaka, Illinois on May 23, 1849 (O 2: 444). Maybe Poe was deliberately ambiguous by using the word “designed” to suggest that not only the general layout but also the drawing were his. It is more

- likely that the drawing of the writing hand was made by DARLEY as early as 1843 (and not in 1848, as Poe's letter to Patterson suggests; see fig. 25), but the text surrounding the picture was very probably written by Poe.
- 24 Thomas Willis White, Poe's first employer, announced *The Southern Literary Messenger* in this way, in a prospectus of May 1834 (see Thomas and Jackson 139).
 - 25 The article in question, printed in *The Broadway Journal* of May 17, 1845 on page 316, was first attributed to Poe by Alterton (84), a decision that was agreed upon by Burton Pollin in 1986 (P 3: 116; cf. P 4: 89f). Pollin points to the unfortunate circumstance that the exact subject of Poe's critique cannot be ascertained because there are only few records of art exhibitions of the day (P 4: 89, 233).
 - 26 It took three months after Poe's first article on TITIAN'S Venus before his next art "criticism" appeared in the columns of *The Broadway Journal*. It is an announcement of a series of articles about the National Gallery at the Rotunda, a building in City Hall Park that was used by the New York Gallery of Fine Arts while Poe was editor of *The Broadway Journal*. However, in the next issues it was not Poe who contributed articles to the series, but Henry C. Watson, the editor in charge of the musical department (see P 4: 177).
 - 27 Unfortunately the whereabouts of the statue are unknown, and so is the artist. Burton Pollin discovered another probable source in the *Weekly Mirror* of July 5, 1845 (P 4: 216f).
 - 28 As is with TITIAN'S Venus and the Ivory Christ, DE CUYPER'S statue seems to have disappeared with no reproductions surviving (see P 4: 226).
 - 29 Poe's "biography" was published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum* of February 25, 1843. Henry B. Hirst signed responsible for the text, but it is very probable that most of it had been dictated by Poe. This Byronic biography contains some invented reports about Poe joining the Greeks in their struggle for freedom against the Turks, a duel in St. Petersburg and travels through Europe before he returned to the States on the night after Mrs. Allan's burial. The biography covered the whole front page of the *Museum* and was accompanied by a portrait of Poe (see Deas 15ff, fig. 5), many laudatory comments about his works by other authors, partly taken from private correspondence, and some poems, which were evidently edited by Poe for this special occasion. The same issue also contained a prospectus of Poe's magazine project *The Stylus*. All this was an act of self-promotion (A. H. Quinn 371ff). As a result of the great demand, Poe's biography was once reprinted, at least, and thus the faked facts about Poe's "eventful life" became widely distributed (Thomas and Jackson 399, 402). Poe's hints at intimate knowledge about the old masters must be seen before this background. Poe's alleged cruise through Europe give his comments about art the semblance of authority, or at least of first-hand experience.
 - 30 See Poe's comment in his review on Leitch Ritchie's *Russia and the Russians*: "This book, as originally published in London, was beautifully gotten up and illustrated with engravings of superior merit, which tended in no little degree to heighten the public interest in behalf" (P 5: 238). See also Poe's review of *The Book of Gems* (P 5: 250).
 - 31 Unfortunately, Poe did not specify why the illustrations he singled out are even better than the others. William HARVEY (1796–1866), a pupil of Thomas BEWICK, was one of the most popular illustrators of his time.
 - 32 One must be careful not to overestimate Poe's favorable review of the book, since his encomium has to be regarded in the light of his diplomatic policy towards the the publishing house Harper. After the Philadelphian publishers Lea and Carey had refused the publication of a collection of his tales, Poe tried to gain the support of the New York house for his plans. Although Poe was able to count on the assistance of T. W. White and James Kirke Paulding, Harper's also declined publication in June 1836 (A. H. Quinn 250ff). In fact, the book was not printed and bound as half as good as Poe wrote in his review. The publication was obviously produced with a limitation of cost in mind. Typographical errors can be found on almost every page. As for the woodcuts, G. S. Layard considered the blocks "very inadequate" (see Pollin, "Relationship" 14).
 - 33 Poe also did not give any reason for his appraisal of the plates in Harper's *Illuminated and Illustrated Shakespeare* (P 3: 232, 346). The pictures had been published before by Charles Knight and Robert Tyas between 1839 and 1842, in an English edition that was also very popular on the continent, especially in Germany (Houfe 387). Among the illustrators are Joseph Kenny MEADOWS (1790–1874) and William HARVEY, the illustrator of Harper's 1835 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*.
 - 34 Apart from different personal taste two other reasons can account for the incommensurability of Poe's and Briggs's commentaries. Poe was always concerned to flatter the big publishing house Harper & Brothers, and two examples of his alleged ulterior motives have already been mentioned. Although Harper's declined the publication of the collection of his tales in 1836, they issued Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* in 1838. Poe's confused letter to Charles Anthon, written in early autumn 1844, indicates that he hoped for another cooperation with the New York publishing house (O 1: 271). Another reason for Poe's favorable reviews of Harper's publications was suggested by Burton Pollin, who points to the publishers' advertisements in *The Broadway Journal*, which brought at least a small revenue for the insolvent magazine ("Treatment" 271).

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- 35 As two examples for Poe's derision of such books see his reviews of William Leete Stone's *Ups and Downs in the Life of a Distressed Gentleman* (P 5: 215) and Laughton Osborn's *Confessions of a Poet* (P 5: 7f).
- 36 One more reason for Poe's predilection for woodcuts and wood engravings becomes apparent between the lines of this letter. Since Poe wanted the illustrations to be set into the text, it was much easier to use replica of pictures on wooden blocks. Thus the pictures could be composed with the type on one printing form, because both were reproduced in relief in one printing process. The combination of text on the same page with pictures taken from steel plates or lithographies, reproduced in *intaglio* or flat-bed printing, could only be achieved with much effort, since a very careful page layout and two printing processes were necessary. In regard to the format of his planned magazine Poe even spoke, in a letter to Charles Anthon early in autumn 1844, of "a large octavo of 128 pp" (O 1: 169).
- 37 Longfellow's *Hyperion*, first published in two volumes in 1839, had been reviewed by Poe in an anything but commendatory manner (H 10: 39f).
- 38 See Poe's letter to Charles Anthon, dating from November 1844: "Its [Graham's] price was \$3 – but not only were its expenses immense owing to the employment of absurd steel plates" (O 1: 270).
- 39 For SARTAIN see A. H. Quinn 330; for Poe see H 11: 222ff; P 3: 59; O 1: 205. For the relationship between SARTAIN and Poe see Tuerk.
- 40 F. DeWolfe Miller (1942) argued that Poe's "The Island of the Fay" was a plate article, but see Burton Pollin's opposing theory of 1972 ("Hoax"). Other plate articles by Poe are "Byron and Mrs. Chaworth", published in the *Columbian Magazine* of December 1844 (P 2: 528–33), and "Stonehenge", published in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* of June 1840 (H 14: 110–13). Moreover, in 1968 Pollin argued that an article entitled "Harper's Ferry" was written by Poe, probably to illustrate the accompanying plate.
- 41 Poe used the term "picturesque" extensively in his *Autography* series, first published in *The Southern Literary Messenger* in 1836 and re-published, with some changes, in 1842 in *Graham's Magazine*. Like his other critical catchwords, Poe used the term in different contexts. Like Poe's notions of the "the beautiful" and "the sublime", his understanding of "the picturesque" is only loosely based on Burke's aesthetics, where it holds a middle position between the two terms first mentioned. Sometimes, Poe employed "picturesque" in its usual sense as a *terminus technicus* for landscape gardening, but in the *Autography* series the word is used to circumscribe a pleasant graphic appearance. The visual qualities of the "picturesque" are "great uniformity [...] with variety in the constituent parts", and "clearness and blackness of a bold wood-cut" (M 2: 273). Poe considered too much uniformity (M 2: 278) or variety (H 15: 226), elaborate ornaments (M 2: 277), irregularity, and a scratchy appearance as the "converse of the picturesque" (H 15: 250f). Poe's remarks about the hand-writings of Fitz Greene-Halleck (M 2: 269) and Albert Pike (H 15: 257f) suggest that Poe thought of the picturesque as a link between the graceful (the beautiful) and the quaint (the grotesque). As yet, Poe's usage of the word "picturesque" has been primarily analyzed in the context of landscape gardening, so that further elucidation of the term is necessary. For studies about Poe and the picturesque see Furrow, Ljungquist (*Grand*, "Picturesque", "Howitt"), Lueck, Rainwater, Ikeda and Burwick.
- 42 See Matthews, Matherly, Porte, Evans, Alsen, McKeithan, Savarese, Mairs, Ringe, Hayne and Thompson ("Politics").
- 43 See Poe's prospectus for the *Penn Magazine*: "To the mechanical execution of the work the greatest intention will be given" (A. H. Quinn 308).
- 44 The quoted passage is just one example for the fact that Poe simplistically used to equal imitation of nature or real life, or the overt incorporation of a moral in a literary work, with the presentation of truth.
- 45 Most likely Poe came across Jan STEEN's works in John Smith's *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, published in London in nine volumes between 1829 and 1842, of which the fourth, dating from 1833, focuses on STEEN.
- 46 A painter with the name van Tuyssel could not be identified. In a private conversation, Burton Pollin suggested that the name was probably inspired by the genealogy of Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and that the name was used as a fill-in for any Dutch or Flemish still-life or genre painter.
- 47 In 1845, DARLEY furnished several illustrations for *The Aristidean*, Thomas Dunn English's short-lived magazine. Two of them were used to embellish Poe's articles. Another connection between DARLEY and Poe is the caricature published in *Holden's Dollar Magazine* of January 1849 where it embellished J. H. Duganne's satirical poem "A Mirror for Authors". Poe, who had obtained the reputation of carrying "a nasty tomahawk as a critic" (*New York Evening Mirror* of October 19, 1844), was depicted as an Indian warrior wielding an axe and a knife (see Deas 133). Poe mentioned DARLEY several times in his reviews, most notably in his review of *The Big Bear of Arkansas, and Other Tales*, published in *The Broadway Journal* of May 24, 1845: "The designs by Darley (who has genius of a high order) are good, of course, but not so good as we expect to see from him" (P 3: 128). DARLEY was also one of the first illustrators of the "The Raven" (1858).

- The *Public Ledger* was issued by A. H. Simmons & Co., who also were the editors of the *Dollar Newspaper*, the paper that published “The Gold-Bug” four times between June 21 and July 14. For the extra sheets, Poe’s story was coupled with “The Banker’s Daughter” by N. P. Willis. It must have been a great satisfaction for Poe that the story of such an acclaimed author as Willis was considered inferior to his own, since “The Gold-Bug” was undoubtedly the main attraction of this double feature. Willis’ tale was not illustrated and it was hardly noticed at all. Copies of “The Gold-Bug” were sold for ¢3, and in order to maximize profits the story was serialized in two instalments (Thomas and Jackson 417ff). Obviously, the owners of the *Public Ledger* understood the marketing of literature much better than Poe. Although A. H. Simmons & Co. had registered Poe’s story for copyright (M 3: 804), “The Gold-Bug” was frequently pirated by American magazines within a few weeks after its first publication. Despite the great success of “The Gold-Bug” selling rates of Poe’s *Prose Romances*, issued on July 18, 1843, were very low. For Poe’s awareness of the popularity of “The Gold-Bug” in England see P 3: 284.
- 48 *Gil Blas* was one of the three books which John Allan sent to Poe while he was a student at the University of Virginia. Since Poe wrote to John Allan (O 1: 39–42) that he had no use for any of the three, it must be supposed that Lesage’s novel was not a French language edition. Anyway, Poe must have come across GIGOUX’s illustrations later, since they were not published before 1835. In his letters to other authors Poe mentioned “Adams” as being eventually responsible for the wood cuts. ADAMS was the engraver of William HARVEY’s illustrations for *Robinson Crusoe* (see above). Poe’s exclusive preference for woodcuts suggests his dislike for steel engravings. The idea to win his favorite engraver ADAMS for the project shows how much emphasis he put on the mechanical execution of the illustrations.
- 49 For other examples of Poe’s awareness of typographical details see H 8: 2; 9: 24f, 49, 69, 115; 10: 172; 13: 98; 16: 41f; P 3: 28
- 50 For Poe’s generally bad opinion of lithography see his reviews of “Life on the Lakes” in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of July 1836 (P 5: 237) and “Sketches of Conspicuous Living Characters of France” in *Graham’s Magazine* of April 1841 (H 10: 138), his article on “Anastatic Printing” in *The Broadway Journal* of April 1845 (P 3: 84) and the “Marginalia” #203 in *Graham’s Magazine* of April 1849 (P 2: 343).
- 51 I do not intend to remedy this deplorable state of affairs here, since an analysis of the term would easily fill dozens of pages. Some publications referring to Poe’s indefiniteness are Pollin (“Music”), Rayan and Odin. In its substantial form the term “indefiniteness” is, according to the OED, a word coined by Poe. However, the OED is in fault in dating Poe’s first usage as late as 1849, as the word already appeared four times (two times italicized) in 1839 in a review on George P. Morris’ song-writing (*Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*, December 1839; see H 10: 41ff).
- 52 This passage closely paraphrases a paragraph from Chapter 14 in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* (Coburn 7: 13).
- 53 These are just a few examples from some tales, a complete list would occupy several pages.
- 54 Poe repeats this comment on Gravina’s statement in *The Poetic Principle* almost verbatim (see H 14: 272).
- 55 1839 in *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* in a critique of songs written by George P. Morris. Poe repeats the quoted passage almost verbatim in 1844 and in 1849 in his “Marginalia” (*The Democratic Review*, December 1844, P 2: 153f, and *Graham’s Magazine*, April 1849, P 2: 337f).
- 56 Poe’s use of this line does not match Bacon’s statement exactly. In the course of twelve years, Poe quoted this line five times, each time with small variations (cf. H 12: 32; H 14: 153; P 2: 254; P 2: 357).
- 57 See also Coleridge’s letter to his brother George, written in March 1798: “Laudanum gave me repose, not sleep: but you, I believe, know how divine that repose is – what a spot of inchantment, a green spot of fountains, & flowers & trees, in the very heart of a waste of Sands!” (Griggs 394).
- 58 Poe mentioned Plotinus and Porphyry briefly, in his tale “Lionizing” and in one of his *Pinakidia*, respectively (M 2: 176, 180; P 2: 43).
- 59 Poe repeated these lines almost verbatim in “The Poetic Principle” (H 14: 273).
- 60 The information in the following survey is mainly culled from Harpham (23–47) and Barasch (17–25).
- 61 Poe might have known of this important distinction, because it is emphasized in the entry for “grotesque” in *The Encyclopaedia Americana*, published in Philadelphia in 1831 (see P. C. Smith 42).
- 62 In the first three versions of the text Poe had used “Arabesque” instead of “convolute” (M 2: 157).
- 63 L. Moffitt Cecil, in his article about “Poe’s Arabesque”, argued that the term refers to Poe’s habit of suggesting some sort of allusion to the Arabian world. However, these references are sometimes no more than just one word per story.
- 64 For Coleridge’s famous definition see Coburn 7: 304.
- 65 For Poe’s discussion of the terms see P 5: 166, 419f, H 10: 61–66, P 3: 16ff, 229, H 13: 125, 224f, P 2: 381, 383, 502, H 14: 282f, H 15: 113f, 69, 102.
- 66 If *grotesche* implied anything similar to the comical, it was absurdity. The contemporary critics complained that the grotesque defied natural laws. In the opinion of Vitruvius the depiction of a large roof supported by thin tendrils was ridiculous.

- 67 Poe mentioned CALLOT in a review of Longfellow's *Hyperion*. The article was first printed in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* of October 1839 (H 10: 39–4) and later republished in the *Broadway Journal* of December 27, 1845 (P 3: 350).
- 68 Floegel's understanding of the grotesque was a forerunner of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, first published in 1965 (first translated into English 1968). Both interpreted the grotesque in the tradition of carnivalesque hilarity. Bakhtin stressed the physical aspects of the grotesque. Especially during carnival, excessive libertinage, licentiousness, indulgence and exuberance yielded a primitive and unrestrained joy. As far as Poe is concerned, Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque is perfectly applicable to stories such as "King Pest", "Four Beasts in One" or "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether", or even to allegedly arabesque tales like "Shadow" and "The Masque of the Red Death". Quite contrary to Kayser, Bakhtin almost exclusively emphasized the gay aspects of the grotesque. In Poe's works, however, the grotesque is not only connected with abandonment and debauchery but also with death and annihilation. The *joie de vivre* is often followed by bereavement. Bakhtin's theory is symptomatic for a general problem in the analysis of the grotesque in Poe's works: introducing terminological definitions or theoretic concepts from the outside into Poe's works usually results in squeezing the author's texts into pre-conceived frameworks that are too narrow.
- 69 For the alleged influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on Poe see Cobb, Dieckmann, Gruener, Kesten, Kühnelt, Pitcher ("Borrowings"), G. P. Smith and von der Lippe ("Figure", "Beyond").
- 70 Robert D. Jacobs mentioned that the whole collection of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* is organized in a way that suggests a convolute ornament. The critic regarded the collection as an overall beautiful design (= arabesque) into which some single "monstrous" (= grotesque) tales are interspersed like "fantastic figures [...] intertwined with flowers, leaves, branches, and scroll work" (166n).
- 71 In this letter, Poe refers to his collection as *Eleven Tales of the Arabesque*. This title should stimulate those critics who equal "arabesque" with "serious" stories (and "grotesque" with "humorous" stories) to reconsider their dual classification. If "Epimanes" is representative of the stories of the collection, "Eleven Tales of the Grotesque" would have been a more appropriate title for it (see O 1: 53). The projected collection is now usually referred to as *Tales of the Folio Club* exclusively. I will use this title in the following, too.
- 72 For another satirical interpretation of the story see Thompson (*Fiction* 125ff). For source studies see Dixon, Engstrom, Fisher ("Pieces"), Frank and Whitt, and for the story's Byronism see Pahl ("Recovering") and Soule. See also Fisher ("Flights"), and Ketterer ("Abyss").
- 73 Fisher ("Pieces" 70f) is one of the few exceptions here, as is Pahl, who suggested that the Marchesa and the stranger are mirror-images and god-like figures (*Architects* 28ff). However, the Marchesa plays a subordinate role in the analyses of these two critics. Ernst (*Poetik* 36) briefly referred to the decoration of the stranger's habitation.
- 74 The narrator is aware that his figure must have stricken the spectators as death-like: "I [...] must have presented to the eyes of the agitated group a spectral and ominous appearance, as with pale countenance and rigid limbs, I floated down among them in that funereal gondola" (M 2: 153).
- 75 On December 1, 1835, in a letter to Beverly Tucker, Poe had mentioned "Morella" as his best tale and he was confident to be able to write even better stories (O 1: 78).
- 76 The three comic book artists above mentioned are not the only illustrators who pay heed to these merely implied graveyard scenes. Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902), Alfred KUBIN (1920), Carlo FARNETI (1928) and Ramón CALSINA (1970/71) also depicted the breaking of the teeth.
- 77 There is a stately number of articles dealing with "Berenice": see Billy, Blythe and Sweet ("Vampirism", "Source"), Bronfen ("Perversion"), Brown, Cappello, Dayan, Doyle, Forclaz, Fukuchi ("Skull"), Johansen, Justin, Pike, Porte (79–84), Sloane ("Gothic", "Revisions"), Weissberg and Zanger ("Forbidden", "Philosophical"). Some of these articles also focus on "Morella". For more material on "Morella" see Bickman, Engel ("Obsession"), Fukuchi ("Repression"), Gargano ("Note"), Halio, Holt, McCarthy ("Sameness"), Richmond and Rose.
- 78 An illustration produced by Povl CHRISTENSEN (1953) accentuates the same "superficial" reading. This picture, however, was used as an illustration for "The Fall of the House of Usher", but there are many reasons that it must be linked with "Berenice". The two stories were not printed in the same book, but they were issued in two simultaneously published companion volumes. My reasons for assigning the picture to "Berenice" are the following. All illustrations of CHRISTENSEN have a scenic character, and as such the picture in question can only depict Madeline's quite passing through the hall (M 2: 404) or her final entry into the chamber (416). In both cases, the picture would be rather inappropriate as a scenic illustration. Moreover, the female figure bears close resemblance to the representation of Berenice, printed as an illustration for the tale on page 178 of the companion volume. The slight opening of her mouth, which reveals a shiny set of teeth, is just one more argument to confirm my conjecture that this picture was misplaced. I mention this incident because it is symptomatic for other misattributions. In sight of the German-Austrian edition illustrated by Stefan EGGELER (1923) Burton Pollin mistook the depiction of the resurrected Madeline Usher (153) for the apparition of Berenice (*Images*

- entries 20 and 566). Considering the parallels between the two stories – deathly sick women, mentally disturbed male protagonists, premature burials, obscure settings – it is not surprising that some illustrations are interchangeable, indeed. See, for example, the close resemblance of EGGELER’s picture with an illustration for “Berenice” preceding page 61 in a Polish Art Nouveau edition illustrated by Witold GORDON in 1912.
- 79 WÖGEL himself produced the engraving of his illustrations. His original drawings, now held by the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, are more professional than the finally published etchings. Considering the fact that some of WÖGEL’s original designs were rejected, it seems that the publisher Quantin was responsible for the the conventional character of many illustrations inside this famous edition (see also the section on “Metzengerstein” below).
- 80 The topic of the teeth has been explained by the fact that Poe had bet that he was capable of writing a story about the breaking of teeth from a deceased person. In 1930, Lucille King discovered that the bet went back to contemporary newspaper reports about the desecration of graves in Baltimore, where graverobbers had broken teeth from corpses in order to sell them to local dentists (see O 1: 57f, M 2: 207).
- 81 In “Ligeia”, the heroine’s teeth contribute to her extraordinary beauty (see M 2: 312, 328). Referring to the legend about Queen Berenice, wife of King Ptolemy of Egypt, as related by Catullus, Joan Dayan wrote about the story’s final scene and its subtle star imagery: “Poe’s Berenice loses her teeth to engender another more complex consolidation. Instead of a constellation in the sky, this new setting for transformation, an inverted apotheosis, explodes, comet-like, into existence with the fall of a box on the floor, revealing those white and shining remnants” (Fables 139). According to Dayan, taking the teeth of Berenice means for Egæus to grasp his identity, his I/dents/idées that is (142, 145; see also Weissberg “Search” 70). Curtis Fukuchi thought that Egæus attempts to restore his reason by breaking Berenice’s teeth, “by surgically defanging the jaws of death” (“Skull” 103). This argument rather weakens his interpretation which otherwise resembles mine to some extent. Kennedy argued generally that “the woman’s teeth signify the problem of death; the narrator wants to possess them to control the reality which they represent” (Death 80). Arthur E. Brown interpreted the teeth as a symbol of “undying death” and as Egæus’ fear of the impossibility of dying (460).
- 82 It is curious that Judith Pike did not refer to the four paragraphs in question. Pike argued that Poe introduced “a new ideology of death” (171). In a time when dead women were elaborately styled as sleeping beauties, Poe shocked his audience with descriptions “that disclose the failure of the fetish of the exquisite corpse” (172). While death was sentimentalized and the deceased continually remembered by means of idealized effigies, the biological fact and the reality of dead bodies was moved out of public consciousness. Pike also interpreted Egæus’ obsession with Berenice’s teeth quite differently than me. According to Pike, Egæus’ must get hold of his cousin’s teeth because they represent that very last bit of her which cannot be made part of his idealized vision, an “impossible remainder, that little peace of the real, which takes on a life of it [sic] own and erupts the symbolic order” (182).
- 83 The only exception is Poe’s later humorous tale “The Spectacles” (1844), where the narrator becomes aware of ideal and elusive beauty under very different circumstances. The many similarities between “Ligeia” and “The Spectacles” suggest that Poe not only parodied his earlier tale but also his aesthetic doctrine of indefinite beauty. Joel Salzberg (“Preposition”) was the first critic to point out some basic similarities between the two tales in his note published in 1970. In “Eleonora” (first published in *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year’s Present for 1842*) and “The Oval Portrait” (first published in *Graham’s Magazine* for April 1842) female characters play an crucial role as well, but there are not as important for the plot as Ligeia.
- 84 For a political interpretation see Schueller, who thought the tale to be paradigmatic for the American crisis of nationalism in the 1830s. Shi considered the enigmatic heroine as a paradigm for the puzzling polysemy of the text which has defied conclusive interpretation despite dozens of critical articles.
- 85 Novalis famous utterance was first published in his own magazine *Athenæum*, in 1790 (Samuel 419). There is, however, no direct evidence that Poe knew this statement when he wrote “Morella” and “Ligeia”, since Sarah Austin’s *Fragments of German Prose Writers* (London 1841) has been identified as his main source of Novalis. Poe reviewed the American edition in December 1841 for *Graham’s Magazine*, three years after he wrote “Ligeia” (Hansen and Pollin 49, 117).
- 86 Wuletich-Brinberg pointed to the story’s underlying Narcissus motif. For Poe’s narrator, looking into Ligeia’s eyes is as much as gazing into a mirror, and to love her means to adore himself. Unlike the mythological figure, the narrator is able to save himself from drowning, at least temporarily. Marrying Rowena is kind of a therapy which fails at the end when the narrator’s self-idolatry obsesses him once again (138ff).
- 87 As for the Ligeia’s relation to the ideal, Daniel Hoffman wrote: “The chief appeal of the name ‘Ligeia’ to Edgarpoe was [...], this is the only conceivable feminine name (assuming it to be such) which rhymes with the Great Key Word, *Idea*” (243; italics original).

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- 88 Roy P. Basler argued that the narrator decorated the turret chamber and contrived the various effects in order to drive Rowena into madness (“Interpretation” 369). In fact, the machinery and the effort seems to be overdone for such an effect, which could have been achieved by less expensive ways. However, Poe’s employment of the ever-changing patterns of the tapestry and the carpet should remind any interpreter that the story can be viewed from different perspectives.
- 89 Note the resemblance of this picture with W. Heath ROBINSON’s frontispiece illustration for “Al Aaraaf” in *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1900). The pictures are similar in terms of composition and in their exposition of female nudity. Note also the corresponding background details in the upper right corner: the oriental roofs in the earlier and the pointed ornaments of the bedposts in the later picture.
- 90 These appellations are just a few examples. They are culled randomly from newspapers’, bookseller’s, educational, and private websites:
http://independent.gmnews.com/News/2002/0130/Front_Page/004.html
<http://www.students.dsu.edu/millejac/ling.doc>
<http://www.craphound.com/nonfic/23.html>
<http://www.parenaissancefaire.com/edgar.htm>
<http://www.cais.com/webweave/poe/poebio.htm>
 All sites were online October 31, 2003.
- 91 Usually, Poe’s revisions of his early serious stories reveal that he was eager to tone down their Gothic ingredients and to elaborate psychological aspects. Therefore, it is not convincing that Poe had removed satirical elements in “Metzengerstein” (as Thompson stated), because such changes would have made the text more Gothic than before. Fisher (“Hoax”) argued that the young and unexperienced writer was prone to the Gothic stereotypes, so that “Metzengerstein” is a document of Poe’s lack of maturity rather than a subtle manipulation of the genre.
- 92 Maybe there was an earlier 20th century illustration than COBURN’s picture, produced by Gladys A. PECK in 1901. Pollin’s list of illustrations for *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (1901; *Images* entry 1214) does not contain a picture for “MS. Found in a Bottle”, but one for “A Descent into the Maelström”, possibly due to the confusion or the erroneous transcription of his abbreviations “MS” and “Mae”. In later editions of the *Tales*, there is an illustration for “MS. Found in a Bottle”, but none for “A Descent into the Maelström”. However, the list of illustrations shows three more differences between the first printing and later editions of the collection, so that it is also possible that PECK’s illustration for “MS. Found in a Bottle” was not published before 1928. I was unable to solve this case, because the 1901 edition remained unavailable.
- 93 The picture reprinted here (fig. 74) is taken from the Italian edition *Racconti Incredibili*, published in 1876 in Milan. Many of the pictures included in this edition appeared two years earlier in the series “Œuvres d’Edgar Poe” in the French magazine *Musée Universel*. It is very likely that MÉAULLE’s picture was also published in the Parisian magazine, since he is involved in the series as the engraver of several other pictures, all drawn by Vierge. Vierge possibly also produced the illustration for “MS. Found in a Bottle”, although the picture only shows MÉAULLE’s signature. MÉAULLE worked primarily as an engraver, but he also produced some illustrations of his own, e.g. the picture for “Silence” in the Quantin-edition of 1884.
- 94 Compare the narrator’s mention of an “indefinite sense of awe” (140), “many vague points of novelty” (141) and “a sentiment ineffable” (144) with Poe’s final statement in the “Letter to Mr. —” (see chapter 3.2).
- 95 With reference to Fitz-Greene Halleck’s “Alnwick Castle” Poe wrote about the incommensurability of humor and the sublime in *Graham’s Magazine* of September 1843: “It is sadly disfigured by efforts at the farcical, introduced among passages of real beauty. No true poet can unite, in any manner, the low burlesque and the ideal, without a consciousness of profanation” (H 11: 199). As for Platonic imagery in “Metzengerstein”, see Hirsch’s interpretation of one scene (M 2: 23) as an allusion to the cave allegory (45).
- 96 Nancy Bate Berkowitz stressed the dream-like quality of the narration. In fact, the “good” Wilson is the narrator of the tale, which is a dream narration. The “evil” Wilson is a mere dream figure, the protagonist of his “sublunary visions” (27, cf. M 2: 427). But the good Wilson is not only narrator, but also dream figure, imagined by himself and his double. This confusing interlocking of perspectives, of projections, reflections and back-reflections, resembles the mentioned mirror cabinet structure of the text, that is visually suggested by Hahn’s illustration. According to Berkowitz, Wilson’s loss of identity is due to the fact that he misinterprets his dreams as reality (31f). See also Halliburton 306f.
- 97 Poe’s use of such suggestive personal “facts”, his double-bottomed allegory and ambiguous imagery, his elusive allusions, and the motif of the *doppelgänger*, are typical aspects of the works of Paul Auster. Auster paid homage to Poe in that he continually alluded to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, “William Wilson” and “The Man of the Crowd”, most notably in his novels *City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986) and *Moon Palace* (1989).

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- 98 Usually, studies of “William Wilson” focus on the relationship of the two Wilsons. Bachinger (Byrons) and Soule pointed to a biographical relevance, because Poe emulated his early idol Byron in the story. However, psychological and psycho-analytical analyses keep prevailing the critical discourse. Marie Bonaparte saw the relation of the two Wilson as the conflict between father and son, that is Poe and John Allan, who represents a tyrannical super-ego (2: 667, 680ff). Similar approaches were brought forth by Hoffman (Poe 209–213), Walsh, Hoffmeister, Sullivan, and Casale. Coskren, Engel (“Identity”), Joswick and Stern basically agree that William Wilson suffers from a split personality. While Hubbs interpreted the second Wilson as the Jungian archetypal shadow, Yongjae Jung, who considered earlier readings too simple (386), referred to Lacan’s theory theory of the Imaginary. Britt forwarded a historical approach, in that he interpreted the narrator as the personification of the mob, as “a Whig’s version of a Jacksonian democrat who attempts to exert his will over the resistance of his double and everyone else and erase any differences between others and his will” (204).
- 99 This last quotation also alludes to the ambivalent character of the story. In fact, the two diverging stories – one that presents the second Wilson as the personification of conscience, the other as the impersonation of the imp of the perverse – are so tightly interwoven, that some text passages simultaneously provide arguments for both theories. Tracy Ware understood “the two stories” as the literal and the allegorical meaning of the text, obviously unaware that the allegory is ambivalent, so that there are at least three stories (48).
- 100 Note that the passage also implies that the feeble lighting conditions as well as Wilson’s excessive consumption of wine are probably responsible for a hallucinatory experience. As usual, Poe is eager to balance supernatural, psychological and literal explanations of the related events.
- 101 This collection was never printed, just like the *Tales of the Folio Club*, but Poe’s manuscript of the table of contents (rpt. M 2: following 474) shows that the two tales were intended to follow each other.
- 102 For the second half of this quotation see one of Poe’s *Marginalia* (#150) in *Graham’s Magazine* of March 1846 (P 2: 257–60).
- 103 A very similar figure is used by Raphaël DROUART as a head-piece for “Le Corbeau”, in a French translation of Poe’s poems, issued a year before the publication of LOBEL-RICHE’s suite of etchings, namely in 1926 (cf. Pollin *Images* entry 187). See also Frederick Simpson COBURN’s depiction of the Eidolon in his illustration for “Dream-Land” (1902).
- 104 In his notes to “Shadow”, Mabbott points out to the ancient city of Ptolemais Theron on the Red Sea as the most likely backdrop for the story (2: 191f).
- 105 See also Richard CORBEN’s picture book adaptation. CORBEN devotes several frames in which drinking is visualized, and in two frames he depicts Oinos staring deep into his chalice at his own reflection, suggesting that he has had a drop too much. (*Creepy* 70, April 1975: 37ff).
- 106 Critics (Ketterer, *Rationale* 146; Thompson, *Fiction* 169, “Silence” 23) usually thought of Bulwer, De Quincey and Disraeli. The German translator Arno Schmidt also pointed to the lesser known William Pitt Scargill (Schumann and Müller 10: 1023).
- 107 This word is Poe’s coinage (see P 2: 358; H 12: 33).
- 108 Several critics have evaluated Poe’s œuvre in the context of Platonism, for instance Baldwin, Foerster and Kelly. They put different emphasis on the impact of the ancient philosopher’s works on the American author. Like Kelly, I regard the influence as “basically Platonic” (522), because there is only little evidence that Poe had a thorough first-hand knowledge of Platon’s writings. Poe’s exact sources are not known, but he could have read about Platon’s idealism in almost any contemporary textbook or journal.
- 109 Critical interest in these tales has been extremely scarce. After a general eulogism by C. Alphonso Smith, published in 1921, it was not before 1952 that Allen Tate analyzed “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion”, “The Colloquy of Monos and Una”, and “The Power of Words” in terms of Poe’s so-called “angelic imagination”, but the article treated the first tale only marginally.
- 110 Poe’s usage of names and gender roles is revealing here. Poe most probably took the names of the two spirits from Shakespeare’s “Antony and Cleopatra”, in which two women of the same appellation (being spelled Iras and Charmian) appear as handmaidens of the Queen of Egypt. Poe’s different spelling is to give them a more Grecian, that is here a more Platonic, touch. The prominent role and the superior knowledge of Charmion in Poe’s tale not only reflects the constellation of the two characters in Shakespeare’s play, but also the relationship between Diotima and Socrate. Characteristically, the ethereal realm is represented by two females, who often function as harbinger of eternal bliss in Poe’s works. The post-apocalyptic realm is called “Aidenn”, which also crops up as the name of the supernal realm in “The Raven” and “The Power of Words”.
- 111 REDON’s word order is suggestive of Poe’s later tale “The Power of Words”: Agathos shows Oinos a planet which he has created himself: a divine act accomplished by means of the atomic reverberations of his expressed will (M 2: 1211ff).

- 112 Unfortunately, I cannot offer any reproduction from GOERG's set of etchings for this story. The suite was issued in a limited edition of 275 copies only. In three years of research I only came across the book twice. Reproductions were not allowed.
- 113 It is typical for the indefiniteness of the story's setting that it is not even clear whether Eiros and Charmion are male, female or sexless spirits. However, Poe's use of the names of Cleopatra's handmaidens in Shakespeare's play suggests that the two are or once were women, unless the slightly different spelling of Charmion (Charmian in the play) was intended to insinuate a male name (cf. M 2: 461).
- 114 Besides an illustration for "Some Words with a Mummy" (216), the first volume contains an illustration for "The Premature Burial" (196), which is considered a promising candidate for one of Poe's pseudo-serious hoaxes. Thus, the accompanying picture can be counted among the illustrations for Poe's humorous tales. The second volume embodies wood engravings for "The Adventures of One Hans Phaall" (15), "The Spectacles" (66, 91), "Three Sundays in a Week" (163), and "Thou Art the Man" (223).
- 115 There is no agreement about the exact contents of *The Tales of the Folio Club*. Poe's plans for his first prose collection variably incorporated six, eleven, sixteen or seventeen tales. For an extensive discussion see the dissertation of Alexander Hammond (Northwestern University, 1971) and his later articles ("Reconstruction", "Evolution", "Further", "Lionizing"). For alternative theories about the list of contents and the roles of the club members see also T. O. Mabbott ("Tales", 2: 200ff) and Claude Richard ("Vocation"). As has been and as will be seen, the separation between serious and humorous stories is anything but easy and unambiguous, so that my differentiation is a working definition rather than a definite classification.
- 116 See Poe's letter to Philip P. Cooke, written in New York on August 9, 1846: "In writing these Tales one by one, at long intervals, I have kept the book-unity always in mind – that is, each has been composed with reference to its effect as part of a whole. In this view, one of my chief aims has been the widest diversity of subject, thought, & especially tone & manner of handling. Were all my tales now before me in a large volume and as the composition of another – the merit which would principally arrest my attention would be the wide diversity and variety. You will be surprised to hear me say that (omitting one or two of my first efforts) I do not consider any one of my stories better than another. There is a vast variety of kinds and, in degree of value, these kinds vary – but each tale is equally good of its kind" (O 2: 328f; italics original).
- 117 Poe said of himself that he was "not 'of the merry mood'" (P 5: 142). Accordingly, most people who knew Poe personally often describe him as a timid or even gloomy person, but a few others also mentioned his jovial side (cf. Thomas and Jackson 69). However, one of the first fictional prose texts Poe ever wrote, was a humorous piece now called "Gaffy", a text that the author threw into the fire (cf. M 2: 3f). Thomas Goode Tucker, one of Poe's fellow students in Charlottesville, reported that "it was intensely amusing, entirely free from his usual sombre coloring and sad conclusions merged in a mist of impenetrable gloom" (qtd. in Thomas and Jackson 75).
- 118 This is one more reason not to identify Poe's humorous stories with the grotesque, and, in turn, the serious stories with the arabesque.
- 119 For Poe's feud with the *Boston Notion* see Pollin ("Boston", "Notion").
- 120 See O 1: 58, H 11: 1–8, 41f, 250f, xvi: 100f, P 2: 224.
- 121 Stephen Mooney undertook two attempts to systematize Poe's humorous writings ("Criteria", "Comic"). However, despite some keen insights, his criteria often do not stand the test. Obviously, the ambivalence of Poe's stories defies any rigid categorization.
- 122 Cf. P 2: xxxiiff and *passim*; cf. Hansen and Pollin 2ff and *passim*.
- 123 LOBEL-RICHE's headpiece for "The Power of Words" shows a man and a woman in a similar situation, though the positions are reversed here (see also the illustration *hors texte* for "Morella"). The full-page plate shows a naked couple in a melodramatic posture which can also be interpreted as ecstatic. In his head-piece for "The Imp of the Perverse", LOBEL-RICHE depicts a naked man wrestling with a snake emerging from between his legs. While LOBEL-RICHE exhibits female nudity in detail, the graphic presentation of males focuses on muscular bodies, but the artist always took pains to cover the sexual organs of the depicted men.
- 124 Characteristically, Poe's feud with English began at a social meeting in Fuller's Hotel, Washington, in March 1843. Reportedly, Poe was drunk with port wine and made fun of English (Thomas and Jackson 405), who revenged himself by spreading rumours about Poe's intemperance and by satirizing him in his novel *The Doom of the Drinker*. As editor of *The Broadway Journal* Poe was anything but complimentary about New Yorker authors such as William Ellery Channing, William W. Lord, Rufus Wilmot Griswold, Amanda M. Edmond, Henry Norman Hudson, and Henry B. Hirst. The decline of Poe's star in the literary world is well reflected in an article published by *The Harbinger*, the organ of the Brook Farm Institute for Agriculture and Education, a community of New England Transcendentalists situated at West Roxbury near Boston. For a reprint of the article and Poe's reply see *The Broadway Journal* of December 13, 1845 (P 3: 336ff). My interpretation of the story as a parody of the author's career as a

- lion in the literary world of New York could hardly have been Poe's intention, unless he foresaw the development to come. When the tale was published for the third time, in March 1845, in *The Broadway Journal*, or in June of the same year, as part of the *Tales*, Poe was still on rather good terms with the New Yorkers. However, such a reading of "Lionizing" is legitimate, since this reader response approach is not primarily interested in authorial intention, but in interpretations that are stimulated by the side by side of texts and illustrations.
- 125 Pollin listed several illustrated editions which are said to contain illustrations for this story (*Images* entries 630, 631, 1246). However, a close inspection of the volumes in question revealed that some of the books do not even contain the story, let alone illustrations for the text. The source of this error is a typo in the abbreviation codes in the "W" field: the code for the satire (Man) was confused with that for "A Descent into the Maelström" (Mae).
- 126 William Whipple delivered convincing evidence that Colonel Richard M. Johnson, ninth Vice President from 1837 to 1841, is the target of the satire (91ff). Daniel Hoffman thought General Winfield Scott to be the object of ridicule (193ff; cf. Royot 64). Alekna pointed to William Henry Harrison, the short-lived 9th President of the United States (36), and Thompson named one Andrew Johnson, but without mentioning any details (*Fiction* 83). Since he referred in his notes to Whipple, Thompson seemingly fused the names of Andrew Jackson and Richard M. Johnson by mistake, probably having in mind the name of the Tennessean politician who became Lincoln's vice president and his successor. Elmer R. Pry detected a connection between Poe's story and a popular folktale of Poe's times in which the veneration of military heroes and the blind faith in technical progress was ridiculed (46). A. H. Quinn was at a loss to define the meaning of the text, although he was vaguely aware of some deeper significance (283). Taylor denied the story such qualities, seeing it as nothing more than an old joke raked up (333).
- 127 Poe renamed the protagonist of "Lionizing" twice. In 1842, he became John Smith, and in 1845 Robert Jones (see *M* 2: 172f, 178ff).
- 128 Unfortunately, none of the 40 pictures in this edition bears a signature, so that there is no evidence, who was responsible for which illustration.
- 129 In Stephen Peithman's annotated edition of Poe's tales, a historical plate was chosen to illustrate the campaign background of the story (568). The picture, however, is one of the many uncredited parts of the book. It was definitely not produced as an illustration for Poe's satire, but, nevertheless, it makes the reader aware of the story's serious background.
- 130 James Lynch ("Devil") stated there are only three tales in which the devil appears, but he had ignored "The Duc de l'Omelette". A similar error underwent Mooney who counted three tales only, too, but who ignored "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" ("Criteria" 434).
- 131 Taylor also identified the devil with Poe, but for him Vondervotteimittis represented "the methodical, bourgeois public of early-Victorian America" (334).
- 132 If it was really Poe's intention to make fun of *The History of New York*, "The Devil in the Belfry" is a satire on a satire, since Irving began the book as a parody on Samuel Latham Mitchell's *The Picture of New-York; or The Traveller's Guide through the Commercial Metropolis of the United States*.
- 133 As editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe's criticized the puffing system, which he identified with the New York publishing world. Poe's (in)famous Drake-Halleck-review, in which he ridiculed the works of the two New York poets, began with the critic's riposte against *The New York Commercial Advertiser* and *The Philadelphia Gazette*, edited by Colonel William Leete Stone and Willis Gaylord Clarke (P 5: 164–74). The latter was the brother of Lewis Gaylord Clarke, editor of the influential *New York Knickerbocker*, which Poe also attacked, though indirectly. Poe's slashing reviews of Theodore S. Faye's *Norman Leslie* in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of December 1835 (P 5: 60–62), a book that had been excessively praised by the New York magazines (Thomas and Jackson 162, 164, 167, 175f; cf. Moss, "Incident"), and Stone's *Ups and Downs* in June 1836 (P 5: 215–18) certainly did anything but improve his standing among the literary men of New York. See Miller (*Raven* 112–57 *passim*) and Moss (*Battles* 85–131) for an account of the feud between Lewis Gaylord Clark and Poe. For further details of Poe's clash with the New York Literati see Moss ("Nemesis"; *Crisis*).
- 134 The French illustrator Jean CHIÈZE (1949) also depicted the village in a way to resemble a clock. Maybe there is also such an illustration among the 25 pictures of Jacques MARET, produced in 1927 for a French limited edition of 70 copies only. Unfortunately, I was unable to inspect the volume in the Rare Books Department of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
- 135 STANTON's picture was part of one of the most successful illustrated Poe editions of all times, *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. This profusely embellished book was first published by Alexander Hyslop in Edinburgh, and it was frequently reprinted thereafter. The first American edition dates from 1870. See also the illustrations in a widely reprinted gift book, issued by John C. Winston in Philadelphia (1881), featuring about 40 illustrations for "The Bells" by DARLEY, FREDERICKS, KING, MCCUTCHESON, NORTHAM, PERKINS and RIORDAN (Pollin, *Images* entries 414, 415, 416, 418, 442, 1141, 1176).
- 136 In a psychoanalytical vein, the destruction of the grotesque face in the mirror can be interpreted as Poe's self-destruction, or as the attempt to free himself of his imp of the perverse, which he might have held

- responsible for marshaling his own ruin. It is probably no coincidence that von Jung hurls a decanter of wine against the mirror. Poe's sombre and self-destructive moods have often been ascribed to his alcoholism (Thompson, *Fiction* 119). For an account of Poe's literary battle with Fay and *The New York Mirror* see Moss ("Incident").
- 137 Cf. M 2: 126. According to book xxvi of the *Histories* of Polybius (c. 200 – after 118 BC) Epimanes showed an eccentric behaviour that confused his contemporaries. Poe might have come across several anecdotes about Epimanes. The King used to vanish from the court in order to ramble through the streets of Antioch with a few companions. He was known to drink with the meanest people and he often appeared at festivities without being invited. Polybius also reported, that he liked to disguise himself, putting off his royal robes in order to fathom what people really thought about him. I culled these information from the internet (http://www.ku.edu/history/index/europe/ancient_rome/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/26*.html) (online October 31, 2003).
- 138 The caption of MARTINI's picture, "Il 'principe dei poeti'", is possibly an allusion to Poe, whose work is characterized by grotesquerie and eclecticism, just like the depicted figure. The two figures in the background may be understood as representing different aspects of Poe's writings, horror and "sophisticated" humor.
- 139 In the case of RACKHAM this is due to his peculiar graphic mannerism, which is characterized by a combination of grotesque details with a realistic style of representation. This style is congenially apt for his famous illustrations for the fairy-tale worlds of Hans Christian Andersen, the Celtic Otherworld or the Arabian Nights. In fact Legs, with his spidery and sinewy limbs, his gnarled fingers and ludicrous physiognomy, is a close relative of the hobgoblins in RACKHAM's Celtic fairy-tale pictures, and the Arch Duke Tem-Pest, lying on the floor, bears a striking resemblance with some of the dwarves in Walt Disney's *Snow White* movie.
- 140 Note the correspondence of colors – "sky-blue," "crimson," "trimmings [...] of orange colored auricula" – in the Signora's description of her apparel with the "blue-blazing melodramaticisms" printed on "gilt-edged paper all *coulour de rose*". Susan Moore Rigby, a writer of minor local fame in Baltimore, was Poe's only victim before the publication of "How to Write a Blackwood Article". The attacks against Edmond, Walter and Fuller are all of a later date, from the times of Poe's editorship of *The Broadway Journal*. McNeal ("Zenobia") read "How to Write a Blackwood Article" as a satire on Fuller (who used to dress flamboyantly), an interpretation that remained undisputed in the study of Gerber ("Milton" 26). In 1972, Pollin argued conclusively, that by 1838 Fuller was only a minor literary figure, which could have hardly been the target of Poe's satire ("Caricature" 93).
- 141 It must be noted that Poe was also grudging Lowell because of the latter's satirical verses in *A Fable for Critics*. For about two years, Poe and Lowell had entertained a friendly exchange of letters (November 1842 to December 1844). In the first three months of 1843, Poe was a contributor to Lowell's *Pioneer*. Poe and Lowell met once in New York at the end of May 1845. Poe was reported to have had a hangover (see Thomas and Jackson 536; A. H. Quinn 461), but that could have hardly been the reason why the two men were disappointed with each other. It is known, however, that Lowell blamed Poe for his severe continual criticism of Longfellow (Silverman 252ff).
- 142 The hint may even go into the direction of the churchman Ralph Waldo Emerson. In this context, the loss of the Signora's eyes, which maintain a consciousness of their own, can be understood as an allusion to Emerson's "transparent eye-ball" ("Nature" 905).
- 143 The situation visually suggests an execution. Note that, if one turns the clock in McKeown's illustration by 180 degrees, the hands do not show five minutes before half past six, but the symbolic time of five minutes to twelve.
- 144 See Poe's early "Sonnet – To Science", in which the progress of time and science is accused of destroying poetic imagination and nature's beauties (see M 1: 90ff).
- 145 Interpreted in the context of Romanticism, it is noteworthy that the disintegration of the self is brought about by a technological invention, the mechanical clock. In his Romantic fits, Poe complained about the disenchantment of the world through science and its technological achievements, circumstances which lead to the alienation of the Romantic artist from the matter-of-fact reality of everyday life.
- 146 On a structural level the theme of reflection becomes manifest in the two-parted composition of the tale. In Iser's terms these two parts function as the story's most obvious disconnected segments.
- 147 See my comment on the homophony of "eye" and "I" and its meaning for Poe's works in section 4.1.
- 148 The figure of Mr. Lackobreath seems to have been a source of inspiration for T. C. Boyle's protagonist Ned Rise in *Water Music*. The sensations of a man about to be hanged were later seriously, but cynically treated in Ambrose Bierce's *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (1891).
- 149 Other critics resumed this hypothesis, for which there is sufficient evidence in the text to prove it (see Hoffman 240f). The protheses discovered by Lackobreath in the drawers of his wife, as well as his later mutilation, are more hints at the disintegration of the self.
- 150 Eight years earlier, OOSTING had provided a dozen and a half illustrations for the *Fantastische Vertellingen*, which had been issued by the same publisher.

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- 151 In a Brazilian edition illustrated by Eugenio HIRSCH and Augusto Iriarte GIRONAZ, the depiction of several graveyard crosses (463) are visual signposts of the text's gloomy aspects, too, but this unspecific picture does not have the same impact as FINI's.
- 152 The variety of illustrations demonstrates the wealth of material which the story offers for graphic artists, but, surprisingly, there are not more pictures than those here mentioned. It seems as if the ambivalence of the story has paralyzed illustrators and literary critics.
- 153 If there are any works at all which can rival the sheer number of illustrations for "The Fall of the House of Usher", these are "The Gold-Bug", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", "The Raven" and "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym".
- 154 It seems as if Quinn's image of the House of Usher was influenced by the setting of Jean Epstein's movie adaptation dating from 1928. The critic had referred to this film and to the appearance of the building earlier: "[...] Epstein's camera realized the clouded landscape and the baroque, decaying house as Poe must have imagined them" (French 258).
- 155 Quinn is right in observing that the visualization is hard to realize, but he is wrong in expecting the resemblance to be unequivocal. Thus, the reflection of the house in the tarn becomes a visual hint at the story's manifold meanings. One of Gary KELLEY's pictures (1996: 85) shows how difficult it is for an artist to depict a house resembling a face, when the similarity is not to be all too obvious. The Swedish artist Bertil Bull-HEDLUND (1946), possibly overwhelmed by the difficult task, was taking pains not to depict the house(-head): in his illustration the building is hidden behind a bush.
- 156 See also the building's reflection in the pool, which vaguely resembles a hideously grinning visage.
- 157 Poe has often been made part of the pictorial fiction. This is especially noteworthy in the illustrations for "The Raven", where the lyrical I often resembles Poe (e.g. TAYLOR 1883, HORTON 1899, DULAC 1909, LANDAU 1953). Some illustrators also depicted him as a figure in "The Gold-Bug" or in the Dupin tales, more often, however, as Legrand or the detective Poe (e.g. SCHREITER 1966), than as his rather slow-minded companion, the narrator (MACAULEY 1904). Axel ARNDT (1988) also portrayed Poe as Usher. In the comic series entitled *Poe*, protagonist resembles the author who experiences adventures more or less suggestive of the author's works. The series was illustrated by Jason ASALA and issued in 25 instalments by Cheese Comics, Dogstar Press and Sirius Entertainment between 1996 and 2000.
- 158 See the pictures of Frederick Simpson COBURN (1902), Byam SHAW (1909), Jacques WÉLY (1910), J. MONSELL (1912), Harry CLARKE (1923, his color picture), S. DE IWANOVSKY (c. 1927), Hans ZANDER (1964), Giorgio TREVISAN (1970), Martin SALVADOR (1975) and Paul ROSIÉ (1979).
- 159 Poe's ambiguous choice of words can be interpreted as a hint, that there are not two of them, Roderick and the narrator, but only one person.
- 160 Poe's keynote is the word "gloom" which rings like a death bell throughout the story.
- 161 In the first paragraph there are several words and phrases indicating and implying ocular perception and visual impression. The narrator finds himself "within view" of the house, when "the first glimpse" at the "natural image" affects him with insufferable gloom. Then he "looked upon the scene", perceiving "eye-like windows"; and, a bit later, "gazed down [...] upon the remodelled and inverted images [...] and the vacant and eye-like windows" (M 2: 397f).
- 162 The chemistry metaphor is Poe's own. See his *Marginalia* #220, first published in *Graham's Magazine* of May 1849 (P 2: 369).
- 163 This theory has its weaknesses, all pointed out by Patrick Quinn ("Teller" 345). The most important objection that the narrator's face would have to resemble a skull, since Thompson interprets the appearance of the house as that of a death-head. See, however, the introducing movie of the computer game *The Haunted Eye*, which visualizes Thompson's theory. This computer game affords remarkable insights into Poe's imagery. The game was designed by Russell Lees for Inscape in 1995.
- 164 It must be remarked, that ARNDT's four pictures also reflect the mirror motif, in that the illustrations are arranged symmetrically. The first and the last drawing show the house plus reflection, pictures two and three the mirror-image only. This circumscription of the mirror-images parallels the movement towards the house, the entrance into it, and the finale, when the narrator flees from it. For Iser's development of his reader response theory see *Prospecting and Fictive*.
- 165 See the narrator commenting on "sombre tapestries of the walls" (400) while being lead into the house of Usher. "Dark and tattered draperies" (411) are mentioned again as part of the narrator's bedchamber. Note also the "huge masses of agitated vapour [...] which enshrouded the mansion" (412). All these are variants of Poe's prominent motif of the veil.
- 166 For Poe's use of the color red see Wilson O. Clough.
- 167 More examples of double enclosures can be found in the story: the house of Usher is surrounded by walls of misty fog, by "the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house)" (412), and Madeline is entombed in her coffin and within a locked vault.
- 168 Cf. Darrel Abel ("Life-in-Death") and Richard W. Dowell.
- 169 Of course, the suppression of Madeline can also be understood in psychological terms. If we accept Thompson's notion about Usher as the narrator's *alter ego* or his double, the twins become a sort of

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triplets, or as three psychic forces within one individual. Thus Madeline represents a subconscious force (repressed guilt, for example) surfacing in Usher's/the narrator's consciousness.

- 170 CORBEN's comic book version is a free, but introspective adaptation of Poe's story. For no apparent reason, Madeline anticipates to be murdered by Roderick. CORBEN also produced a cover illustration for another compilation of comic book adaptations, but here Madeline looks very different. The colorful picture shows Madeline storming into the room like a monster, and her claw-like hands and sharp teeth suggest that she is a vampire.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In the following, the title of an illustration refers to title given by the illustrator. If there is no such title, it is defined by the version of the text. Since Poe changed the titles of his stories now and then, the titles of different illustrations for the same text here given may vary. In case of a non-English language edition, the translated title renders the title of the illustration, unless the picture is a reprint of which the original title is known. Captions, if existent, are added in parentheses.

- Fig.** p. Artist/Title/Details/Source
- 1** 26 By the author. A typology of text-picture relations.
- 2-4** 28 CLARKE, Harry. Vignettes in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. New York: Brentano's, 1923. *passim*
Limited edition of 2500 copies.
- 5** 29 ROBINSON, W. Heath. "Lenore". 14,4 × 9,8 cm
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- 6** 29 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether."
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- 7** 30 FARNETI, Carlo. "Metzengerstein." 20,2 × 14,7 cm
Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1927. 243 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 8** 31 HELNWEIN, Gottfried. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher."
Unheimliche Geschichten. Augsburg: Kunstverlag Weingarten, 1979. 44/45
- 9** 33 HAHN jr., A. "Het Ovale Portret." 19 × 12,4 cm
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- 10** 33 WÉLY, J. [Portrait of the author.] 19,5 × 12,8 cm
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- 11-13** 34 RACKHAM, Arthur. Spine decoration, endpaper design and illustrated title for *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. New York: Weathervane Books, 1985.
- 14** 35 FALKÉ, Pierre. Frontispiece (14,8 × 10,9 cm) and title page from *Les Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym*. Paris: Éditions de la Bandérole, 1921. — Limited edition of 605 copies.
- 15-17** 37 WÖLBING, Jürgen. Illustrations on pages 28, 182 and 181 from *Gordon Pym*. Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1980. — Limited edition of 250 copies.
The illustrations measure 12,9 × 9,9 cm (15), 5,6 × 12,7 cm (16) and 4,6 × 12,8 cm (17)
- 18** 40 MCPHARLIN, Paul. "Tamerlane". (Illustration: 13,1 × 8,5 cm)
Pages 48/49 from *The Raven and Other Poems*. Detroit: The Fine Book Circle, 1936.
Limited edition of 950 copies.
- 19-20** 52 HARVEY, William (engraved by Adams). Title-page (illustration 6,2 × 6,1 cm) and page 137 (illustration 5 × 6,4 cm) from *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: with a Biographical Account of Defoe*. Illustrated with Fifty Characteristic Cuts, from Drawings by William Harvey, Esq. and Engraved by Adams. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835.
- 21** 54 HERVIEU (engraved by himself). "Porte St. Martin." 14,3 × 9,6 cm
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- 22** 54 HERVIEU (engraved by S. H. Gimber). "Porte St. Martin." 14,6 × 9,7 cm
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- 23** 61 Diverse illustrators. Pages 132/33 from *The Vicar of Wakefield*. New York: Appleton & Co, [1841 or 1842].
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- 24** 65 DARLEY, F. O. C. "The Gold-Bug."
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Reproduced from Mankowitz, Rolf. *The Extraordinary Mr. Poe*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978. 152
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- 25** 65 DARLEY, F. O. C. Title page design for *The Stylus*.
Reproduced from Eugene Fields, *Some Letters of Edgar Allan Poe to E. H. N. Patterson*. Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1898. facing p. 16
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- 26** 66 GIGOUX. Page 664 from *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*. Paris: Paulin, 1835.
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- 27** 66 GRANDVILLE. Frontispiece (22,9 × 14,5 cm) from *Aventures de Robinson Crusoe illustrés par Grandville*. Paris: H. Fournier, 1840.

- 28 69 BROWN, Hablot Knight (aka PHIZ). Detail of the frontispiece from *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*.
The Works of Charles Dickens. In 34 vols. Printed from the ed. that was carefully corr. by the author in 1867 and 1868. With the original illustrations. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899.
 The complete picture measures 18 × 11,1 cm
- 29 69 FLAXMAN, John. "The King of the Lestrigonians seizing one of the companions of Ulysses." 17,4 × 24,3 cm
The Odyssey of Homer. Engraved from the compositions of John Flaxman R.A. Sculptor. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1805.
- 30 103 ROBINSON, W. Heath. "Evening Star." 14,5 × 9,3 cm
The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. London: George Bell and Sons, 1900. 97
- 31 103 HILDEBRANDT, Greg. "Evening Star." 22,8 × 17,3 cm
Tales and Poems of Poe. Parsipanny, NJ: Unicorn, 1986. 72
- 32 107 COBURN, Frederick Simpson "The Assignment" ("She stood alone.") 18,3 × 8,8 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Book Lover's Arnheim edition. vol. 2. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 134 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 33 107 SHAW, Byam. "The Assignment." ("Thou hast conquered – one hour after sunrise – we shall meet – so let it be!") 14 × 10,3 cm
Selected Tales of Mystery. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1909. facing p. 104
- 34 108 DWIGGINS, W. A. "The Assignment" ("... no motion in the statue-like form itself stirred even the folds of that raiment of very vapor which hung around it as the heavy marble hangs around the Niobe.") 8,6 × 8,4 cm
Tales. Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1930. 349 — Limited edition of 1000 copies.
- 35 108 CHRISTENSEN, Povl. "Stævnemødet." 17,7 × 11,7 cm
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- 36 112 LEGROS, Alphonse. "Berenice." 27 × 37,2 cm
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- 37 113 WÖGEL. "Berenice." 12,9 × 9,4 cm
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- 38 113 GIANNINI, Giovanni. "Berenice." 16,7 × 11 cm
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- 39 114 KUBIN, Alfred. "Berenice." 14,9 × 11,6 cm
Ligeia und andere Novellen. Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1920. 41 — Limited edition of 1000 copies,
- 40 114 EICHENBERG, Fritz. "Berenice." 14 × 9 cm
Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Random House, 1944. facing p. 500
- 41 116 RÍU, Pedro. "Berenice." 7,4 × 6,4 cm
Narraciones Extraordinarias. Barcelona: Ed. Ibera Joaquín Gil, 1942. 233
- 42 116 SCHÜTTE, Ernst. "Berenice." 8,1 × 10,7 cm
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- 43 118 PICCOLO. "Berenice." ("Entre los cruzados laberinticos del bosque.") 20,2 × 13,1 cm
 Frontispiece from *Narraciones Extraordinarias*. La Novela de Ahora, xli. Madrid: Saturnio, 1908.
- 44 118 MONES, Isidro. "Berenice." 13,2 × 6,5 cm
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- 45 119 MONES, Isidro. "Berenice." 5 × 17,8 cm
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- 46 121 SIMÉON, Fernand. "Berenice." 9,1 × 9,2 cm
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- 47 121 LOBEL-RICHE, Alméry. "Berenice." 21,6 × 15,7 cm
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- 48 122 TREVISAN, Giorgio. "Ligeia." 12,2 × 8,4 cm
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- 49 122 BOFA, Gus. "Ligeia." 17 × 13,2 cm
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- 50 124 DWIGGINS, W. A. "Ligeia" ("Rushing to the corpse, I saw – distinctly saw – a tremor upon the lips.") 11,1 × 8,5 cm
Tales. Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1930. 261 — Limited edition of 1000 copies.
- 51 124 FRONIUS, Hans. "Morella." 16,9 × 11,7 cm
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- 52 126 DURAND, Paul. "Ligeia." 16,7 × 11,4 cm
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- 53 126 CLARKE, Harry. "Ligeia." 20,2 × 15 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. New York: Brentano's, 1923. facing p. 122
Limited edition of 2500 copies.
- 54 127 SHARP, William. "Ligeia." ("She, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia.") 18,4 × 11,6 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. Baltimore: Limited Editions Club, The Garamond Press, 1941.
facing p. 404 — Limited edition of 1500 copies.
- 55 127 EICHENBERG, Fritz. "Ligeia." 14 × 9 cm
Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Random House, 1944. facing p. 344
- 56 129 TILNEY, F. C. "Ligeia." 9,7 × 7 cm
The Works of Edgar Allan Poe. vol. 3. London and New York: J. Shiells & Co., J. B. Lippincott, 1895.
facing p. 144
- 57 129 VAN MAËLE, Martin. "Ligeia." 16 × 10 cm
Dix Contes. Paris: Librairie Dorbon, 1912. 165 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 58 130 FARNETI, Carlo. "Ligeia." 20,2 × 14,6 cm
Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1927. 237 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 59 130 SATTY, Wilfried. "Ligeia." ("The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey ...")
24,8 × 18,3 cm
The Illustrated Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1976. 37
- 60 130 SHAW, Byam. "Ligeia." 14,1 × 10,3 cm
Selected Tales of Mystery. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1909. facing p. 134
- 61 138 WÖGEL. "Metzengerstein." 20,3 × 14,1 cm
Reproduced from the original drawing in the publisher's unique edition of the artist's sketches
for Histoires Extraordinaires and Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires (Paris: A. Quantin, 1884). The
sheets in this book are unnumbered, but according to my page count the drawing appears on
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- 62 138 WÖGEL. "Metzengerstein." 12,3 × 9,2 cm
Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: A. Quantin, 1884. 305 — Limited edition of 100 copies.
- 63 139 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "Metzengerstein." 13 × 8,8 cm
Frontispiece from Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 2.
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 64 139 DOCKTOR, Irving. "Metzengerstein." 10,3 × 8,3 cm
Ten Great Mysteries. New York: Scholastic Publications. 1960. 198
- 65 140 RACKHAM, Arthur. "Metzengerstein." ("The young Metzengerstein seemed riveted to the saddle
of that colossal horse.") 17,1 × 13,3 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. New York: Weathervane Books, 1985. facing p. 226
- 66 140 SATTY, Wilfried. "Metzengerstein." ("Frederick, Baron Metzengerstein, was, on the other hand,
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- 67 142 FRONIUS, Hans. "Metzengerstein." 18,6 × 12,2 cm
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- 68 142 FRONIUS, Hans. "Metzengerstein." 16,6 × 9,9 cm
Das verräterische Herz. 13 Erzählungen. Munich: Rütten & Löning, 1965. 63
- 69 143 SHARP, William. "Metzengerstein." ("A cloud of smoke settled in the distinct colossal figure of
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Tales of Mystery and Imagination. Baltimore: Limited Editions Club, The Garamond Press, 1941.
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- 70 143 FARNETI, Carlo. "Metzengerstein." 20,4 × 14,1 cm
Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1927. 246 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 71 146 MOSER, Barry. "MS. Found in a Bottle." ("She paused upon the giddy pinnacle.") 16,1 × 9,7 cm
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- 72 146 SHAW, Byam. "MS. Found in a Bottle." ("Upon the very verge of the precipitous descent hovered
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Selected Tales of Mystery. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1909. facing p. 222
- 73 147 FINI, Léonor. "Manuscrit Trouvé dans une Bouteille." 21,6 × 12,7 cm
Oeuvres Imaginatives et Poétiques Complètes. vol. 1: Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Eds. Vialetay, 1966.
facing p. 216
- 74 147 MÉAULLE, [Louis Fortuné]. "Manuscrit Trouvé dans une Bouteille." ["Manuscritto Trovato in
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Reproduced from an early Italian reprint (Racconti Incredibili. Milan: Ed. Lombarda, 1876. [153]).
The first publication in the French magazine Musée Universel (c. 1874) remained elusive.

- 75 149 RACKHAM, Arthur. "MS. Found in a Bottle." ("Their grey hairs streamed terribly in the tempest.") 16,3 × 13,3 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. New York: Weathervane Books, 1985. facing p. 192
- 76 149 FONT, Alphonso. "MS. Found in a Bottle." 25,5 × 19 cm (all frames together)
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- 77 150 FONT, Alphonso. "MS. Found in a Bottle." 9,2 × 6,2 cm
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- 78 150 FONT, Alphonso. "MS. Found in a Bottle." 9,9 × 6,7 cm
Scream 6 (June 1974): 24
- 79 151 PORCELLI, Ronald "MS. Found in a Bottle." 13,9 × 18,2 cm
The Essential Poe. Tales of Horror and Mystery. Illustrated by Ronald Porcelli. Mt. Vernon, NY: Lantern Press, 1989. 33
- 80 153 COBURN, Frederick Simpson "MS. Found in a Bottle." 11,3 × 9,1 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 2. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 16 — Limited edition of 500 copies
- 81 153 PECK, Gladys A. "William Wilson." ("In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting.") 13,5 × 9,2 cm
Tales, Selected. The Modern Reader's Series. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928. facing p. 172
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- 82 157 HAHN jr., A. "William Wilson." 19,1 × 12,7 cm
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- 83 167 MONSELL, J. "William Wilson." (Mine own image advanced to meet me.) 12,2 × 8,1 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. London: W. Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1912. facing p. 285
- 84 159 HELNWEIN, Gottfried. "William Wilson." 31,9 × 23,3 cm
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- 85 159 STERNER, Albert Edward. "William Wilson." 12,7 × 6,1 cm
The Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Newly Collected and Edited. vol. 2. London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1895. facing p. 24
- 86 160 HOFFMANN, Carl. "William Wilson." 16,6 × 9,1 cm
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- 87 160 FRONIUS, Hans. "William Wilson." 17,8 × 12,4 cm
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- 88 161 FRONIUS, Hans. "William Wilson." 11,7 × 9,9 cm
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- 89 161 CALSINA, Ramón. "William Wilson." 11,2 × 10,6 cm
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- 91 162 DUBOUT, Albert. "William Wilson." 18 × 12,2 cm
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- 92 164 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "William Wilson." 12,7 × 8,8 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 4. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 120 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 93 164 RÍU, Pedro. "William Wilson." 6,9 × 7,4 cm
Narraciones Extraordinarias. Barcelona: Ed. Ibero Joaquín Gil, 1942. 145
- 94 165 KUBIN, Alfred. "William Wilson." 13,5 × 10,9 cm
Das Feuerpferd. Munich and Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1910. 33 — Limited edition of 1000 copies.
- 95 165 BOFA, Gus. "William Wilson." 16,5 × 12,6 cm
Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1941. facing p. 40
Limited edition of 250 copies.
- 96 167 FARNETI, Carlo. "William Wilson." 21,2 × 14,8 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1928. facing p. 26 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 97 167 WÖGEL. "Ombre." 15,2 × 11 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: A. Quantin, 1884. 255
- 98 171 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "Shadow." 15,3 × 8,9 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 2. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 178 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 99 171 FARNETI, Carlo. "Ombre." 20,9 × 14,8 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1928. facing p. 210 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 100 172 LOBEL-RICHE, Alméry. Page 313 from *Vingt Histoires Extraordinaires*. Paris: Le Livre de Plantin, 1927. — Limited edition of 197 copies.
The illustration measures 15,8 × 17,8 cm

- 101** 172 LOBEL-RICHE, Alméry. "Ombre." 21,9 × 15,9 cm
Vingt Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Le Livre de Plantin, 1927. 315 — Limited edition of 197 copies.
- 102** 174 KUBIN, Alfred. "Schatten." 13,6 × 11 cm
Hans Pfaalls Mondreise und andere Novellen. Berlin: Propyläen, 1920. 147
- 103** 174 EICHENBERG, Fritz. "Schatten." 14 × 9 cm
Schatten. Bayreuth, Bear Press. 1987. 7 — Limited edition of 150 copies.
- 104** 177 CALSINA, Ramón. "Sombra." 13,7 × 10,6 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 75
- 105** 177 CALSINA, Ramón. "Sombra." 11,4 × 10,5 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 77
- 106** 179 MÉAULLE, [Louis Fortuné]. "Silence." 13,6 × 8,3 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: A. Quantin, 1884. 259 — Limited edition of 100 copies.
- 107** 179 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "Silence." 14,4 × 8,9 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 3. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 252 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 108** 180 EICHENBERG, Fritz. "Schatten." 14,1 × 9 cm
Schatten. Bayreuth, Bear Press. 1987. 15 — Limited edition of 150 copies.
- 109** 180 CALSINA, Ramón. "Silêncio" 13,8 × 10,5 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 179
- 110** 185 REDON, Odilon. "Le souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères." ["Conversation d'Eiros avec Charmion."] — 27,3 × 20,9 cm
A Edgar Poë. Paris: G. Fischbacher, 1882. plate #5 — Limited edition of 50 copies.
- 111** 185 SATTY, Wilfried. "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion." 19,7 × 15,5 cm
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- 112** 190 WRIGHT, John Buckland. "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion." 15,9 × 10,8 cm
Masque of the Red Death. Maastricht: The Halcyon Press, 1932. 160
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- 113** 190 CALSINA, Ramón. "Conversación de Charmión con Eiros." 11,5 × 10,5 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 117
- 114** 199 LOBEL-RICHE, Alméry. "Lionnerie." 24 × 15,5 cm (sheet size)
Vingt Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Le Livre de Plantin, 1927.
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- 115** 199 SCHARFF, Paul. "Lionizing." 22,1 × 14,2 cm
Racconti. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1961. 389
- 116** 200 McKeown, Stephen. "Lionizing." 9,6 × 9,3 cm (each frame)
Comic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Edinburgh: Franklin Canongate, 1973. 48–49
- 117** 203 SERVOLINI, Luigi. "L'uomo 'usato'." 4,3 × 5,6 cm
Stravaganze. Classici di Ridere, 8. Rome: A. F. Formiggini, 1929. 65
- 118** 203 HOBAN, Russell. "The Man that Was Used up." 17,6 × 10,5 cm
Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963. 207
- 119** 204 McKeown, Stephen. "The Man that Was Used up." 9,6 × 9,3 cm (each frame)
Comic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Edinburgh: Franklin Canongate, 1973. 122–123
- 120** 205 CALSINA, Ramón. "El Hombre que se Gastó." 13,2 × 10,6 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. 2. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1971. 365
- 121** 205 DAVIDSON, Al. "The Man that Was Used up." 14,6 × 17,8 cm
The Gold Bug and Other Tales of Mystery. Chicago: Children's Press, 1969.
- 122** 208 EICHENBERG, Fritz. "The Devil in the Belfry." 13,9 × 9,1 cm
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- 123** 208 CALSINA, Ramón. "El Diablo en el Campanario." 11,5 × 10,5 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 105
- 124** 209 CLEE, Suzanne. "The Devil in the Belfry." 6,9 × 7,9 cm
The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1983. 514
- 125** 209 SCHREITER, Rick. "The Devil in the Belfry." 15,3 × 10,2 cm
Pit and the Pendulum and Five Other Tales. New York: Franklin Watts, 1967. 52
- 126** 210 BOFA, Gus. "Le Diable dans le Beffroi." 16,6 × 12,5 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1941. facing p. 184
Limited edition of 250 copies.
- 127** 210 HOFFMANN, Carl. "Der Teufel im Glockenstuhl." 16,7 × 9,1 cm
Abenteuer eines gewissen Hans Pfaal. Unheimliche und phantastische Geschichten. Berlin: Neues Leben, 1977. 229
- 128** 211 MARTINI, Alberto. "Il Violinista-Campanaro/Il Diavolo sul Campanile." 28 × 20 cm
Alberto Martini, *Illustratore di Edgar Allan Poe*. Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1984. 201
Martini created this picture between 1901 and 1914.

- 129** 211 WÖGEL. "Le Diable dans le Beffroi." 13 × 9,1 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: A. Quantin, 1884. 177 — Limited edition of 100 copies.
- 130** 212 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "The Devil in the Belfry." 12,7 × 8,8 cm
Frontispiece from *Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 3. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 131** 212 CHURCH, Frederic Edwin. "The Devil in the Belfry." 19,3 × 13,3 cm
Frontispiece from *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. vol. 4. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1884.
- 132** 215 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "The Duc de l'Omelette." 13,8 × 8,8 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 4. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 80 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 133** 215 SERVOLINI, Luigi. "Il Duca de l'Omelette." 11,3 × 5,7 cm
Stravaganze. Classici di Ridere, 8. Rome: A. F. Formiggini, 1929. 40
- 134** 216 Bull-Hedlund, Bertil. "Bon-Bon." 9,2 × 9,2 cm
Hemlighetsfulla och Fantastika Historier. Stockholm: Björk & Börjesson, 1946. 279
- 135** 216 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "Bon-Bon." 13,9 × 8,8 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 2. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 164 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 136** 217 SERVOLINI, Luigi. "Mistificazione." 4,3 × 9,5 cm
Stravaganze. Classici di Ridere, 8. Rome: A. F. Formiggini, 1929. 12
- 137** 217 SERVOLINI, Luigi. "Mistificazione." 4 × 8,9 cm
Stravaganze. Classici di Ridere, 8. Rome: A. F. Formiggini, 1929. 19
- 138** 219 KUBIN, Alfred. "Eine Geschichte aus Jerusalem." 14,3 × 11 cm
Hans Pfaalls Mondreise und andere Novellen. Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1920. 167
Limited edition of 1000 copies.
- 139** 219 MARTINI, Alberto. "Il Maiale-Mercante/Un Racconto di Gerusalemme." 28 × 20 cm
Alberto Martini, *Illustratore di Edgar Allan Poe*. Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1984. 269
Martini created this picture in either 1908 or 1909. According to Paola Bonifacio, curator of Pinacoteca Alberto Martini in Oderzo, the image is also known under the title "Ritratto Psicologico".
- 140** 221 FARNETI, Carlo. "Un Événement à Jérusalem." 21,5 × 14,9 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1928. facing p. 258 — Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 141** 221 TILNEY, F. C. "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling." 9,5 × 7,2 cm
The Works of Edgar Allan Poe. vol. 4. London and New York: J. Shiells & Co., J. B. Lippincott, 1895. facing p. 132
- 142** 221 CLEE, Suzanne. "Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling." 5,8 × 7,9 cm
The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1983. 493
- 143** 225 CALSINA, Ramón. "Cuatro Bestias en una." 13,3 × 10,6 cm
Obras Selectas. vol. I. Barcelona: Ed. Nauta, 1970. 167
- 144** 225 FARNETI, Carlo. "Quatres Bêtes en une." 21 × 14,7 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: KRA, 1928. facing p. 170
Limited edition of 240 copies.
- 145** 226 JAMES, Louis. "Quatres Bêtes en une." 18,2 × 11,1 cm
Le Scarabée d'Or suivi de 23 Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Le Livre Club du Libraire, 1959. facing p. 146
- 146** 226 MARTINI, Alberto. "Quattro Bestie in una /Il Principe dei Poeti." 28 × 20 cm
Alberto Martini, *Illustratore di Edgar Allan Poe*. Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1984. 199
Martini created this picture in either 1908 or 1909.
- 147** 228 SIMÉON, Fernand. "Quatres Bêtes en une." 8,9 × 9,1 cm
Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires. Paris: Éditions d'Art Edouard Pelletan, 1924. 3
Limited edition of 845 copies.
- 148** 228 ENSOR, James. "Le Roi Peste." 9,6 × 11,5 cm
Etching on copper.
- 149** 232 STERNER, Albert Edward. "King Pest." 12 × 6,9 cm
The Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Newly Collected and Edited. vol. 4. London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1895. facing p. 64
- 150** 232 KUBIN, Alfred. "König Pest." 12,8 × 10,9 cm
Frontispiece from *König Pest und andere Novellen*. Munich and Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1911.
Limited edition of 1000 copies.
- 151** 235 FARNETI, Carlo. "Roi Peste." 19,6 × 14,5 cm
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- 152** 235 LEGRAND, Louis. "Roi Peste." 25,3 × 17,3 cm
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Limited edition of 115 copies.
- 153** 237 BARTLETT, Michael. "King Pest." 4,5 × 8,9 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. London: Burgess and Bowes, [c. 1951]. 64

- 154** 237 RACKHAM, Arthur. "King Pest." ("The victorious Legs rushed out with her into the street, followed by the redoubtable Hugh Tarpaulin.") 17,4 × 13,3 cm
Tales of Mystery and Imagination. New York: Weathervane Books, 1985. facing p. 82
- 155** 239 VAN MAËLE, Martin. "Roi Peste." 15,3 × 9,9 cm
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- 156** 239 VAN MAËLE, Martin. "Roi Peste." 16 × 10,1 cm
Dix Contes. Paris: Librairie Dorbon, 1912. 197 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 157** 241 FRONIUS, Hans. "König Pest." 17 × 11,5 cm
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- 158** 241 FRONIUS, Hans. "König Pest." 12 × 10 cm
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- 159** 243 FINI, Léonor. "Comment Écrire un Article à la Blackwood." 17,1 × 13,3 cm
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- 160** 245 MCKEOWN, Stephen. "How to Write a Blackwood Article." 9,6 × 9,3 cm (each frame)
Comic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Edinburgh: Franklin Canongate, 1973. 68–69
- 161** 248 STERNER, Albert Edward. "How to Write a Blackwood Article." 12,7 × 6,9 cm
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- 162** 248 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "How to Write a Blackwood Article." 14 × 8,8 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 3. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 244 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
- 163** 255 COBURN, Frederick Simpson. "Loss of Breath." ("'Monster!' I began in a tone of deepest indignation. 'Monster and double-winded idiot!'") 13,6 × 9,1 cm
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe. The Book-Lover's Arnheim Edition. vol. 4. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902. facing p. 40 — Limited edition of 500 copies.
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- 166** 258 MCKEOWN, Stephen. "Loss of Breath." 9,6 × 9,3 cm (each frame)
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- 167** 257 CALSINA, Ramón. "La Pérdida del Aliento" 13,1 × 10,6 cm
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- 168** 263 PORTCH, Julian. "The Fall of the House of Usher." 7,6 × 7,7 cm
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- 169** 263 TILNEY, F. C. "The Fall of the House of Usher." 8,7 × 7 cm
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- 170–** 264 COMBET-DESCOMBES. "La Chute de la Maison Usher."
172 The illustrations measure 3 × 3,4 cm (170), 3,4 × 3,5 cm (171) and 3,3 × 3,6 cm (172).
La Chute de la Maison Usher. Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1919. 9, 25, 42
- 173** 265 FARNETI, Carlo. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 20,9 × 13,5 cm
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- 174** 265 THOMAS, Alexis. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 29,3 × 18,1 cm
Trois Contes Extraordinaires. Paris: Éds. SERG, 1968. 43
- 175** 266 HEIDELBACH, Nikolas. "Der Fall des Hauses Usher." 9,5 × 5,5 cm
Cover illustration for *Der Fall des Hauses Usher*. Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 1994.
- 176** 266 DE JAEGHER, Luc. "De Ondergang van het Huis Usher." 13,5 × 9,4 cm
Fantastische Vertellingen. Tilburg: Nederland's Boekhuis, 1945. 10
- 177** 267 DUBOUT, Albert. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 18,5 × 13,8 cm
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- 178** 267 ROSENKRANTZ, Arild. "Huset Ushers Fald." 11,5 × 7,2 cm
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- 179** 268 VRIESLANDER, JOHN JAC. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 12,7 × 8 cm
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- 180** 268 ALASTAIR. "The Fall of the House of Usher." 18,4 × 12,9 cm
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- 181** 269 TATEISHI, Shuji. ["The Fall of the House of Usher."] 14,2 × 9,4 cm
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- 182** 269 SHARP, William. "The Fall of the House of Usher." ("I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar.") 18,4 × 11,5 cm
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- 183** 271 OOSTING, Jeanne Bieruma. "De Ondergang van het Kasteel Usher." 16,2 × 10,1 cm
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- 184** 271 BLISS, Douglas Percy. "The Fall of the House of Usher." 13,4 × 8,4 cm
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- 185** 273 MALIPIERO, Luigi. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 6,2 × 8,4 cm
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- 186** 273 ALEXEÏEFF, Alexandre. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 9,8 × 10,8 cm
Reproduced from *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Maastricht: The Halcyon Press, 1932. 11
- 187** 274 ALEXEÏEFF, Alexandre. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 14 × 10,8 cm
Reproduced from *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Maastricht: The Halcyon Press, 1932. 17
- 188** 274 ARNDT, Axel. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 15,9 × 18,7 cm
Der Untergang des Hauses Usher. Bietigheim: Galerie im Unteren Tor, 1988. 7
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- 189** 274 ARNDT, Axel. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 18,7 × 18,7 cm
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- 190** 275 ARNDT, Axel. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 15,2 × 18,7 cm
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- 191** 275 ARNDT, Axel. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 19,5 × 18,7 cm
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- 195** 286 RISCHMANN, Ram. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 17,9 × 13,4 cm
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- 196** 286 RISCHMANN, Ram. "La Chute de la Maison Usher." 17,8 × 13,4 cm
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- 197+** 287 CORBEN, Richard. "The Fall of the House of Usher."
198 Reproduced from *Edgar Allan Poe. Klassische Gruselgeschichten gemalt von Richard Corben*. Bergisch-Gladbach: Bastei, 1975. 29, 33
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- 200** 289 HELNWEIN, Gottfried. "Der Untergang des Hauses Usher." 31,8 × 23,2 cm
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